

# Summer Newsletter 2017

## Volume 13-2



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

### Ray Fraser: Obituary

We were sorry to hear that Ray Fraser, our past Chairman, sadly passed away on 1 June. As Chairman, Ray achieved a great deal in progressing our aims and developing Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum. A smiling Ray is pictured in costume while on duty at the museum in 2014. Ray and his wife Rosemary both put in a tremendous amount of time and hard work on many areas of the Society's administration and were the lynch pins that kept it all together for many years. Rosemary has told us that Ray had requested that anyone who wished to mark his passing would do so by way of a donation to the British Heart Foundation or the Marie Curie Cancer trust. The Society sends its deepest condolences to Rosemary and her family at this very sad time.



### Plans for the archive - Natalie Small

*Natalie has recently moved into the area and has taken a major part in organising the archive, and all the other work that goes with it.*

Our society is very fortunate to be custodian to a fascinating and varied collection of exhibits relating to Dereham's history. It is crucial that this collection is held in a suitable environment which not only helps in the preservation of these exhibits, but also keeps them readily available for Bishop Bonner's Museum displays and accessible to people wishing to conduct research.

Since the last Newsletter, an enthusiastic group of volunteers has been working hard sorting and cataloguing the sizeable contents of the archive; this is progressing well, though there is still much to do. A stocktake is in progress, including the copies of the Dereham and Fakenham Times for which we are the custodian.

We will of course keep you updated with progress and next steps.

### From the archive - Robena Brown

*with grateful thanks to Margaret Bohn for information*



During the ongoing process of rationalising and moving the DAS archive, there have been some interesting discoveries for those of us who are new to the collection. The WWI death plaque (often known as a death 'penny') was sent to next-of-kin to honour the fallen. This one pictured is a cherished item in the archive displayed on a purpose-built wooden stand. It was originally sent to Mrs Gladys Barnes of Dereham to honour her husband, WWI soldier William Barnes, and over the course of time has found its way into our museum archive.

William joined the British army in 1916 at the Norfolk Regimental recruiting office in Church Street (now Case & Dewing estate agency) enlisting as Private 25785 in the 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment. In 1915, William had married Gladys Reeve, also of East

Dereham, and it was the following year that he went off to train and subsequently to France to join the European Theatre of War in 1916 leaving behind his wife and only child, James.



The Norfolk Regiment Recruiting Office in WWI - 21 July 1915, taken on the occasion of the funeral of Charles Sherriff

In 'History of the Norfolk Regiment', F Lorraine Petre details the 8<sup>th</sup> Norfolk Battalion's activities in France:

*'At the end of January 1917, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion Norfolk went forward from the training grounds to the front line near Miraumont....following the ordinary routine of trench warfare till February 15<sup>th</sup>, when they moved into the front trenches for the attack on the 17<sup>th</sup>, down the slope of the valley on the left bank of the Ancre below Miraumont. There had been five weeks of intense frost on this front which at last broke on the very morning of the attack when the hard surface of the ground turned first into one big slide, and then became a sea of mud, in which rifles and machine guns got clogged, and through which the infantry pressed a slow, floundering, stamina-testing way.'*

The attack began in the early hours of 17 February in deep mud and darkness, under a tremendously increased barrage from the German lines, since the enemy had discovered the planned offensive. Unfortunately, this operation failed to meet many of its objectives and saw the loss of many officers and other ranks. William Barnes, aged 31 years, was killed in action during that offensive on 17 February 1917. Like many of his fellows, his body was never recovered, but his name is recorded for posterity on the Thiepval Memorial in France along with over 72,000 other missing soldiers who also died in the battles on the Somme during 1915-18. To give an idea of the scale of the losses, there are five more lost soldiers named William Barnes listed.

An announcement in the Dereham and Fakenham Times of 14 April 1917 reads: *'The friends of Private W Barnes of the Norfolk Regiment have received official information that he has been killed in action. He leaves a widow and one child.'* William was awarded the British

and Victory medals which would have been sent to his widow Gladys after the war as well as the death plaque, scroll and any monies due. She would also have received a small pension for herself and her son, however, these 'ten-bob widows' as they were called, found it extremely difficult to manage on such a small income.

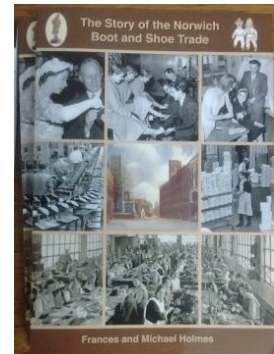
Tragedy continued to follow Gladys Barnes and we find the following reported in the Dereham and Fakenham Times on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1917: '*Gladys Barnes – Early in the year her husband was reported killed in action in France and after a few days illness her only child James Harry died on Saturday last, aged two.*' Gladys went on to remarry twice more and died in 1968.

Though much information is available online now, it is the items in the DAS archive, namely the soldier's death plaque and the valuable resource of the archived Dereham and Fakenham Times newspapers which give us the human part of William Barnes' tragic story.

## Notes from two of our recent meetings

### 10 May - The Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Trade

Our May meeting featured Frances and Michael Holmes, telling the Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Trade, aided by numerous slides and a couple of films. Taking turns to address us, they explained that this issue was one of a number they had undertaken as Norwich Heritage Projects, resulting also in their book of the same title. To their surprise, they had found this was a bigger challenge than their work on pubs and breweries, partly because of the importance of this trade to Norwich, and partly because there was very limited archive material, so research had necessarily been based on talking to people involved.



The origins of the trade could be traced to the end of the eighteenth century. Norwich was then a major commercial centre, based on the textile trade, but as the industrial revolution started, economic activity moved north, as Norwich had no coal. Three factors played a part:

- availability of former textile workers with transferable skills
- the need for a similar organisational structure, based on cottage working
- the need for a wholesale outlet

A workshop was opened in Norwich by James Smith in 1792 (ultimately becoming the still trading Start-rite). The nineteenth century saw the introduction and spread of automation, for example in 1856 a sewing machine which worked at 3000 stitches a minute. By 1900, Norwich employed some 6000 people in the trade, third only to Northampton and Leicester. The Norwich speciality was high quality footwear for women and children. By the twentieth century, there were 5 major factories in the city, but there was a setback after the First World War, as countries to which Norwich had exported developed their own industries. However, Norwich was lucky: first, women's fashions changed, with skirts rising from ankle level, so footwear became prominent, and Norwich specialised in high quality women's shoes; and second, in 1922, Princess Mary got married - in Norwich shoes. A film about their manufacture was shown, showing the shoes being made by the turn shoe process, where the shoe was made inside and out and turned only near the end of the process: this process is little used now, but remains the method for ballet shoes.

In 1931, Norwich had 10,700 workers, 17.5% of the total workforce, though many were on short time. In the Second World War, many of the factories were damaged or destroyed by

bombing, but the industry survived, and in the 1950s still employed 9000 workers. Frances and Michael showed us how the factories were organised, as well as the non working activities, such as Christmas Parties and works outings.

The decline started from the 1960s: total sales of shoes were still rising, but most of this came from imports, and UK manufacture was falling. Labour costs in the UK were rising, and these made up a large part of the cost of the shoes. Fashions were also changing, and younger people were often looking for shoes they could afford, in the latest fashion, and were less concerned with quality and durability. There were also major changes in distribution, with an emergent British Shoe Corporation building up a near monopoly of supply, then forcing the price down.



Through the 1970s and 1980s these trends continued, with factories steadily closing throughout this period, so virtually none were left by the end of the century. One small resurgence has been Start-rite, which in 2003 re opened a business in high quality shoes, which they design and market, but, significantly, which are made abroad.

The presentation ended with a review of buildings which remain, including the Last Wine Bar, named in reference to its previous function; we were also recommended to see the excellent exhibition at the Bridewell Museum.

More information and photographs can also be found about this on the EDP website, until the item is removed: <http://www.edp24.co.uk/news/reunion-sparks-memories-of-norwich-s-proud-shoe-trade-1-5018465>.

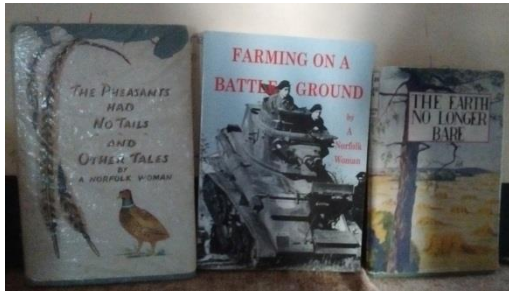
## 14 June - An Evening with Lucilla Reeve

In a very real sense, Lucilla Reeve came to life for our June meeting. You would have to have been there to have experienced the immediacy of her talk; the best I can do is to pick out some of the events that she described so well to us. None of this reflects her idiosyncrasies - an ability to see ghosts, to dowse for water, for example.

Lucilla came from Tottington, an area reputed to have been cursed in the 1550s to be fated to fade completely out of existence - a prediction which was pretty well true by the 1950s. Her mother Polly was a parlour maid on the Merton Estate; her father's identity was not known to her, though many thought it might have been the Sixth Baron Walsingham. She moved with her mother, who had by then married, to London, where she paid her own way through college. Returned to Tottington at the outbreak of the Great War, she lived with her widowed grandmother. At the end of the war, she was instrumental in pressing for a proper stone memorial, and helped raise money for it in the village. Photographs were shown of the memorial, unusual both in having the name 'Tottington' removed during World War 2 (to ensure any invading Germans were not helped) and subsequently replaced, and in recording also the names of those who came back as well as those who did not.



Lucilla became a land agent, supervising and supporting the tenants of the Estate. Clearly a woman unafraid of expressing and acting on her strong views, she got around on a bike, a motor bike and a small red sports car. She was a member of the National Socialist Party, standing (unsuccessfully) for election to Parliament for Swaffham, though was very clear that she did not in any way support the Nazis. In 1938, she took on Bagmore Farm, as she had been unable to find a tenant: she had workers to help during the week, but had sole responsibility evenings and weekends. At this time, she restarted Rogation Services, not in church, but walking the land. This led to reports appearing, first in the local press, then nationally - but these were less interested in how she had brought derelict land into productive use, and more in how she was working land cursed in the 1550s. Sightseers became a nuisance, eager to trace the events of that cursing.



She wrote poems and short stories, and had 3 books published about her life; she also travelled to London to be on the radio. Then came World War 2, and airfields started to spring up around her: by 1940 she was surrounded by the military, and was herself arrested because of her National Socialist membership, but the then Baron Walsingham interceded.

Then on 13 June 1941, she was told that the army wanted to use the area as a training ground, and would be taking over much of her land. Exactly a year later, it was announced that the area was to be extended, and 800 people from Tottington and the nearby villages were required to move - on the promise of being able to return when the war ended. They were given little time - a week's notice which later grew to a month - to find somewhere else to live and to move her possessions, all without any help. Inevitably, there were incidents both leading up to the move and after it had happened, with incursions onto her remaining land and crops. Lucilla had nowhere to go, but Baron Walsingham again assisted, this time enabling her to live in former duck plucking sheds - not very good accommodation, but she made the best of it.

When the war ended, she took the opportunity on Armistice Day to revisit Tottington, to find it desolate, with many of the houses damaged or destroyed. She - and the others - waited for news of being able to go back home, until in 1948 it was announced that there was, after all, to be no return; compensation was given, but at 1938 prices, which was insufficient to enable her to make her planned move to the Broads. She found herself, for the first time, unable to think straight and in the summer of 1950 was in hospital, diagnosed with 'melancholy and depression', and said to experience delusions and hallucinations. She was nevertheless sent home, but in October was found having hanged herself. She was buried in her beloved Tottington, initially outside the churchyard because of her suicide. Later, somewhat ironically it seems to me, given the history of conflict she had had with them, the army knocked down the fence and when it was rebuilt, her grave was inside the boundary.

At the end of her account, recognised by the audience of 30+ members and friends as having felt like hearing Lucilla talking directly about her life, Georgette Vale answered questions and read some of Lucilla's poems.

## 2017 Display

We were pleased that the Dereham Times came to interview Sue Walker White and Mrs Margery Cambridge about the Hobbies' display and material, also providing publicity for our 'free entry' day on 27 May.

# Museum collection celebrates a special part of Dereham's heritage

The widow of a renowned model maker has donated a special collection to a museum as part of an exhibition that focuses on a historic Dereham business.

From 1895 until 1960 Hobbies of Dereham was supplying kits, tools, components and guidebooks to budding model makers such as Alan Cambridge who became known for his recreations of the iconic Hobbies treadle operated fretsaw.

Now Mr Cambridge's wife, Margery, is donating a collection of her husband's fretsaw models to Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum in Dereham for an exhibition which will highlight the town's industrial past.

Sue Walker White, curator of the museum, said: "Hobbies was such a major part of the town for so long and this exhibition is part of a start of trying to get people's memories recorded for a museum archive on the impact the business had, there's probably people out there with little gems such as pictures of one of their parents working on things for Hobbies."

"The company even took part in the war effort in the first and second world wars, helping to make huge parts of airplanes."

She continued: "Until Margery's donation we didn't have any examples of the Hobbies treadle

STEVE SHAW  
steve.shaw@archant.co.uk

machine to show anyone but now we have and we hope to keep one on permanent display. This collection from Margery and Alan has given us a piece of Dereham's iconic history that we can put on show."

Mr Cambridge took up his model making hobby after retiring from his job as an engineer, a profession that Mrs Cambridge said made him something of a perfectionist.

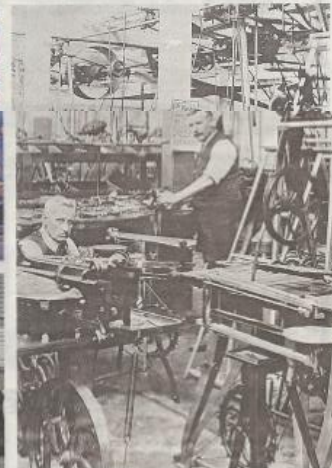
She said: "Everything you see in the collection, Alan made from scratch. 'Fretsaw' was his hobby, he did them all in the workshop and he'd be in there hours. He was previously an engineer and so everything had to be spot on. If it wasn't, he wouldn't use it. Often he wouldn't even have plans. He would just sit in his workshop and build them."

She added: "I think he would be very honoured for them to be on display. I'm sad he's not here to see it but I'm very proud of him, very proud."

The collection goes on show this weekend as part of an exhibition that focuses on Hobbies and its place in Dereham. To celebrate there will be a special free open day on Saturday, May 27, from 1.30pm until 4pm.



The new Hobbies exhibition at the Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum in Dereham. Pictured are Sue Walker White and (R) Margery Cambridge. Picture: IAN BURT



Hobbies of Dereham made plans, kits and tools for making wooden models and toys. Stockroom scene in early 1960s. Above: Fretsaw machines under construction in the Hobbies factory during 1917. Pictures: ARCHANT



Hobbies of Dereham at an exhibition in 1947.

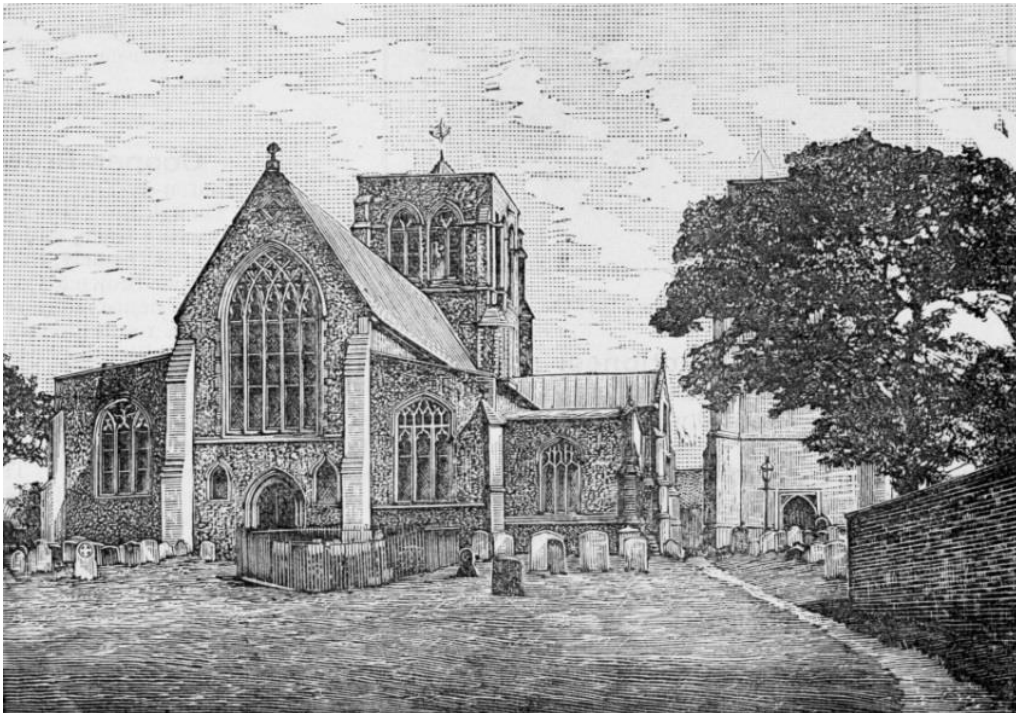
Picture: ARCHANT LIBRARY

## Museum opening arrangements

The Museum is open this year for three days each week - 1.30pm to 4pm on every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday until 30 September. Our thanks go to all those who are keeping the Museum open. If we could get more volunteers, we could look at opening more often next year: if you would like to volunteer (or know of someone else who will), please contact our Volunteer Co-ordinator Ken Hawkins via [ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk) or 07561 813243.

## Norfolk 1890

Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society has recently published *Norfolk 1890 - the story of 365 Norfolk Businesses*. The majority are Norwich based, but there is coverage also of Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Downham Market, Swaffham, Fakenham, North Walsham, Aylsham and, of course, East Dereham. The latter has 10 pages, and includes interesting views of locations around the town. In each of the next few Newsletters, we are, by kind permission of NIAS, reproducing one of these views, and a current photograph of the same location. We would be interested to hear of any comments or reminiscences that these call forth. In the edition, we show 'Parish Church - from a photograph'. NIAS has also kindly allowed us to sell the book (150 pages) at a reduced price of £15. Copies will be available at each of our meetings, but it may be possible to arrange supply at other times - please contact Ken Hawkins at [ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk) or 07561 813243.



## Museum Accreditation - Megan Dennis

Megan Dennis is the Curator at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse.

Megan (our mentor) offers us this account of the accreditation process we are currently going through. The information is from the SHARE Museums East website (<http://sharemuseumseast.org.uk>).

### SHARE Museums East a network of know how



Welcome to SHARE Museums East – supporting Museum Development in the East of England.

Museums Accreditation is the UK standard for museums and galleries endorsed by Arts Council England, Museums Galleries Scotland, Museums Archives and Libraries Wales (a division of the Welsh Government) and Northern Ireland Museums Council. It defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging development. It is a baseline quality standard that helps guide museums to be the best they can be, for current and future users.

Accreditation is widely credited with playing an important role in raising standards in museums since its introduction. As an agreed standard with a badged award, Accreditation is understood within the sector, but also by relevant funding bodies and governing bodies as the mark of a responsible museum. Accreditation has an emphasis on effective forward planning to build relevance and resilience.

Bishop Bonners' Cottage Museum submitted our accreditation application in late 2016; we are now awaiting the results of this application later in the year.

## First World War

The EDP and Dereham Times recently used one of our photographs in a feature about the Town Council's new grants for organisations planning events in 2018 commemorating the War. Our own desire to hear from anyone who has photographs, letters, postcards or mementoes relating to the war was also mentioned. If you have such items, please contact Sue Walker White: [sue@suewhite.demon.co.uk](mailto:sue@suewhite.demon.co.uk) or 01362 695652.



Dereham during the First World War. WWI military funeral procession in Church Street, Dereham. The coffin is draped with the Union Jack and the soldier's cap and sword are placed upon it.

### NEWS

## Groups encouraged to mark 100 years since end of First World War

It is a picture which captures a moment in history.

A First World War military funeral procession goes through Church Street, in Dereham.

A coffin is draped with the Union Jack and the soldier's cap and sword are placed upon it.

Now, as we approach the 100 year anniversary of the end of the First World War, groups in Dereham are being encouraged to organise events to commemorate the historic moment.

Dereham Town Council has launched a new grant scheme to support organisations planning events next year. Grants are open to not-for-profit organisations. The council will fund up to one-third of the costs of any commemorative activity up to a maximum of £1,000. Dereham mayor Hilary Bushell said: "The First World War was such a monumental event in the

Life of the country and the town, involving unimaginable courage, immense endurance and untold sacrifice.

"The town council would like to encourage and support organisations with initiatives that would commemorate the sacrifice made by all those who fought in the First World War."

"We would like to see a wide range of activities during 2018 and through to the commemoration of the end of the war in 2019, involving as many people as possible."

"It is hoped that the grant will help support initiatives that will enable another generation to appreciate and value what a previous generation endured so that we can live in peace." Information is available from the town council offices on Quebec Street or

on the town council website. The town council will hold a briefing session on June 29 at 6pm at the Council Offices, Assembly Rooms, Quebec Street, Dereham where people can discuss potential applications. Meanwhile, volunteers who run Dereham's museum in Bishop Bonner's Cottage are appealing for help in a First World War project.

They aim to capture the history of Dereham from people's memories and information passed down within families.

They want to hear from anyone who has photographs, letters, postcards or mementoes.

**Dereham Antiquarian Society is linking with the town council and other societies to share information about the First World War and life in Dereham during the conflict. Call 01362 695652 or email [bcmuseum@outlook.com](mailto:bcmuseum@outlook.com)**



## Are you a member?

If you are not a member of Dereham Antiquarian Society, you may want to consider joining. Our membership fees are unchanged from last year - see below. If you have any questions about this, please contact Julian Walker on 01362 695652 or email him at [4jcwalker@gmail.com](mailto:4jcwalker@gmail.com).

### Membership Fees 2017:

Individual - £10

Couple at the same address - £17

Family at the same address - £23

You can join on line at <http://www.derehamhistory.com/membership-form.html> (using Paypal), or send a cheque payable to 'Dereham Antiquarian Society' to:

Julian Walker, 4 Hornes Cottages, Off Dereham Road, Scarning, Dereham NR19 2BQ

## Programme of events 2017-18

Our current programme is on our website, and has also been printed into our 'Talks Programme' cards which everyone renewing should by now have received. For those of you who have already had our programme card, **please note that the 2018 AGM date has changed to Thursday 15 February 2018**. In case you haven't got the card, here is the list.

*No talk in August.*

*Wednesday 13 September 2017  
National Trust – Blickling Beauties  
Speaker: Kate Barnes*

*Wednesday 11 October 2017  
Dereham Antiquarian Society Dinner  
see below for booking details*

*Wednesday 8 November 2017  
How does your Garden Grow? The garden  
collections at Gressenhall Farm and  
Workhouse  
Speaker: Bridget Yates*

*Wednesday 13 December 2017  
Dereham Christmas History Quiz*

*Wednesday 10 January 2018  
A Norfolk Family Life in 1900s  
Speaker: Christine Humphries*

**Thursday 15 February 2018**  
*Dereham Antiquarian Society AGM*

Admission to talks is £1 for members of Dereham Antiquarian Society and £3 for non-members. Visitors are always welcome, with the fee payable on the door, refreshments included.

A provisional booking has been made for the Annual Dinner on 11 October, at The Bull at Litcham. It will be a three-course meal with a set price of £20 for the menu below.

**Starters:** *Vegetable soup, Prawn cocktail, Fan of melon, Chick liver pate or Garlic mushrooms*

**Main course:** *Roast beef or pork, Cod, chips and peas, Chicken breasts with white wine sauce, Steak and kidney pie or Vegetarian nut roast*

**Desserts:** *to be selected on the night*

**Tea or Coffee**

Firm choices will be needed a few days before the night, but we need to have an idea of numbers as soon as possible. If you plan to come, please contact Ken Hawkins and let him know (1) how many places you would like and (2) how definite is your booking - certain, likely or possible.

## And finally

We plan to produce a Newsletter every quarter, in January, April, July and October. The press date for the next issue is 1 October: if you have material for this issue, please send it to Ken Hawkins at [ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk). 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](http://www.derehamhistory.com) is updated regularly so please have a look now and again. We also post updates on local history and national heritage news on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/DerehamHistory> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/BonnersMuseum>, both of which have several hundred followers.

If you did not receive this Newsletter via email, but would be willing to do so, please let Sue Walker White have your email address ([sue@suewhite.demon.co.uk](mailto:sue@suewhite.demon.co.uk)): we won't pass it on to anyone else without your permission, and we won't use it for anything but Dereham Antiquarian Society business.