

SPRING Newsletter 2021 Volume 18-1



Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum,
Dereham Antiquarian Society
& Town Archive

Letter from the Chair *Trevor Ogden*

The government has removed remaining legal restrictions on public behaviour to protect against Covid-19, and it is good to think that we might be able to resume our old patterns of behaviour. However, it is easier to bin laws than the virus, and the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser have urged that we continue to take precautions. As I write this in the last week of February, infection rates in Breckland are falling, but in under-60s rates are still higher than at the peak of the 2020-21 winter. Fewer people are seriously ill in hospital, but we all know from our own experience or that of friends that Covid-19 remains an illness to be avoided if possible.

At the Annual General Meeting we discussed when we wanted to return to face-to-face meetings and agreed that we would resume our old pattern from April, so we will be meeting face-to-face at Trinity Methodist Church Hall, Theatre Street, on 13 April at 7.30pm, to hear Joy Evitt speak about "The History of the Norfolk Wool Trade". (For details of the March talk, still on-line, and our later programme, see [p16](#).)

However, it remains important to consider others and to reduce risk of spreading infection, and to bear in mind the expert advice. We therefore ask that people do not come to meetings if they have symptoms or are a close contact of someone who may be infected, and wearing masks continues to be a sensible way of reducing risk to others when in groups. We will have a box of masks at the door in case you forget to bring one. (At the AGM we decided to ask people to take a Lateral Flow Test before coming to the meetings, but clearly with the end of free testing it would be wrong to expect that.) Also, if the speaker agrees we hope to video the talk and put it on-line for any who don't wish to be there in person.

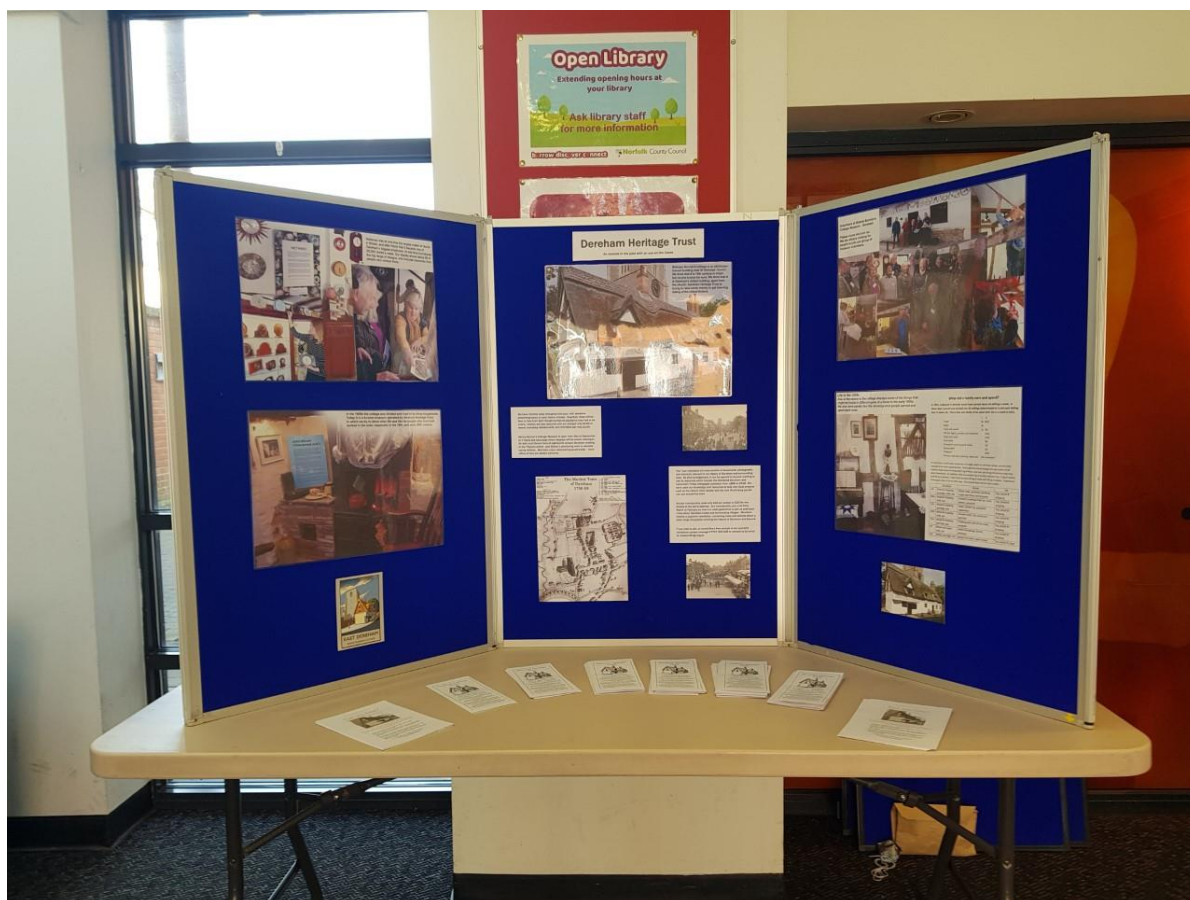
We are now back in possession of Bishop Bonner's Cottage, after all the building work. The brickwork round the fireplace is still drying out, and some may have to be renewed next winter. Also the external woodwork is fairly grubby, and the Town Council will be getting that repaired and painted in the summer. However, we are in the process of getting the interior professionally cleaned, and we have already started renewing displays. These include the new exhibition on John and Ellenor Fenn and their work. Dr Karen Smyth, Chair of the Paston Footprints Project has described this as "brilliant" and "not to be missed". The Museum opens on Friday 29 April, and will then be open on Fridays 10am to 1pm and Saturdays 10am to 4pm, until the end of September. We hope you enjoy it!

If you use Dereham library you will see that we have a display in the foyer through March, to publicise what we do and to sow the idea of coming to visit the Museum displays, or even try a hand at stewarding. Further ahead, we plan to have a stall with other local voluntary



Thanks to Sue Walker for this picture of virus particles in the very act of scurrying into a bin. Let's hope they've gone for good!

groups at Dereham Day in the Memorial Hall on Saturday 14 May. This aims to be “An exciting celebration set to showcase all that is great about Dereham”, so we need to be there. If you are able to be a presence at either the library display or on Dereham Day, please let Catherine Hawkins know.



The display at the library

Finally, you will remember the interesting information about the cottages that emerged from the expert survey by Susan and Michael Brown, reported in the Autumn newsletter, and the earlier work by Sue Walker on the history of the colouring of the pargeting. We are seeking funding for the building's timbers to be tree-ring dated, and to produce a booklet which will bring all these new findings together. We hope that this will be ready this summer, and will add a lot of interest to visits.

From the AGM

Trevor mentions the AGM above. 18 members attended and reviewed the Annual Report, the Accounts, and our Mentors' report - followed by a quiz on local knowledge (or, in my case, ignorance). Our constitution at this time did not allow us to hold the AGM other than in person, but we were able to secure Charity Commission permission to do so as we considered this in the best interests of DHT. The AGM unanimously passed a resolution to change the constitution giving us the power to hold future AGMs on line should it seem advisable. The usual votes on Trustees and the committee confirmed the following appointments:

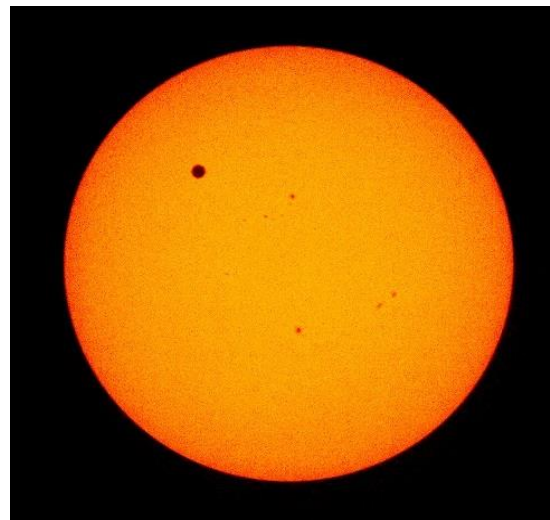
Trustees: Robena Brown, Catherine Hawkins, Ken Hawkins, Trevor Ogden, Sue Rockley, Peter Wade-Martins.

Committee members: all Trustees, plus Hilary Williams, Phillip Duigan as a representative of the Town Council, and Megan Dennis as the Museum Mentor.

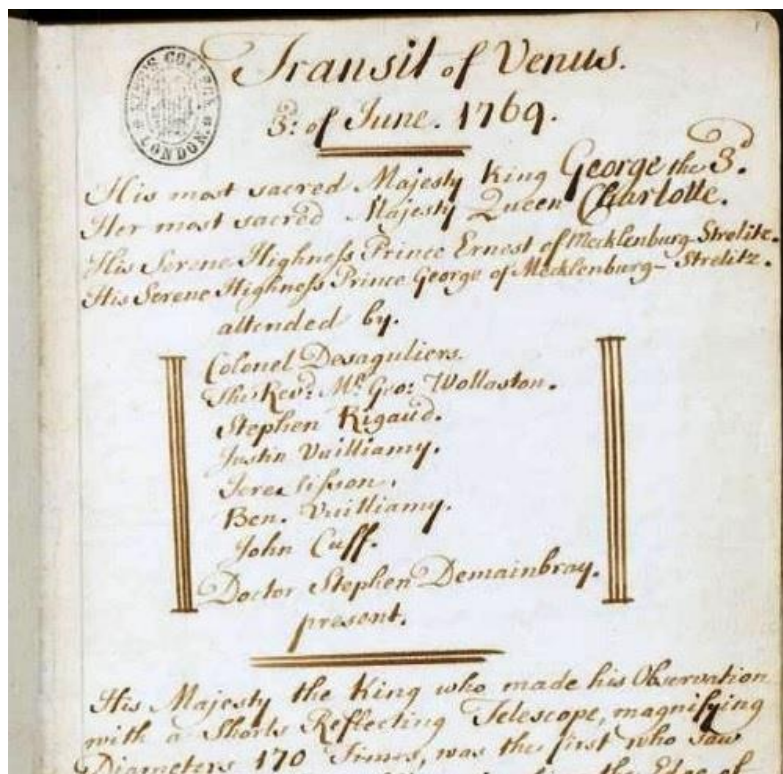
Francis Wollaston and the Transit of Venus Trevor Ogden

Measuring the Solar System

It was 3 June 1769. In the stockade his crew had built on the Pacific Island of Tahiti, Captain James Cook looked up in satisfaction at the bright morning sky. Later, he wrote in his journal, "This day prov'd as favourable to our purpose as we could wish, not a Cloud was to be seen the whole day and the Air was perfectly clear". In Pondicherry, India, Guillaume Le Gentil looked up gloomily at the clouds. It was more hopeful for other observers in the Spanish territory of California, and at the Prince of Wales Fort on Hudson's Bay. In the Old Deer Park, at Richmond, Surrey, the weather also looked good. It was a summer evening, and King George III sat in the observatory built specially for this occasion. One of the gentlemen with him was George Wollaston, FRS, Mathematical Lecturer at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University, who was something of an expert on celestial mechanics.



The planet Venus passing across the Sun's disc during the 2012 Transit, viewed from the International Space Station (NASA)



Notes of the King's observations of the 1769 Transit. George Wollaston is second on the list of those attending.

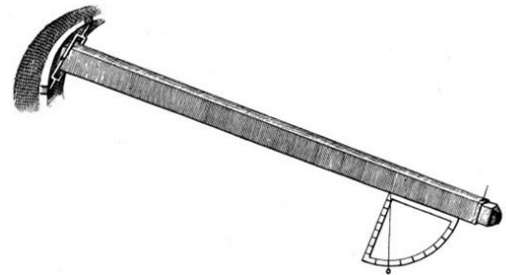
And in the vicarage of East Dereham, Norfolk, sat the rector, George's older brother, Francis Wollaston. He had made his own preparations, and was now watching the Sun through his heavily smoked glass and his telescope, until he saw the small black disc of the planet Venus just touch the edge of the sun and begin its slow journey across the bright face, a journey known as the Transit. As he later wrote to the Royal Society to report his measurement, "In watching for the first contact of Venus, I kept my eye on the Sun's edge where the contact was expected; keeping that point nearly in the center of my field, and the first impression which I

saw was at 7hr, 12 minutes, 39 seconds mean solar time."

In Richmond, the King saw the disc touch the sun 18 seconds later. Unfortunately, it clouded over soon after, and both in Dereham and Richmond the sun had set before the transit was complete.

Francis was 38. He had first been trained in the law, and had then been ordained, but he seems to have had a stronger interest in astronomy. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1769, the year of the Transit, and showed the same practical skill and gift for

experimental observation for which his son William Hyde Wollaston later became famous. He securely mounted his telescope in a window of the Dereham rectory, and apparently had a distant mark by which he could accurately tell the direction of south. Later, when he had moved to Chislehurst, he described his observatory there to the Royal Society. His telescope was “fastened to a large stone pillar, bedded on the wall of the house”, with the due south direction indicated by “a mark 700 feet distant”. Perhaps he had a similar arrangement at Dereham, with his telescope mounted so that he could tell accurately in which direction and at what upward angle it was directed.



The telescope mounting that Francis used in 1769. The left-hand end would have been secured in his window, pivoted so that it could be moved from side to side and up and down.

This clock, made by John Holmes in about 1775, is like the one used by Francis Wollaston for timing the Transit. This one was sold by Christies in 2008 for £22,000.

To make his observations, Francis also needed a good clock. He bought one from the distinguished clock-maker John Holmes, of London. It had a wooden pendulum with a large bob, with a smaller bob underneath for fine adjustment of the speed of the clock, which was firmly fixed to the chimneybreast. Francis demonstrated his rare skill by observing known stars passing the north-south line with his telescope, and adjusting his clock so he knew solar time to within a second.

What was it all for? By the 1700s, the careful observations by earlier astronomers meant that the structure of the solar system was well understood. However, although the relative distances of the planets were known, for example that Venus was only 0.723 times as far from the Sun as the Earth, no one knew whether the Earth was 50 million miles from the Sun, or 100 million, or 150 million. If this distance could be measured, then all the other distances in the Solar System could be calculated. In 1663, James Gregory, a Scottish astronomer and mathematician, described how the distance to the Sun could be calculated if observers timed a Transit of Venus from different parts of the world whose latitudes and longitudes were accurately



Point Venus, Tahiti, where Captain Cook made his observations

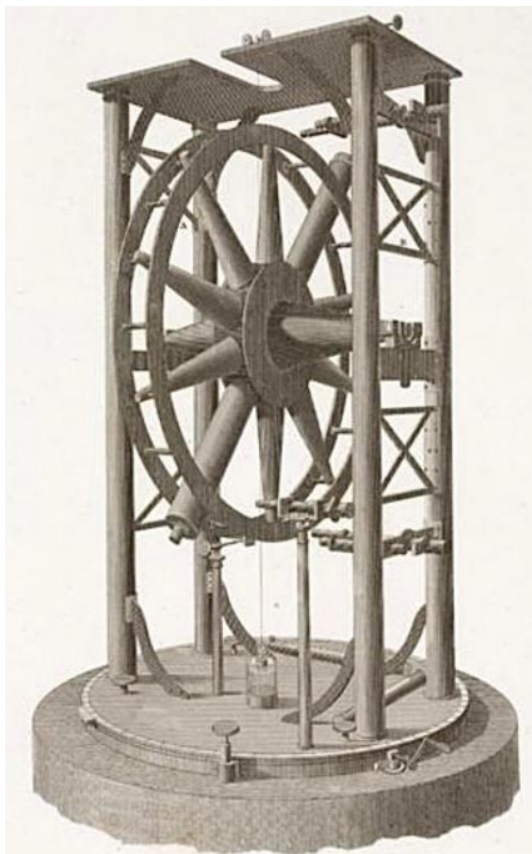
known; some ingenious trigonometry could then be applied to calculate the distance from the times.

Transits occur because Venus orbits the Sun inside the Earth's orbit, so every now and then the planets exactly line up, so Venus appears to pass across the Sun's face. The exact motion is complicated, however, and usually the planets pass without being exactly lined up. The Transits, with the planets lined up with the Sun, come in pairs, with the second coming 8 years after the first, and then a gap of over 100 years before the next pair. The first pair after James Gregory's prediction was in 1761 and 1769.

There were some unsuccessful attempts to make the necessary observations in 1761, but for the 1769 Transit, as we have seen, things were better organised. Captain Cook arrived home in July 1771, and delivered his timings to the Royal Society. The ones from the other stations had apparently already arrived, and in December Thomas Hornsby, Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, read a paper to the Society in which he used the results to calculate the distance to the Sun, which he made 93,726,000 miles. The distance varies with the time of year, but this is within 1% of the mean value determined by radar, so in those terms the exercise was a great success. Hornsby only used the measurements from sites which could record both the start and the finish of the Transit.

What happened to everyone?

After he moved to Chislehurst later in 1769, Francis improved his equipment and carried out many years of careful astronomical work, presenting many papers to the Royal Society, and publishing a general catalogue of stars, that is a list of the prominent visible stars with accurate measurements of their positions. This sounds dull, but was fundamental in identifying changes and minute stellar movements. In 1781 his friend William Herschel noticed a "star" that moved, against the well-catalogued background of fixed stars, and this turned out to be a newly-discovered planet, Uranus.



The improved mounting which Francis designed at Chislehurst, which allowed accurate positioning of the telescope in any directions. (photo: Sue Walker)

But there does not seem to be a record of whether or not Francis as a clergyman was a good shepherd to his flocks in either Dereham or Chislehurst.

Although Francis moved his instruments, the most important thing that he took to Chislehurst from the point of view of science was his 3-year-old son, William Hyde Wollaston, who 50 years later was famous throughout Europe for his discoveries, and turned out to be probably the most significant person ever born in Dereham.

Francis' brother George, who had been honoured to be present at the King's observations because of his early work on celestial mechanics, does not seem to have done anything else very noteworthy, although he lived until 1826. He also was a clergyman, and was a Doctor of Divinity as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society.

While Captain Cook's crew carefully packed his instruments, he unsealed his further orders, and found he was to explore the South Pacific. He mapped New Zealand and the east coast of Australia on the way home, claiming eastern Australia for Britain, but without consulting the people already living there.

The unhappiest story is that of Guillaume le Gentil, the French astronomer observing the Transit in Pondicherry. He had left Paris in March 1760, planning to observe the 1761 Transit, but his ships were delayed by war and bad weather, and he did not get to India until after the event. In view of the difficulties, he decided to wait in Pondicherry for the 1769 Transit, as there would then be no more for 105 years. The weather was fine during May 1769, but at the time of the Transit, the sky was overcast, and his 8-year wait was in vain. Think of that if your outdoor event is rained off! Worse followed: his return was further delayed, and he did not get back to Paris until October 1771. He found that his letters had not arrived, he had been declared legally dead, his wife had remarried, and his relatives had inherited his estate. However, he lived for another 21 years, remarried, and restored his reputation with publications on the Indian astronomy that he had learnt about during his stay there.

Further information

Wikipedia is informative about the Transits and Captain Cook. There is an article on Francis, with a paragraph on his brother George, in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, which you can access through the Norfolk Libraries website if you have a library card. There is a lot about William Hyde Wollaston at <http://www.derehamhistory.com/william-hyde-wollaston---derehams-forgotten-scientist-b1766.html>. George III's observatory still exists, and can be visited: see <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/kings-observatory>. The papers presented to the Royal Society by Francis and by Thomas Hornsby are on line, and can be found by searching by author at <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/search/advanced>. There are two different methods described online to use the Transit times to calculate the distance to the Sun. One, which in my experience does not work well, is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwP8wCzbFLc&t=391s>. A second is <https://www.exploratorium.edu/venus/question4.html> and a rather more complete (but still approximate version) of this method is https://vt2004.imcce.fr/en/fiches/fiche_n05_08_eng.html.

Pondicherry is now called Puducherry. You can visit it, but make sure you have secured your flight home!

Wayfinding panel

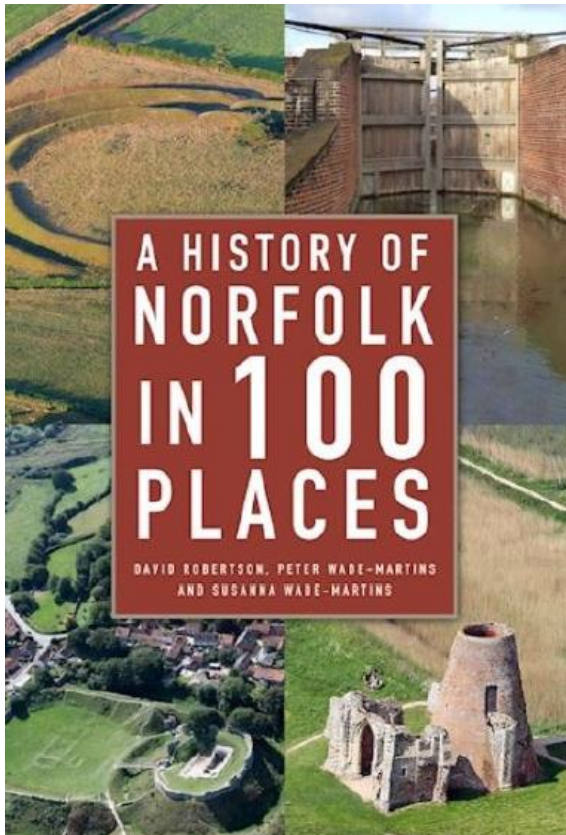
Past newsletters have reported the erection of Wayfinding panels around the town, many designed by our member Sue Walker. One has been put up near to Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum - do go and see it if you haven't done so already.



Recent talks *Ken Hawkins*

January : A History of Norfolk in 100 Places

David Robertson, Peter Wade-Martins and Susanna Wade-Martins



For our talk, we were delighted to welcome all three of the authors of the newly published *A History of Norfolk in 100 Places*. They had decided that each would present three of their favourites.

David went first, starting with the first in the book - Happisburgh Beach. This was the site of the earliest evidence of humans in Northern Europe. Discoveries since 2000 have included 200 flint artefacts, plus animal remains, from 800,000 to 1 million years ago. In 2015, a set of 49 footprints was discovered, from 5 or more people, adults and children. Next came Lynford Lakes, the most important Neanderthal site in Britain (and one of the most important in Northern Europe). A 5 month excavation was made in an infilled river channel, probably a cut off meander (or oxbow lake). Sediments were 60,000 years old, and findings included more than 2000 animal bones, 91% of them from at least 11 different mammoths. There were also 2720 stone tools, 41 being hand axes. His final site was Hethel Airfield Chapel, dating merely from the 1940s (WWII). Then it was a part of a US bomber base, but now features a

museum in the former gym, open for specific events: David showed WWII wall paintings. The site has since 1960 also been occupied by Lotus.

Peter was next, with Warham St Mary Iron Age Fort, his first dig. The three current entrances were modern, and the original entrance was not totally known, though he speculated it was across what was then a river and bog area. Next came Burgh Castle, a Roman fort, with, unusually, full height walls. It currently has walls on three sides, with the fourth possibly having fallen into the marsh. It was believed to be part of a Roman naval base. Excavation in the 1950s showed Saxon occupation of the site, possibly with a monastery, later Norman. The work done there includes making the site wheelchair accessible. Peter's final choice was St Benet's Abbey, complete with a drainage mill, among those much painted by artists of the Norwich School (and on view in the Castle Museum in Norwich). Peter noted that every year, the Bishop of Norwich travelled by wherry on the River Waveney to conduct a service here.

Susanna finished off the presentation, beginning with the Rood Screen at St Helen's Church, Ranworth. She showed the 15th century rood screen (dividing the chancel from the nave); there was a staircase behind, which gave access to the walkway along the top, which featured the usual cross in the centre. Further illustrations showed the fine medieval artwork and paintings (about 1480). Her second choice was the North Walsham and Dilham Canal, opened in 1826 in accordance with an 1818 Act of Parliament. It ran for 14½ kilometres from Wayford bridge on the Ant to the bone mills at Antingham. The upper part of the canal above Swafield closed in 1893. Some sections remain navigable to canoes and there are restoration works in progress. The course of the canal is hard to follow above the final lock at Bacton Wood. Final closure took place in 1934. The presentation ended with Holkham Hall, Park and Monument. The monument was erected in 1845, funded from public

subscription, and unlike many monuments, featured the agricultural impact made by Thomas Coke - at the top was a sheaf of wheat, while carvings on the plinth were of animals and a plough.

The presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session from the 30 people logged in to Zoom.

If you haven't yet got a copy of the book, it can be obtained from local bookshops (including Jarrolds, City Bookshop and Waterstones in Norwich) or online: [A History of Norfolk in 100 Places - David Robertson, Peter Wade-Martins, Susanna Wade-Martins \(smarturl.it\)](#).

March : Paston Footprints project

A report on the talk by Rob Knee will be included in the next Newsletter, but for now, say hello to John and Margaret Paston, who were married in about 1440. John was MP for Norfolk in



1460, and his journeys often separated him from Margaret, who stayed in Norfolk looking after their property in the dangerous years of the Wars of the Roses. The letters they exchanged form an important part of the Paston Letters, which were translated and edited in Dereham by John Fenn, and published by him, beginning in 1787. The life and work of John Fenn and his wife Ellenor are the subject of an exhibition in Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum, which opens on 29 April. The models were made by Penny Knee, Rob's wife.

The Round Tower

The quarterly magazine of The Round Tower Churches Society includes, in its current (March 2022) edition a piece taken from the *Eastern Evening News* of 22 April 1933 about William Cowper, which might be of interest to members. It is reproduced by kind permission of the Society, and we are grateful to Michael Pollitt, editor and Society vice-chairman for this. For further information about RTCS, see www.roundtowers.org.uk and to consider joining, contact Nick Wiggin, wigjter@outlook.com.

From the archives

**Taken from the
Eastern Evening News,
April 22, 1933**

Norfolk people should be proud that this noted poet once lived and died among them.

William Cowper, (pictured) then in declining health, removed under the care of the Rev John Johnson on July 28, 1795 from Weston Underwood, Buckinghamshire, to North Tuddenham, Norfolk – a journey which took three days.

They didn't stop in Cambridge en route.

Cowper's mother was the daughter of Roger Donne, of Ludham Hall.

It was on this maternal side that the Rev Johnson claimed kinship as a cousin of the poet.

'Johnny of Norfolk' as the poet called his cousin, first came to his notice when, as a student at Cambridge, he penned a poem, *The Tale of the Lute or The Beauties of Audley End*.

It was thought of such merit that Cowper was asked to revise it – and it was arranged that Lord Howard understood Cowper to be the author.

Later, the Rev Johnson visited his cousin at Weston around 1790 – and even criticised the poem.

When Cowper confessed the deception, he was freely forgiven and a close friendship developed.

It was at the suggestion of Mr Johnson that another cousin, Mrs Ann Bodham, wrote to Cowper enclosing a picture of his mother.



He thanked her, adding: "Every creature that bears any affinity to my dear mother is dear to me... the world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture which you have so kindly sent me."

The incident also occasioned what is often held to be his most beautiful poem: "On the receipt of my mother's picture out of Norfolk."

The affection between Cowper and Johnson steadily developed and when the poet came to Norfolk, his friend took every effort to make him welcome.

In August 1795, Johnson took Cowper to Mundesley. However, the salt air caused a painful inflammation of the poet's eyelids.

Visits to other parts of Norfolk followed in the following months and he spent a winter at Dunham Lodge and then in Dereham from 1798.

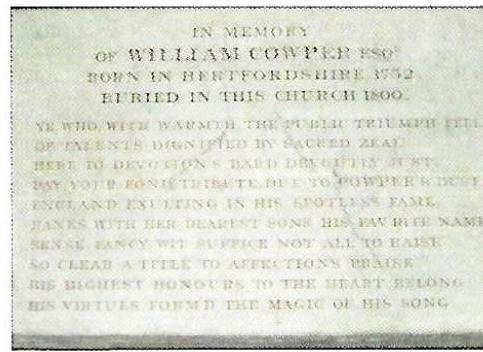
Mundesley was again visited in 1798 and the following year, *The Castaway* was written. Some thought it was prompted by discovery of a body on the beach. Actually, it was written in Dereham but founded on a reading of an anecdote in Anson's *Voyages* some 20 years earlier.

He died on April 25 1800 and is buried in St Edmund's chapel in East Dereham's church.

The Norfolk Chronicle reported his death, possibly somewhat briefly – "Yesterday se'nnight, died at East Dereham in this county, the celebrated poet William Cowper, Esq, of the Inner

Temple, author of *The Task* and many other beautiful productions.

"This amiable and very interesting character was born at Great Berkhamsted in Herefordshire on November 15, 1731. His father, the rector of that parish, was John Cowper, D. D., nephew to the Lord High Chancellor Cowper; and his mother was Anne, daughter of Roger Donne, Gent, late of Ludham Hall, in this county."



Cowper memorial in St Nicholas's church, Dereham.

From the Archive: 'Youth in the Making 1915-1940 - The History of Dereham Senior School' by Walter Tebbutt *Robena Brown*

Dereham saw two major new schools built in the years just before and during World War I - that on the Norwich Road which is now Neatherd High School and which we have shown in a previous newsletter, and the school on Crown Road shown below which is the subject of our article this spring.



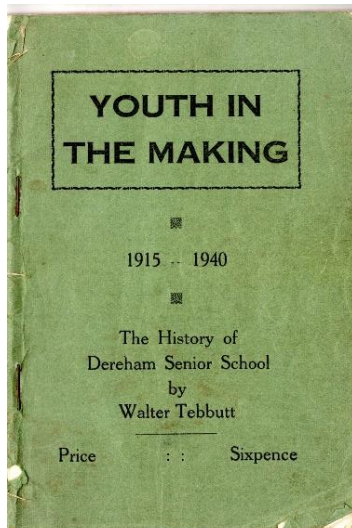
Local men who built the new Crown Road School pictured c1913-15

The premises which this new school occupied in Crown Road were modified many times and now accommodate Dereham Sixth Form College. In 1915 they were in a newly built range of buildings on a two-acre site which was then regarded as being on the outskirts of the town.

In January of this year, Mr M Durrant of Colton who, like many people during the pandemic, was taking the opportunity to have a 'turn-out', found a booklet which he thought might interest us and we gladly accepted his kind offer to care for it in the town archive.

It was written during World War II by the school's first headmaster, Walter Tebbutt, who arrived in Dereham during World War I in 1915 to take up his post and who died suddenly in March 1943 when living at 33 Crown Road, Dereham.

The information within its 57 pages is valuable to both local and family historians for though an unassuming little book it is full of fascinating facts, together with the names of staff and hundreds of pupils who passed through the school. We think you may enjoy some passages from it here.



Mr. Tebbutt notes that the first Log Book entry was 'rather historic': "The official opening of the school arranged for the 13th September 1915 was postponed owing to the recent bombardment of the town by a Zeppelin." He went on to say "This bombing took place on September 8th. I had arrived in Dereham with my wife on that very afternoon so that the incident was almost a "Royal Salute". We spent the night in the cellar of our house at 25 Bath Terrace, Norwich Road, and even now [1940] when bombing is so common I can remember vividly the horrors of that night and the damaged buildings in the Market Place and Church Street."

"The effect on the children at first was particularly noticeable as their parents invariably took them out into the fields and sheltered in dry ditches when a raid was threatened. Consequently the attendance the next day was poor and those who did come were tired and excited. After a few months

however they became acclimatised and work became more settled."

"The School was originally classified as a higher elementary type, with a five year age range, from 9-14 years and 175 children were admitted on the opening day. They came chiefly from the London Road Council School, Dereham which was originally one of the old Board Schools at which children paid small weekly fees."



An early 20th century George Coleby printed postcard of the Crown Road School

"The 'High Spot' of the first term was the planning of the School garden and the horticultural instructor, Mr H Goude, called on September 20th to advise us. The plot available was an acre in size and in Nature Study lessons on it we had found 70 different varieties of wild flowers."

"It was decided to have it ploughed up and the boys had a delightful time watching Mr F Edwards who is still in Dereham, and his team, turn the ground over scientifically. They forked it over, removing mountains of twitch grass etc and ridged it up and manured it for the winter in preparation for a potato crop in the following Spring."

"We soon encountered difficulties, the first being a legacy of truancing on Fridays, which was the local market day. I instituted a 'flying squad' of prefects who cycled round the market in search of delinquents. One giant of a boy was successfully run to earth in his fathers' poultry house and brought to school much against his will. His name must remain a secret."

“Another rascal was another boy with a crutch - very reminiscent of Dickens’ Tiny Tim - only robust instead of delicate. His favourite trick was to fall down in front of old ladies on market days to enlist their sympathy and usually this provided him with plenty of pocket money.”

“To the Staff and myself, all of whom were fresh from Training Colleges the broadness of the dialect was rather a stumbling block. It is quite true that children are bi-lingual; they have one language for school and one very different for the playground and home and in the days before Talkie Pictures and Radio, which have certainly influenced speech (though not always for the better) it was sometimes difficult to understand a child’s expression.”

“*‘E wen stairtion ni wen wim’*, is a boy’s explanation for being late one day. In English this is, *‘He went to the station and I went with him’*. ... Nowadays [1940] the broadness is considerably modified in school.”

[Mid-Norfolk born and bred, the first statement from the tardy lad is perfectly clear to me! – RB]

“Another early difficulty was the possibility of children leaving school at the age of 12 if they could pass the required standard. In the first term 5 children left under the scheme. Then, of course, a child could leave without examination on the day it was 14 years old and not have to remain as now until the end of the term. All this meant that many children did not complete the course of work as planned, a difficulty which has been remedied since the introduction of the Hadow Scheme.”

“The last difficulty was the calling up of the men teachers for military service. Mr U N Myall went on January 31st 1916. His successor Mr S J Stevenson went on May 8th 1917 and I went on August 3rd 1918 having been called up for a short period in 1916. The School was left in charge of Mr A E Tripp my first assistant, and he carried on cheerfully and efficiently.”

This takes us beyond World War I and we will share more passages from Mr Tebbutt’s book with you in our next newsletter.

Seeing the future in 1848 *Trevor Ogden*

Guessing the future is a mug’s game. In 1848, Tomas Babington Macaulay published a History of England, and it includes a passage in which he tries to foresee what the 20th century might be like.

It may well be, in the twentieth century, that the peasant of Dorsetshire may think himself miserably paid with twenty shillings a week; that the carpenter at Greenwich may receive ten shillings a day; that labouring men may be as little used to dine without meat as they now are to eat rye bread; that sanitary police and medical discoveries may have added several more years to the average length of human life; that numerous comforts and luxuries which are now unknown, or confined to a few, may be within the reach of every diligent and thrifty working man. And yet it may then be the mode to assert that the increase of wealth and the progress of science have benefited the few at the expense of the many, and to talk of the reign of Queen Victoria as the time when England was truly Merry England, when all classes were bound together by brotherly sympathy, when the rich did not grind the faces of the poor, and when the poor did not envy the splendour of the rich.

I think, though, that we would all rather be alive now. £1 (20 shillings) in 1848 had the buying power of about £120 now, and in 1848 the average life expectancy in UK was about 42. It took until WWI for the wages of the Dorsetshire peasant to pass £1 a week, even without allowing for inflation. And the 1840s saw the first demonstrations in the west of the use of general anaesthetics in operations, and who would want to be in a world without those?

Opening the Museum: 29 April - 1 October 2022 *Catherine Hawkins*

It is such good news that the museum will be open to the public again this year, after being closed for two years, partly due to COVID and partly due to the need for essential repairs. Opening times will be Fridays from 10am to 1pm, and Saturdays from 10am to 4pm, from 29 April to 1 October.

Over recent weeks I have been contacting our team of volunteers to ask them which days they are available to work, and they have stepped up to the challenge. Consequently, the museum is staffed for virtually all of those days - but there are still a few sessions to cover. We have nineteen volunteers in total, coming from very varied backgrounds and life experiences. They all share an interest in Dereham's history and a desire to contribute to our community by helping to keep the museum open.

We are lucky to have a number of new volunteers this year. Volunteers always work in pairs, and the new volunteers will all work with experienced ones to start off with. There will also be a training/induction session at the museum in April for all.

Our volunteers have also helped out at the opening of the Ellenor Fenn Garden earlier this year, and are currently helping to staff the display we have put up in the library foyer. The display will be there for the month of March, to raise the profile of Dereham Heritage Trust and the museum, and hopefully attract more members, visitors to the museum, and of course, more volunteers.

If you are interested in joining our team, please do get in touch.

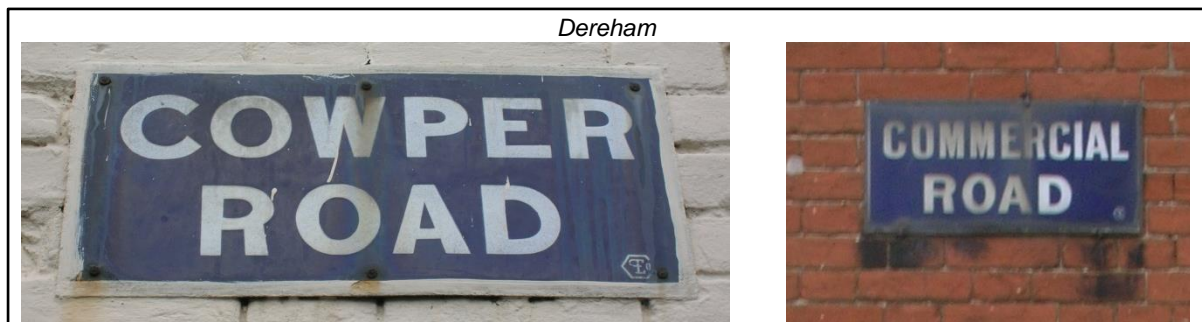


Following a major cleaning of the Museum, Peter and Susanna Wade Martins spent a couple of hours in the north room putting everything back as it was, reinstating the Metamec display, though using some different clocks than those last seen in 2019.

Snapshots of Local History - Historic Street Signs *David Viner*

David Viner, of Cirencester Archaeological & Historical Society, has contacted us about street signs - we appear to have the same signs as some of those in Cirencester! Below is an extract from an article he has written for CirenScene, April 2022 edition. David asks what might be known about our two signs, similar and he believes by the same maker, Garnier of London. Does anyone know anything about the story of these two signs in Dereham (and whether there might be any more which he missed on his brief visit to the town?). His main interests are in the maker, any installation dates, and whether or not they might have been part of a batch purchase at one time? If you can help, please contact Ken Hawkins or direct to David at dviner@waitrose.com.

Cirencester has a fascinating series of street names, each one with a story attached, and our Snapshots series will be examining them in more detail soon. There is also strong interest in street signage, the signs themselves, which come in various shapes and sizes, some modern (and very recent) but others of considerable historic interest. This article looks in particular at these earlier signs, in their distinctive blue-and-white livery, design and materials – all indicators of age.



By modern size requirements, these enamelled signs are small, only sixteen inches long and eight inches deep, and they were always positioned some ten to twelve feet above pavement level, fixed to various buildings at road junctions and street corners around the town, stretching from Barton Lane in the north right down to Queen Street in Watermoor in the south. There are nine surviving and still in position, and they represent what's left of a much larger batch of signs which the town's local authority of the day determined should be provided at a time when the town had been growing fast.

Although the archival proof remains elusive so far, it seems pretty clear that these signs belong to the period between 1894, when Cirencester Urban District Council began its life, and 1897/8 when old photos show signs in place just before the widening of Castle Steet began. That would make sense, as the Council needed signs for the many new streets springing up, as well as providing permanent signage in its historic streets, perhaps for the first time.

The supplier, as recorded and still visible by the firm's logo on the majority of plates, was Garnier & Co of London, a company originating in France in the mid-19th century but also established in London from the 1870s/80s. It was long-lived; a company under this name was still manufacturing signs in north London into the 1990s. Specifically related to the specialist role of manufacturing vitreous enamelled steel signs of this type, their process produced a hard, long-lasting finish. The key date-ranges seem to be from 1890 onwards when the 'Garnier Enamelled Letter and Advertising Sign Co' was set up, becoming Garnier & Co in 1923. So it all fits.

Membership matters

If you are already a member, renewals are now due. Our membership year runs annually from 1 March to the end of February; the normal subscription rate is £12 for a single member, £20 for two people at the same address. Payment details are set out below: please let us know if you have changed any of your contact details in recent times.

If you are not currently a member, can we invite you to consider joining? From September each year, we offer half price membership for the remainder of the subscription year, and new joiners paying full rate from January will have membership to 1 March in the following year. The membership form is at http://www.derehamhistory.com/uploads/1/6/2/3/16236968/dht_membership_leaflet_2020.pdf, or you can request a copy from Ken Hawkins. Then either post your completed form with payment or scan and email it to ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk.

Payment We can take payment at one of our meetings (cash or cheque only), but there are also two other ways open for payment: by cheque payable to Dereham Heritage Trust, posted to Ken Hawkins, DHT, 26 Hillfields, Dereham NR19 1UE, or by bank transfer to Dereham Heritage Trust, sort code 20-28-20, account 10179752 - but if you use this method please make sure you quote your surname as a reference so that we can recognise the payment as coming from you.

Programme of events 2022

We have a full programme of speakers and events planned through the year, though it remains open to change. We plan to resume in person meetings as from April, unless government guidelines and safety considerations oblige us to reconsider: we are keeping this under constant review, but will let all members know in good time of any changes.

As an 'extra', wherever possible we will in future be recording our live talks and making the recording available to members until the next following meeting date; you will be able to find it on our website. Members who choose to watch the talks in that way are invited to make the usual £1 charge as a donation to offset our costs - our speakers still deserve full recompense for their time and effort! Payment can be made by cheque or bank transfer as noted in the [Membership matters](#) section above. Thanks to those of our members who have donated for our online talks up until now.

*If you missed the March talk by Rob Knee, on "Revealing the Story of the Pastons", a tie in with the display planned for the Museum later this year, it is available at https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/9mdTLEcyFsOnosKnN3eQFX-DI2jeiK6RR5C6vdpED5o5L7pUkipTDzAsXyMOUKPI.Pv_ExqoKSW7G7AKK; Access Passcode: @0C2*F@z*

For the full programme, please turn over.

Next issue

We plan to produce a Newsletter every quarter, in March, June, September and December; the press date for the next issue is **1 June**. If you have material for this issue, please send it to Ken Hawkins. And please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any other comments of any sort. In between Newsletters, our website www.derehamhistory.com is updated regularly so please have a look now and again.

Please keep this page as your reminder of our 2022 programme

Planned meeting dates continue to be the second Wednesday of each month, at Trinity Methodist Church, 31 Trinity Close, Dereham NR19 2EP (off Theatre Street), starting at 1930, and ending with light refreshments before close at 2100. Admission to talks is £1 for members of Dereham Heritage Trust and £3 for non members. Visitors are always welcome, with the fee payable on the door, refreshments included.

13 April

The history of the Norfolk Wool Trade

Joy Evitt

11 May

Restoration of ponds on the Neatherd and Etling Green

Andy Hind

8 June

History of footpaths in Norfolk

Sarah Spooner

13 July

In search of Boudica

Natasha Harlow

10 August

Hobbies

Martin Flegg

14 September

The Glaven Ports to 1800

Jonathan Hooton

12 October

Lost Buildings of Dereham - Part 2

Sue Walker and Robena Brown

9 November

Norfolk Postal History 1579 to 1950s

David Leathart

14 December

Dereham in the 1980s - The Films of Michael Burton

Brent Scholes

11 January 2023

Norfolk's earth heritage

Tim Holt-Wilson

8 February 2023

AGM