

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF MEETING 12th MARCH 2025

MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	Paul Salvidge	Heather Salvidge
Dave Verlander	Mike Rea	Margaret Rea
Chris Bush	Diane Bush	Margaret Shaw
Keith Hunt	Jill Hunt	Brenda Davidson
Lynda Jolly	Tim Snow	Therese Clear
Hilary Todd	Sue Waite	Frances Lambert
Anne Player	Tricia Holyomes	Lynda Bowcock
Tony Bailey	Kevin Wood	Valerie Austin
Graham Hebenton	Ann Hebenton	Trevor Hackett
Do Hackett	Christine Smith	Richard Smith

Apologies:

Ian Jackson	Moyra Jackson	Doug Stephenson
Peter Johnson	Sue Johnson	

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present to the meeting

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 13th November 2024

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Annual General Meeting

The Secretary opened the Annual General Meeting.

- I. The Chairman presented a review of the Society's activities over the past year. In particular, when speaking of the website, he put on record our thanks to Chris Powell who had built the original site and who had recently stepped down as volunteer Technical Manager.
- II. The Treasurer presented the Society accounts for the year 2024.

Secretary's Note: Copies of the Chairman's Remarks and the Society Accounts will be distributed to members with these minutes.

- III. Invitations were extended for nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

There were no nominations for these posts so the incumbents will serve for another year.

- IV. Invitations were extended for nominations for the Committee vacancies.

There were no other volunteers so one committee position remains vacant.

Officers of the Society for 2025/6 will be therefore as follows:

Ray Franklin	– Chairman
Dave Verlander	– Vice Chairman
Paul Salvidge	– Treasurer
Mike Rea	– Secretary
Chris Bush	– Committee and Webmaster
Heather Salvidge	– Committee
Tony Bailey	– Committee
Vacancy	– Committee

- V. David Verlander was, with the agreement of members present, asked to continue to serve as the Society's representative to the ECA.

There being no other matters raised by the members present the Annual General Meeting was closed and business reverted to the main agenda.

5. Speaker, Ray Franklin

Ray commenced his talk with a resumé of the history of the church.

The earliest part of the building has been dated to 1110 although a record exists of a church in Elsenham in 1070 when it was gifted to the Abbey of St Stephen in Caen, Normandy. The original building was very likely built on the site of an earlier Saxon church and was constructed from stone blocks, probably imported from Northern France, the rest being flint and rubble and a number of Roman tiles or thin bricks. The tower and South porch were added in the 15th century and the vestry or North porch was built by the Victorians. There are two fine examples in the North wall of the original Norman windows, small and high up and originally open to the elements! The large east window is 15th century although the stained glass is modern. It may have contained stained glass in Mediaeval times but that has long disappeared. There is however a small piece of early stained glass in the South window of the Chancel depicting a leopard's head, this may be the only surviving fragment of the original East window.

There are four bells within the tower. The treble was cast by William Culverdon a Master Founder at the forerunner of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry between 1506 and 1522 it not being possible to date the bell better than that. The next bell to be cast was the Tenor in 1572 by John Greene (or Grene) a "Hertfordshire Bell Founder" possibly at Hitchin although this is not certain. The third bell, the Second, was cast by John Dier at the Hitchin foundry in 1600. These three bells are known as ancient bells having been cast in the 16th century or before. The last bell in the set, the Third, is very much a "Johnny-come-lately having been cast in 1819 again at Whitechapel by Thomas Mears another Master Founder.

The bells served St Marys well until 1958 when safety concerns meant the bells had to be lowered to allow repairs to be made to the tower. Lack of funds meant the bells could not be replaced for swinging so they were rehung for chiming.

He went on to speak of the many brass plaques and other hangings in the church some dating back several hundred years.

There were many photographs shown, the oldest a hundred years old, showing bits of the church that no longer existed such as the choir stalls and the original font, the latter disappearing, we are given to believe, under mysterious circumstances.

The talk concluded with a question and answer session.

6. Open Forum and Any Other Business

6.1 St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival

The theme for this year's tree was Elsenham's Wild Weather that showed some of the more severe weather that had affected Elsenham over the years. It was another very well presented tree and our thanks go to Heather Salvidge and Diane Bush who did a first class job of decorating the tree and setting it up in the church.

6.2 Elsenham's Wells

A chance find of some handwritten and typed sheets of paper of unknown age has led us on a tour of Elsenham's wells. The paper listed five as follows:

- The Kennel's, Gaunts End (formerly the Keepers house)
- Opposite Hale's, Gaunts End
- Elsenham Jam Company
- Messrs Gold Bros Ltd Nurseries, New Road

The fifth is the village pumphouse at the foot of Park Road erected by Sir Walter Gilbey as a memorial to his wife.

Since the article in the village magazine we have heard about a sixth in a garden along Henham Road but if anyone can add to the list we would be delighted to hear from you.

6.3 Teas and Coffees

Our thanks go this evening to Sue Waite and her helpers who kindly brewed the teas and coffees.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 11th June 2025 . Our speaker will be Mark Ratcliff who will be speaking about "Camp116; Hatfield Heath."

ENDS

Minutes Agreed: June 2025

Ray Franklin – Chairman

A.G.M 2025 Chairman's Report.

For years, decades, possibly centuries Chairmen have followed a “well-trodden path,” at A.G.M.s.

They have felt obliged to thank their fellow committee members for their work over the last year.

Now I also thank them in their entirety, not because I feel obliged to do so but because I genuinely feel a great debt to them for all they have done.

From our Treasurer Paul Salvidge who has executed his financial duties with great acumen and dedication.

To our secretary (my right-hand man or should I correctly say my left-hand man), Mike Rea. In addition to record-keeping, he has organised and booked our speakers. I must just add a note of thanks to his wife Maggie who has generously supplied refreshment and welcomed the committee in to their home for meetings.

Chris Bush continues to add to our ever-increasing photo collection. He has looked after our Web Site content, it is very much the jewel in the crown of EVHS.

In regard to our Web Site, I must mention that Chris Bush’s, friend \Chris Powell. The guy who did all the initial work in setting-up the Website. Has now stepped down.

I feel I must record my thanks to Chris Powell, who together with Chris Bush set the thing up.

But will still be there to help should our newest recruit Chris Rippingale who works on the bowels of the site require assistance. The site has many recorded interviews with local people more are booked to be interviewed, so watch this space.

Without the hard work of all our Committee Members the History Society would not be able to operate. My personal thanks I convey to them all for making my tenure as Chairman such an enjoyable one. Lastly, I thank you for your attendance, for your interest in the history of our Village and its surroundings. Your presence makes it all worthwhile