

Autumn Newsletter 2017

Volume 13-3



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

Our Annual Dinner - last chance to book

Our Dinner this year is on Wednesday 11 October at The Bull at Litcham (1 Church St, Litcham, King's Lynn PE32 2NS; 01328 701340). 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

If you haven't yet booked, please contact Ken Hawkins as soon as possible and let him know how many places you would like, and your menu choices. **If you have booked**, it is now time to make your menu choices. **Please note** that this constitutes a firm booking and a commitment to pay The Bull; if you later find you cannot after all go, please let us know as soon as possible and we will cancel the booking if we can.

Spreading the word

On 9 September, Dereham Antiquarian Society was one of the many local groups who took a stall at the Dereham Fringe Festival, organised by the Friends of Dereham Memorial Hall. Sue Walker White and Natalie Small looked after the display and spoke to the many



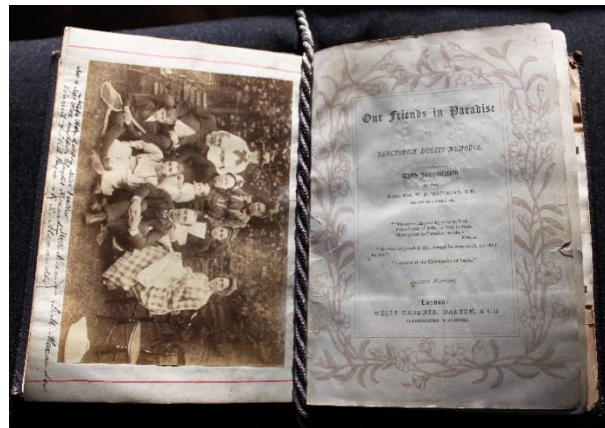
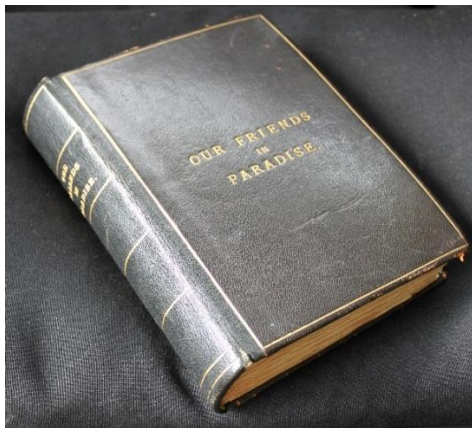
members of the public who stopped by to talk. Our display included objects relating to the Palace Royal Theatre such as some original billsheets advertising productions from the 1820s and 1830s. Also on display were some photographs from the 1930s of local theatre groups. The event was a fabulous opportunity to talk with the public about our work (several took away our membership leaflet, one person joining there and then!), but it was also wonderful to network with other not-for-profit groups. We look forward to being involved again next year.

News from the archive - Natalie Small and Robena Brown

In recent months, a management plan has been devised for the archive and our wonderful volunteers have worked hard to achieve many great outcomes. Most objects have been sorted, lightly cleaned and packed into acid free archive boxes. A stocktake has been completed of all objects in the museum and is now in progress in the archive. On the plus side, this has brought a number of items back into the light, and some of these have been brought along to our evening talks for everyone to see. Expert advice has also been sought for the care of many objects, and the team has been very grateful for the support given by Megan Dennis, Bridget Yates and Rev Jonathan Boston.

Our society also manages a rare collection of *Dereham and Fakenham Times* (known affectionately in committee meetings as the DAFT collection), with the earliest volume dating back to 1880. Due to their age, many of these volumes are very fragile so Robena Brown has arranged for an expert from the Norfolk Records Office to advise us on the best practice management of this collection. We look forward to being able to share the fascinating contents of these volumes with everyone once conservation work has been done.

From the archive: *Our Friends in Paradise* - Robena Brown

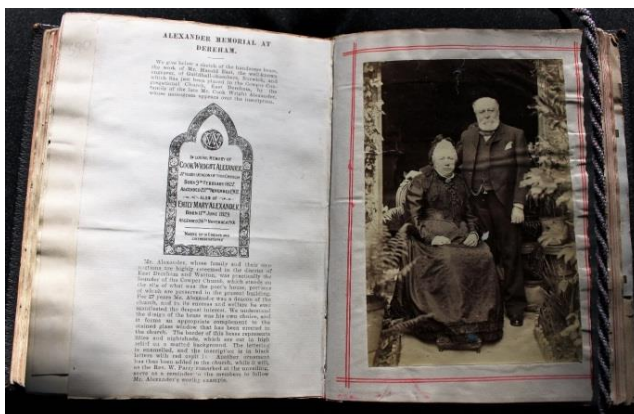


The re-evaluation of the DAS archive currently underway brings to light many fascinating items and none more so than a beautiful nineteenth century leather-bound book entitled *Our Friends in Paradise* or *Sanctorum Dulcis Memoria*. It would seem that few of these books have survived and probably even fewer in the excellent condition of the one in our care.

Many of us may keep a 'birthday book' to remember special dates of family and friends. This book, however, records the celebration of the Christian ascendancy to paradise on the date of death, each day of which has a religious sentiment to accompany it. Packed with information about the lives and deaths of many local people it also contains many accompanying photographs, newspaper cuttings and some letters, all mainly from the latter half of the nineteenth century but within there are also notes and records relating to pre-Victorian days. It was purchased from F W Count, bookseller, stationer and printer of 41 Market Place, East Dereham. Most of our readers will recognise these premises as being later those of W F Chambers and Son of the same trade for most of the latter half of the twentieth century.

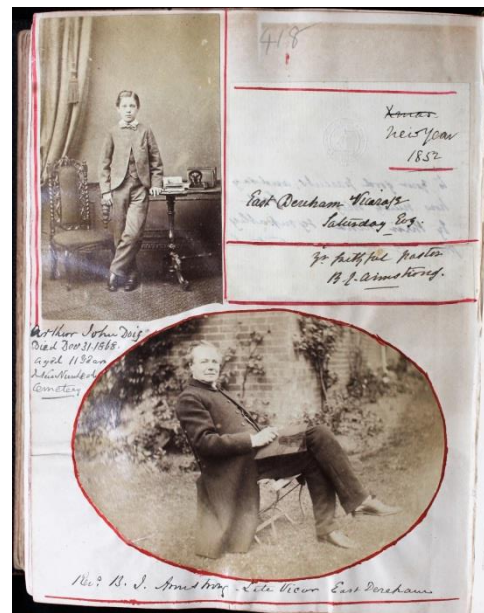
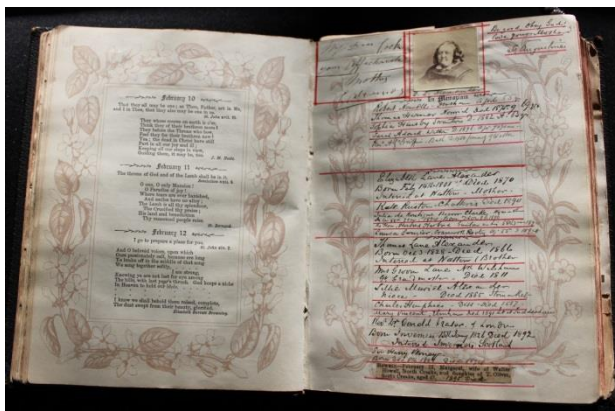


The book appears to have been compiled by a devout Christian female member of the Alexander/Wright family. There are many references to Alexander Cook Wright who was, according to the report pasted with the photograph below, 'practically the founder of the



Cowper Church' in Dereham market place. A fabulous snapshot of mostly East Dereham and area ladies and gentlemen, particularly of Congregationalists, it is a local *Who's Who* or, perhaps more accurately, who was who, during the Victorian period with the later entries in the very early twentieth century. The compiler also noted deaths of national and international importance such as the passing of members of the royal family and also Lord Alfred Tennyson, poet laureate, on 6 October 1892.

Though most birth and death dates of our nineteenth century relatives are freely available online and elsewhere now it is the photographs which accompany the dates and notes which rather ironically bring this book 'to life'. This wonderful book contains treasures for the local, social and family historian and warrants much more research than has yet been possible since its rediscovery in the archive and the pressing copy date for this newsletter so more revelations may follow in due course. Of particular interest are two photographs which accompany the recording of the death of the Rev Benjamin J Armstrong's on 20 December 1890. One is a typically posed seated young minister, however, the later one (below) shows him towards the end of his life as an older gentleman sitting in a garden looking serenely content. On the same page above the photograph is the vicar's own handwritten note, 'Yr faithful pastor B. J. Armstrong'. The importance and historical value of this book to Dereham and beyond justifies its place in the museum archive and it will be preserved appropriately and for posterity.



Notes from two of our recent meetings

10 July - The pre-history of Dereham

Our last talk before the August break was given by Claire Bradshaw, Community Archaeologist for Norfolk County Council's Historic Environment Service, based at Gressenhall. To start with, Claire introduced the Service, noting that it oversaw the Historic Environment Records of some 65000 entries, all available online. The most common entries were about archaeological sites, then historic buildings and finds. Many finds are brought in by members of the public (often metal detectorists, with whom county archaeologists have a good relationship), and these have added hugely to local knowledge. She also illustrated the work of her team in mapping from aerial photographs and reviewing all planning applications for their possible archaeological impact. As a Community Archaeologist, her role includes giving talks to groups like us and schools, and giving practical tuition - all aimed at raising the profile of archaeology in Norfolk.



Claire commenced her review of the pre-history of Dereham with a slide showing areas of interest and archaeological activity in the town - these are the red areas in the photograph. She then followed a chronological sequence, commencing with the Palaeolithic period - 950,000 to 12,000 years bp (before the present). In the earliest, Lower Palaeolithic, period (500,000 to 150,000 bp), people were nomadic (hunter gatherers), and Britain was still



connected to Europe. It was from this period that the footprints were found on the beach at Happisburgh (some 50 footprints from 5 individuals - see http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/featured_project_happisburgh/happisburgh_footprints.aspx, where, at that time, the Thames flowed into the sea. Research in that area then discovered tools and animal bones. From Dereham, 3 flint

flakes had been found, and Claire thought it significant that these seemed to be associated with locations near water - on Rush Meadow and in the Tud Valley. In the Middle Palaeolithic period, there were many cold periods, with people retreating from the area, leaving few finds; there were none recorded in Dereham.

In the Upper Palaeolithic (40,000 to 12,000 bp), Norfolk finds were almost exclusively in river valleys or on the coast. Then around 11,600 bp, there were distinctive flints found from an area in the north west of Dereham: they had long blades with a bruised edge, showing they had been used for chopping.

In the Neolithic period (6000 to 4351 bp) farming started, and people were staying in one place for extended periods (though there was some evidence that occupation may have been seasonal rather than continuous). There are pottery finds came from this time, though they are very fragile and crumble easily. There were 27 records from Dereham from this period, many of them individual axe heads. From Neatherd Moor, some 1500 waste flakes had been found, with some also from the Rush Meadow area, suggesting substantial activity and population. Claire showed illustrations of some of the flints, many of which were highly polished. She noted that a local flint expert could make a useable head in 20 minutes, but polishing would have taken 100 hours, so was thought to indicate status, especially as some showed no sign of having been used.

Moving on to the Bronze Age, Claire showed a photograph of two axe heads which are part of our own collection and had been brought to the talk for viewing. [insert Sue's photo here.] Bronze axe heads were not as effective as flint, being more quickly blunted, but had the advantage that they could be melted down and recast. All bronze finds in Dereham are from late in the period, which Claire believed was a result of this process. Stepping over the border, she illustrated a small anvil from Scarning - "a spectacular find" - which was thought to have been used for gold work. The difficulties of identifying local sites were, Claire believed, related to the soil types: in most of Norfolk, crop marks showed the location of burial sites, but not in Dereham, where either the sandy soil did not generate a mark, or natural features masked the archaeological ones.

From the Iron Age (2800 to 1908 bp) coins had been found, some from the Iceni, but others were Roman, predating the first emperors and so indicating trading taking place. A brooch was also illustrated, a decorative rather than purely functional find. Claire ended with the Roman period (42 to 409 CE*), where finds included a lot of pottery, but also a major hoard of over 1000 coins, most of them silver, which were presumed to have been buried for safety in a time of unrest. A final illustration was of a Dolphin brooch.

Following well deserved applause, Claire answered questions on what counts as pre-history, the process of reporting finds, stone and wood circles, the source of tin and copper for bronze (Cornwall and Wales respectively) and population levels in Norfolk. She left us with leaflets from the Service - further information is available at <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/>.

14 September - The Blickling Belles: The daughters of Blickling Hall

Our new season of talks got off to a great start when Kate Barnes (National Trust Room Steward) gave us a talk about the *Blickling Belles*, packed with detail about many people, but focusing on three women in particular - Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk; Henrietta (Harriet), Lady Belmore; and Amelia Stewart, Viscountess Castlereagh. The common feature to all was that Blickling Hall was their home for at least parts of their lives - as Kate noted, the blood line was continuous, though the surnames changed many times, until December 1940 when the Hall passed to the National Trust.



Kate's story started with the departure of Anne Boleyn (The Maid of Norfolk) from Blickling and its purchase by Henry Hobart, First Baronet; he had rented the house and purchased the estate, before buying the house and remodelling it. He died in 1626, and the story moved on to another Henry Hobart, Fourth Baronet, who had 7 children. Henry got himself killed in an illegal duel and the estate went into Chancery as his son was not old enough to hold it. Within 3 years, his wife had also died, leaving his children orphans. The eldest was Henrietta, then 16 or 17, and she had been well educated and had a small dowry. She married Charles Howard, who was disappointed to find that the arrangements in Chancery meant he could access only the interest from the dowry, not the capital. He turned out to be a drunkard and a gambler, and the relationship did not go well. Henrietta contrived, through the shocking means of selling her hair, to get her and Charles to Hanover to join the court of the future King George I there. In due course, King George I took the throne, and his son (the future King George II) became the Prince of Wales. Following a falling out, the Prince of Wales was obliged to set up a separate court at Hampton Court from his father's court at St James' Palace. Charles became a member of the King's court, while Henrietta remained with the Prince of Wales household where she became mistress to the Prince of Wales; so they lived separately, and Henrietta refused Charles's requests for her to join him. This continued after the Prince became King George II, when in his frustration, Charles broke into Hampton Court in an effort to use a legal warrant he had obtained which allowed him to take Henrietta as his property, but in error he entered the Queen's. The King arranged a deal to pay off Charles, but ultimately, relationships deteriorated further and Queen Caroline eventually gave permission for Henrietta to leave the court.

John Hobart, the Second Earl of Buckinghamshire (grandson of the Fourth Baronet) married Mary Anne Dury, and they had three daughters, the eldest Harriet. Through a politically arranged marriage, she became the wife of Amar Cowery Lory, who was later Lord Belmore, a widower living in Castle Coole, Ireland. She was 17, he 42; she was a sociable teenager, Castle Coole was well away from the rest of society: it was not long before he wanted a separation, though not before their daughter had been born. Harriet left and spent 5 years in Paris, but subsequently met, and became pregnant by, William Kerr, Viscount Ancrum, later Marquis of Lothian. Her husband was not at first willing to arrange a divorce (she was not legally able to start this; only he could), so Harriet travelled widely, her pregnancy visible to all. This eventually prompted Lord Belmore to act, though the divorce was not finalised until after the birth of her son, and only then did she remarry. Of Sophia, the youngest of the three daughters, there is little information.

Lady Amelia ("Baby") Hobart was the daughter of John Hobart and his second wife Caroline. In her younger days, Amelia was seen as very popular but indiscreet. She met, and married, Viscount Castlereagh, who was her opposite, being seen as more reserved. But the

marriage worked well: he became Marquis of Londonderry, and she rose in social and political circles (introducing The Quadrille to London), so that she acted as a political hostess during the 1814 Congress of Vienna. She subsequently became patroness of 'The Almack', where she and her all woman committee ran the first club in London for both men and women.

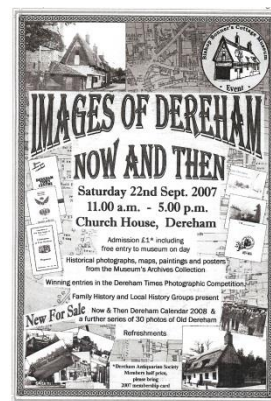
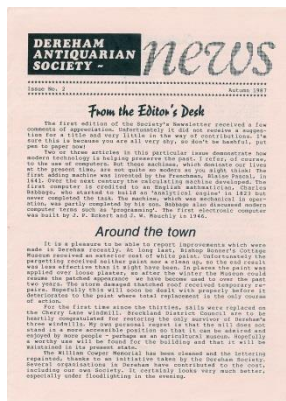
As a footnote, Kate suggested we look out next year for some 'interesting' plans for the Library at Bickling - much in need of attention.

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A dip into past Newsletters can be quite revealing. In Autumn 1987, we were on Issue No 2! This ran to 4 A5 sides, with the front story the painting of Bishop Bonner's Cottage.

It is a pleasure to be able to report improvements which were made in Dereham recently. In the last, Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum received an exterior coat of white paint. Unfortunately the pargetting received neither paint nor a clean up, so the end result was less effective than it might have been. In places the paint was applied over loose plaster, so after the winter the Museum could resume the patched appearance we have become used to over the past two years. The storm damaged thatched roof received temporary repairs. Hopefully this will soon be dealt with properly before it deteriorates to the point where total replacement is the only course of action.

And the cost of the Society Dinner was £8, coffee extra!

In Autumn 1997, the Newsletter was still 4 sides, with news of new displays: *Second addition was the new display cabinet in the Mildred Cook room, and what an asset this has proved to be. This season it accommodated the Hobbies Centenary exhibition and has attracted several comments. [The first addition was a new burglar alarm.]*

Finally, in 2007, the Newsletter had grown to 24 sides, so I have picked out a poster for the *Images of Dereham Now and Then* day.

Museum Accreditation

We continue to await the outcome of our accreditation application in late 2016.

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. 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 or 07561 813243.

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 this edition, we show the Market Place - but where is the tower of the Cowper Memorial Evangelical Congregational Church?



Museum opening arrangements

The Museum closed for the year on 30 September. Our thanks go to all those who gave their time to keep the Museum open. We have invited them all to tea and cakes, both to say a heartfelt 'thank you' and to get feedback from those on the 'front line' as to what we might do to make visits to the museum even better - and of course ways to improve their own experience.

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 or 07561 813243. The Museum will open again in May 2018.

Bishop Bonner's Cottage China Plates still available - £2.50



Stocks of these individually boxed plates are reducing quickly but if you would like to buy one, perhaps as a gift or as a memento of such a well-known and loved landmark in our town, please contact any committee member or, better still, come along to one of our evening presentations at the Trinity Methodist hall and buy one there - see below for our future programme.

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.

Wednesday 11 October 2017
Dereham Antiquarian Society Dinner
see the first Newsletter item 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.

Membership matters 1 - Renewal

If you have been a member but have not yet renewed your membership for 2017, we regret that **this will be your last Newsletter**. To renew your membership, please see below. 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.

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

Membership matters 2 - New members

If you are not a member of Dereham Antiquarian Society, you may want to consider joining. We are pleased to offer reduced rates to new members joining from now until March 2018 - contact Julian Walker for details.

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 January: if you have material for this issue, please send it to Ken Hawkins at 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 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): 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.