



# Dereham Antiquarian Society

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## *Hello and Welcome*

... to the first newsletter of this year!

Winter is a very quiet time for us – at least on the face of it! Although the Museum battens down its hatches very tightly for the long winter, behind the scenes there has been a frenzy of activity, thanks to our dedicated committee members. To commemorate the centenary of World War I, there is an exciting exhibition opening at Bishop Bonner's Cottage on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May. Various interesting exhibits offer a detailed insight into how life was for the people of Dereham one hundred years ago. We look forward to seeing you there. There is also an excellent programme of talks and visits planned until March 2015. The Museum website continues to be updated with local research and photos, and it's a fascinating gateway into Dereham's past.

Spring also brings a warm welcome to our new Chairwoman, Sue Walker White. In addition to her dedication in creating our exciting website, she is spear-heading our World War I centenary exhibition. Happily too, it's not actually goodbye to ex-Chairman, Ray Fraser, as he continues to support the Committee in his new role as Joint Vice Chairman. There have been a few other changes to our Committee – please see pages 2 and 3 for full details. So much going on – exciting times!

Peter Bradbury's rather thrilling re-telling of the Paston family's changing fortunes continues on page 6. East Norfolk-ers – far more interesting than Eastenders!

I am still very interested in receiving anything you feel might be of interest to our readership.

*Susan Keeler*

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**Apologies:** The article 'Brewers and Brewing in Dereham', page 4 of the December newsletter, was wrongly attributed. Full acknowledgements are as follows: The information was taken from a document written by members of Dereham WEA and the University of Cambridge Board of Extra-Mural Studies led by Chris Barringer in 1989, and given to the Dereham Archive in 1998. The original authors were: Joan Adams, Chris Barringer, Ben Norton, Teddy O'Donnell, Brian and Ruth Warwick-Smith, with help and additional material from Colin and Anne Chambers, Joy Lodey, Sharon Lake and Beryl Flatt. The text was prepared for this article by Steffi Spooner.

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## A Short Note from the New Chairwoman - Sue Walker White

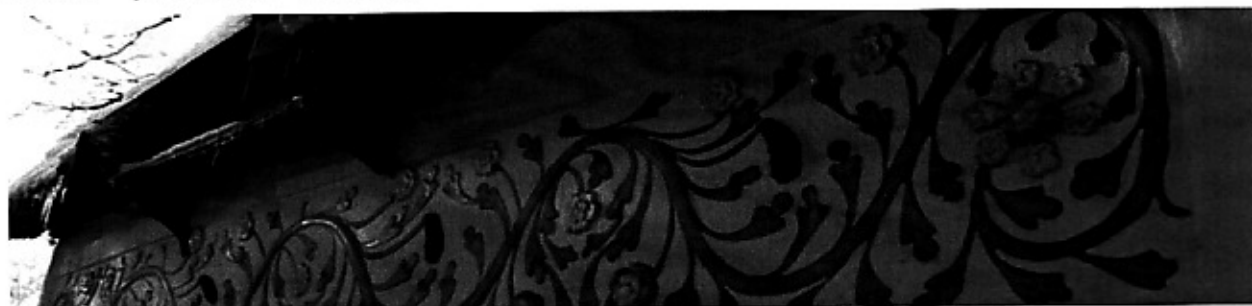
Thank you for giving me the role of Chairwoman for DAS. I will try to live up to the lead given by Ray Fraser over the past two years. I am very pleased that Ray is still on the committee as Vice Chairman. I would like to thank Margaret Davies, Sheila Jones and Tony Jones, three very long-standing and valued members of the committee, who have retired this year. They have all spent countless hours working on behalf of the Dereham Antiquarian Society: we are all very grateful to them. Sheila is continuing to organise the outings through the summer for the Society.

We have been busy working on the new museum displays to commemorate the centenary of World War One in 1914. The exhibition looks at everyday life in Dereham in early 1914, and the outbreak of the war and its effect on the town. We are also looking at treasured items from the time, generously shared with us by Dereham families - photographs, postcards, letters, diaries and mementoes. The exhibition opens on 10<sup>th</sup> May. Highlights will include a special appearance of a working 1914 motorcycle; live music from the time; a wind-up gramophone with original 1914 records; and a stereo-viewer with 3D photo cards produced during WW1. For children there will be paper chain-making to decorate the cottage. On the opening day there will be something of interest for all the family. Alongside the WW1 exhibition there will also be a display of aerial photographs of Dereham from 1920 to 1937 from the 'Britain from Above' project. Come and join us from 10am on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May at Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum and experience the sights and sounds of Dereham in 1914.

Over the coming year the committee and volunteers have a lot of work in front of them with the re-ordering and digitization of the archive, but it will all be well worth the effort. The changes will make the collections far more accessible physically and easier to use for research by members and the wider community.

We are always in need of more volunteers to help with all aspects of our work. At the moment we are looking for a new treasurer and new membership secretary as Pat Skitrall and Dorothy Sneesby, respectively, are standing down. We are very grateful to Pat and Dorothy for all their help, they have done a wonderful job. If you feel you would like to volunteer - in any capacity - please do get in touch.

*Sue Walker White*



## Notes from the AGM

Not well attended, sadly! We were able to thank 3 retiring committee members: Tony and Sheila Jones and Margaret Davies have stepped down, as has Pat Skittrall as Treasurer and Ray Fraser as Chair. Thanks are given to all for their enormous amounts of work for DAS.

In his report Ray said we have survived on 61 years of voluntary commitment: excellent, but we now need more members and museum volunteers. We have speakers for each month (but August) to attract new people. High costs have ruled out coach outings. Ray has worked closely with the Town Council, which is giving us £900 for museum 2014 running costs.

Sue White gave a museum update: the reception is now spacious and welcoming. The Home Front is the focus of this year's display. Archive work has been boosted by new computers; we have a scanner to scan documents so that the originals may stay with the owners. Negotiations with the Town Council for relocating the Archive are progressing. We need more money for computers for display purposes, and to physically move.

Pat Skittrall presented the Accounts, now run as a single book, with one bank account. Pat thanked Dorothy Sneesby and Sheila Jones for collecting money. 2014 subscriptions will stay at £10 (£17 for couples), £1 members' entry for talks, £3 for non-members. Please return your renewal slips!

Rev Boston took the Chair to vote in the new committee: Sue White - Chair; Treasurer - vacant; Stef Spooner - Secretary; Bob Davies & Ray Fraser - Vice Chairs; Pat Skittrall, Rosemary Fraser, Peter Bradbury, Susan Keeler, Alison Philips - committee members; Dorothy Sneesby - Membership Secretary [this is now a vacancy - see Note from New Chairwoman]. Auditor will continue to be Jim Stebbings, and there were no motions for changes.

## Notes from the 1<sup>st</sup> April Committee Meeting

With all the effort being made to fit out the Museum in readiness for opening on 10<sup>th</sup> May, there have been more Committee meetings. There was a good response to the request in local press for letters, documents and diaries from the World War I. Sue White has been busy collecting the information and then organising it for display. Alison Philips, our new committee member, has been helping Sue to create new displays and deciding which items from the archive are going to help 'set the scene' for the 1914 display. The exhibition will make very interesting viewing.

We have been given £200 by the Round Table in Dereham towards the costs of the i-Pads we would like to put in the Museum to enable people to access more-detailed information. This money was most gratefully received. It was agreed that we would put an appeal in the paper for subscriptions to buy at least one i-Pad in time for the opening day if we possibly could.

There is a milestone in the Museum which came somewhere from Dereham town. It points to Norwich and Swaffham. Does anyone know its original location? There is a possibility that it could be returned to its rightful position - but we don't know where that is! Can anyone help?

The Committee apologises for the delay in the publication of the members' booklet and newsletter. It has been difficult this year to confirm all the speakers for the booklet, which has previously been issued with the newsletter - so this has also been delayed. As you see, these problems are now overcome! Soon we should have a nice, modern 'corporate image' which will be used on future publicity material. The Committee agreed it would be good to ensure the public realised that DAS runs the Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum, and the new publicity material will reflect this connection.

Sue White has created a QR code for the website, enabling those with Smart phones to scan it and magically be linked to the site. It is hoped this will encourage younger people to find out more about us. It will appear on our publicity material. It looks like a square, misshapen barcode.

Museum volunteers are getting ready to run the Museum this year, and should you wish to offer some time to help, please contact Rosemary Fraser (01362 694654).

Even more help! If you have a contact for a local magazine, like Hill and Vale at Elsing/Lyng, would you please let me have it - an email if possible. We want to circulate information about the talks through local magazines.

*Steffi Spooner*

*Taken from our website:***NORFOLK MILITIA**

The Militia Bill was passed at an early stage of the Seven Years War, and a part-time reserve force was duly raised in each county.

The French appeared to be making vigorous preparations for invasion and by the summer of 1757 the situation seemed desperate. Lord Townshend's Militia Bill, in which he was warmly supported by Pitt, then Secretary of State, gave English civilians an opportunity to defend their own shores.

Each Lord Lieutenant was to command the Militia of his county and recruiting was the responsibility of him and his deputy lieutenants. Each county was to provide a given quota of men according to its population. The men were chosen by ballot in each parish and had to serve for 3 years or, they could provide substitutes or compound for a monetary payment, and there were various exemptions.

The Norfolk Militia was formed into two Battalions, the Eastern and Western, commanded by two Members of Parliament for the county, Sir A Wodehouse and Lord Townshend, with Lord Orford as Colonel in Chief.

The men exercised once a fortnight for three years. In the book 'The Norfolk Assembly', Ketton-Crèmer of Felbrigg Hall quotes Lady Townshend as saying 'My Lord is at Dereham with his Militia playing soldiers'. He used the Park at Raynham to review his Militia, and it is believed there is a painting of this event.

Many years later in 1850 the Reverend Armstrong was made vicar of the considerable parish of Dereham. In his diary he mentions that the Dereham Volunteers held their first outdoor display in the Vicarage grounds in May. Families were invited and four tents which had been used in the Crimea in 1854/5 were erected for the benefit of the ladies. Two bands played at intervals and there were military movements, bugling, running, kneeling and firing.

In June 1859 a public meeting was held in the Corn Hall for the formation of a Dereham Rifle Volunteer Corps. The Reverend Armstrong made a short speech urging people to join. About thirty men did, the eldest an elderly fat banker of 70 years, and the youngest a seventeen year old. They were kitted out in a grey uniform. The Corps met regularly to drill and exercise.

The following June, the Queen reviewed no less than 30,000 Volunteer Rifles in Hyde Park, London. This was to give a warning that an invasion would meet with strong resistance.

The Dereham contingent continued to work hard and helped to put on a Subscription Concert in November 1860. It was recorded that the hall was full and the Dereham Rifles' fife and drum band was a great attraction. In September they attended a review of 2,000 volunteers at Holkham Hall, hosted by Lord Leicester, who dined the whole force and 500 private guests too.

About this time competition was starting between the Corps of Dereham and Wymondham and in April 1862 a Rifle Match was staged at Swanton, which Dereham lost. As the day was windy it was said it was chancy shooting anyway! There was a Grand Entertainment given to the volunteers at Letton Hall, where a vast crowd assembled. 150 volunteers sat down to a dinner in a tent and speeches were given. Social events were held to raise money for needy volunteers.

It was a red letter day when the Dereham Volunteers marched with the Reverend Armstrong to the railway station to form a Guard of Honour for the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the Queen of Denmark who were en route to Costessey Hall.

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## Meeting the Ancestors



Do you have any information on 'The Crown Laundry' in Dereham?

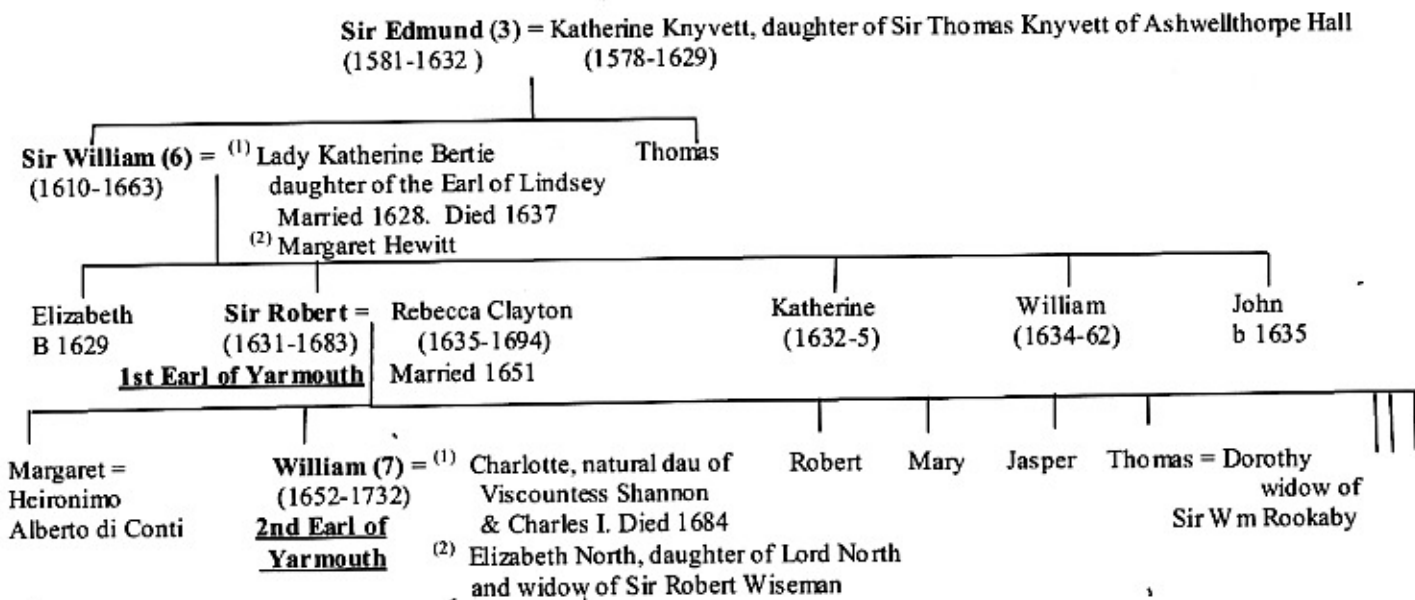
One of our members is researching the firm and would welcome any information, such as its location, the occasion of the photograph, and, of course, the identities of anyone in this photo.

Thank you!

*If you have a 'mystery' photo you would like to be included in future newsletters, please let us know and we can arrange to have it scanned and printed.*

## THE RISE AND THE FALL OF THE PASTON FAMILY

Peter Bradbury



The numbers in brackets ( ) cross refer to the text

### Part 4: The Civil War, Restoration of the Monarchy, Royal Favours

King Charles I had been on the throne for seven years when Sir Edmund (3) died. The prosperity of the family continued to grow along with their prestige in Norfolk, in what has been called the Golden Decade. At the age of 22, the eldest son Sir William (6) became head of the family. William had, in 1629 at the age of nineteen, married Katherine Bertie, the lovely daughter of the 1st Earl of Lindsey of Grimsthorpe Castle in Lincolnshire, and they made their home at Oxnead. They were a very happy and loving couple. William was a graduate of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge where he was a very popular student. He read widely in several languages and when he left was an extremely cultured young man. His wife Katherine was also very cultured and they both loved art, fine buildings, and all the good things in life. Oxnead Hall became renowned for its works of art, the extent and elaboration of its gardens, and the great hospitality offered to guests. After nine years of happiness, and the birth of three sons and two daughters, Katherine sadly died in childbirth. She was buried in the little church at Oxnead where a beautiful monument was created by their friend Nicholas Stone (Royal Sculptor to Charles I and James I). The most striking feature is a bust in white marble on a pedestal, against a background of black, which is unmistakably a portrait of her! In the year of her death her grieving husband was obliged to serve as High Sheriff of Norfolk, but as soon as he was free he sought to ease the pain of his grief and embarked on a long period of foreign travel. During his travels in Europe, which included Florence and Rome, he collected a great many works of art to further enhance the treasures of Oxnead. Few of the young Englishmen who went abroad in the 17th century ever journeyed further than Europe, as travel in Turkish lands was dangerous, uncomfortable and expensive. This did not deter William who took a ship from the Italian port of Leghorn (Livorno) to Alexandria, and, after paying the taxes on Christians entering Egypt and the Holy Land, reached Jerusalem. At Felbrigg Hall near Cromer there is a portrait of Sir William with a scene painted in the background of an oriental scene showing an Egyptian being devoured by a crocodile: could this have been an incidence from William's travels? Sir William returned to Oxnead with his latest treasures and, having overcome his grief, resumed his open-handed and luxurious hospitality.

By this time the Golden Decade was over, and storm clouds were already gathering on the horizon when King Charles decided to try and strengthen his support in the Eastern counties by creating several new Baronets, and so in 1641 Sir William became a Baronet.

About this time he married his second wife, Margaret Hewitt, daughter of Sir Thomas Hewitt of Pishiobury in Hertfordshire; there were no further children from this marriage. William was surrounded by Puritan neighbours whose authority from Parliament far outweighed the Paston influence in local political affairs; this forced William to appear to favour the Parliamentary cause. He was given a commission in the local Militia and ordered to muster his troops; he tried to avoid his duty by absconding to London for long periods of time. On the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 he served on several committees that were raising funds for arms and recruiting men to serve in the Militia, and even donated money to the cause. Finally in 1643, after failing to attend the meeting at which the decision was made to form the Eastern Association, he was stripped of his command. In anticipation of being severely punished or even imprisoned he slipped across to Holland, and joined the group of Royalist sympathisers there.

Parliament were well aware of the Royalists assembled in Rotterdam and on the 14th of June 1643 the House of Commons made an order that Sir William Paston and eleven other gentlemen were required to return to England or have their estates and properties sequestered (commandeered) for the service of the Commonwealth. They chose to ignore the summons, so all the rents of Paston farms and the income from his manors were impounded and his wife was forced to give up £1,100 of magnificent plate.

William had no choice other than to return and try to reclaim his estates. This he did in 1644, and, on paying a very heavy fine, regained his estates, but lost the entire income of the previous year. There is a List of Delinquents held in the House of Commons archives which shows that an amount of £1,376 8s 4d was paid by Sir William Paston Bart: this was at least three times as much as any other of the Norfolk delinquents. The Paston fortunes never seemed to recover from that loss of income and the formidable fine.

King Charles I was executed on the 30 January 1649 and his sons Princes Charles and James Stuart joined their mother's 'court in exile' in Holland. One year later Sir William's eldest son Robert left Oxnead to join the 'Court in Exile' and became a friend of Charles Stuart, not returning to England until just before the Restoration.

At Oxnead the family led a very quiet life, Sir William turning once more to art and literature for his consolation. He never seemed able to manage his debts, and made no attempt to limit the outgoings demanded by his lifestyle. In 1659 he sold Caister Castle together with its lordships and manors in liquidation of debts amounting to £6,500 which he had borrowed over a period of time from a Yarmouth businessman named William Crowe. After all the troubles suffered by his ancestors to win Caister, it was now lost forever! During the years Charles Stuart was in exile, William was constantly supplying him with money by borrowing, and by mortgaging his manors, further increasing his debts!

Sir William's eldest son Robert had returned to England sometime before Charles Stuart was invited back to claim his throne, and when Charles II did return in 1660, Robert was one of the Royalists who rode to meet him. He was knighted by Charles II at Canterbury, on the road to London.

Sir William Paston Bart died in 1663 aged 53, and was buried in Oxnead Church next to his first wife (there is no monument), and Sir Robert Paston, the eldest son, inherited what was left of his father's estates – and all his debts! His wife was Rebecca, daughter of Sir Jasper Clayton, a forceful and ambitious woman whose influence on his career was to prove not very beneficial. Educated at Westminster under Busby and at Trinity College Cambridge, he inherited to a considerable degree his father's learned and antiquarian tastes. He became obsessed with alchemy (turning base metals into gold) as a means to restore family fortunes and wasted large amounts of money in carrying out expensive experiments. Having a wife and family of six sons and four daughters to provide for, the income from his reduced inheritance was not enough to cover their upbringing and insuring their future. There was one likely avenue to riches in Robert's eyes and that was the favour of the King. At the end of 1664, Sir Robert was able to recommend himself to the King in a striking and unexpected manner. He was sitting in Parliament as MP for Castle Rising when he and two other Norfolk Tories were approached by the King's advisor (Lord Clarendon) and asked if one of them would propose that a sum of two and a half million pounds be provided as finance for a war against the Dutch. Robert's two friends declined because of the enormous amount involved, but Sir Robert, seeing his chance to win favour in the eyes of the King, accepted! The next day there was a debate and it was agreed that a very large sum must be voted and the motion was put to the House. The House was in deep silence pondering the motion, when Sir Robert stood up and proposed that two and a half million pounds be provided for His Majesty. He was received in absolute silence, as they all sat in amazement at his proposal, until a gentleman moved that a smaller sum be given, whereupon Robert's two friends quickly seconded the original motion and it was 'voted in'. When next Robert visited the court the King took him aside and thanked him saying that "he would never forget his kindness" and gave an assurance of his friendship and assistance in any matters arising in the future.

Robert stayed on at court and managed, with the King's support, to gain a warrant worth £2,000 a year for a term of twenty one years. As a further mark of favour the King hinted at a possible elevation to the Peerage in the future.

Following the court became a way of life of life for Robert in his never-ending quest for money, and he was constantly being urged on by his ambitious wife Rebecca. In 1671 the King and Queen visited Oxnead and were wined and dined in the banqueting room – especially built for the occasion: on entering the hall, the King told Robert that "he was now safe in the house of his friend".

Two years after the royal visit, King Charles married one of his natural daughters to Robert's eldest son, William, who was aged twenty one, and at the same time bestowed the titles of Viscount Yarmouth and Baron Paston on Robert. These signs of royal favour, although well intended, did in fact mean more expenditure for the Pastons and more endless searching for sources of money.

In 1679 Charles II, in recognition of Paston's services to the royal cause in Norfolk, at last kept his promise, and made Robert the Earl of Yarmouth, while his eldest son William became Viscount Paston. Although to the people of Norfolk their Lord Yarmouth appeared to be a wealthy and powerful nobleman, underneath the facade, his debts were such that his wife Lady Rebecca sold her collection of some 117 rings, lockets, and stones which raised £259, followed later by over 50 household effects which raised £1,569.

Lord Yarmouth wrote in a letter at that time; "my debts are more than my personal estate". It is no doubt that the strain of his ever-mounting debts and political disputes, together with ill health, caused him to retire to London, where on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1683 he died aged only 52 years. His body was buried with great state at Oxnead, and in his funeral sermon the family chaplain Dr Hildeyard said "He died a good Christian as he had lived like a Gentleman, his own wish and often repeated expression": there was no monument erected.



Two years later, his friend King Charles II died and James II came to the throne, and Robert's eldest son William (7) had inherited his father's estate, title and debts.



Katherine Bertie



Sir Robert Paston, 1st Earl of Yarmouth



Charlotte, wife of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Yarmouth

# EVENTS AND LECTURES LISTING

Please call Sheila Jones (01362 820580) if you have a query with regard to visits  
Please call Peter Bradbury (01362 690096) if you have a query with regard to the talks

Talks are held at Trinity Methodist Church Hall, Theatre Street, Dereham,  
at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated.

Admission for each evening talk is £1 for members and £3 for non-members.

Visitors are always welcome, with the fee payable on the door.

**Saturday May 10th**

## **WW1 Centenary Open Day, Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum**

**10am to 4pm – free entry for all the family**

Experience the sights and sounds of Dereham in 1914

See a working 100-year-old motorcycle.

Live music and wind-up gramophone with original WW1 records.

View life at the time in 3D on a stereo viewer & photo-cards of the time.

Children can help decorate the cottage with paper chains.

The exhibition includes stories of Dereham families shared with the  
Museum to mark the Centenary of the Great War.

If you would like to share your family's WW1 story please come along!

**Wednesday May 14th**

## **The Paston-Bedingfeld Family of Oxburgh Hall**

Illustrated talk by Peter Bradbury

**Wednesday May 21st**

## **Visit to Oxburgh Hall**

Car Sharing – Meet at Cherry Tree Car Park 10.30am

**Wednesday June 11th**

## **Kate Frye - Dereham's Suffragette Activist**

Illustrated talk by Elizabeth Crawford

In 1911 Kate Frye was sent by the New Constitutional Society for Women's Suffrage to drum up interest in the cause of 'Votes for Women' among the people of Dereham and the surrounding area. During the 3 years prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 Kate spent weeks at a time in Dereham, organising meetings and talking to people about women's position in society. In her diary, Kate recorded in considerable detail daily events, making pertinent comments on the townspeople and their reaction to the idea of women's suffrage. Through her writing we can revisit Dereham and its people and discover what life was like 100 years ago – or at least how it seemed – to one observant visitor.

**Wednesday June 18th**  
**Visit to Mannington Hall Rose Gardens**  
Car sharing - Meet at Cherry Tree Car Park 10.30am

**Wednesday July 9th**  
**A Striking Village**  
Illustrated talk by Anne May

The story of the Norfolk village of Burston's School Strike 1914-1939, the longest strike in British history. Anne May's family were closely involved with the strike.

**Tuesday July 15th**  
**Visit to Silverstone Farm, N Elmham/Gateley**  
£13 to include guided tour, tea & cakes  
Car Sharing - Meet at Cherry Tree Car Park 2pm

**Wednesday September 10th**  
**Old Dereham**  
Illustrated talk by Gordon Olley

**Wednesday September 17th**  
**Visit to True's Yard Museum, Kings Lynn**  
Car Sharing - Meet at Cherry Tree Car Park 10.00am

**Wednesday October 8th**  
**DAS Dinner or Luncheon**  
TBA

**Wednesday November 12th**  
**Hobbies of Dereham**  
Speaker: Adrian Vaughan

The story of the world-famous firm.

**Wednesday December 10th**  
**Anti-Clockwise Around the Island**  
Speaker: Geoff Worton

**Wednesday January 14th 2015**  
**Norfolk in the First World War**  
Speaker: Neil Storey

**Wednesday February 11th 2015**  
**Dereham Antiquarian Society A.G.M.**

**Wednesday March 11th 2015**  
**The Remarkable Mr Fenn of Hill House Dereham**  
Illustrated talk by Lucy Care

# BISHOP BONNER'S COTTAGE MUSEUM DEREHAM

*51 years of the Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum*  
**1963 - 2014**

## OPENING TIMES AND ADMISSION FEES

May 10<sup>th</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Tuesday & Thursday: 2pm to 4.30pm

Friday: 10am to 1.30pm

(Refreshments available until 12pm in the Church House)

Saturday: 1pm to 4pm

### Entrance Fees 2014

Adult £1      Child (age 5 - 16) £0.50

Group visits welcome by appointment - Tel: 01362 853453

