

# Autumn Newsletter 2018

## Volume 14-3



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

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**If you want to come to our Annual Dinner, you need to book [now](#) - [see page 8](#)**

### Letter from the Chair *Peter Wade-Martins*

#### What's in a name?

Our society has been known as the Dereham Antiquarian Society since it was founded by Canon Noel Boston and Dr Eric Puddy in 1953. Then, the concept of an "Antiquarian" seemed suitable for its age, but times change and words (and their meanings) evolve. Your committee feels that we are now due for a somewhat different image. There has been lively discussion at our committee meetings and a number of suggestions have been made. 'The Dereham Heritage Trust' is our favourite at the moment, while 'Dereham Heritage' and 'Dereham History' have also been suggested. Clearly any alteration would need to be approved at the next AGM in February, so there is plenty of time for members to make their comments known. All suggestions would be most welcome. So, please send your comments to our editor, Ken Hawkins.

#### Does Dereham need a Heritage Centre?

Dereham is rightly proud of our row of cottages in St Withburga Lane, dating from the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. They are the oldest surviving domestic buildings in the town and were converted into a museum in the 1960s. But their very nature with small rooms, steep winding staircases and narrow passageways make them less than ideal as a place to explain the whole history of the town or to meet relevant educational needs and would be better used furnished as period rooms demonstrating living conditions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Without a dedicated teaching space, disabled access and toilets, other use of the cottages is inevitably limited. The people of Dereham deserve a centre to provide meaningful displays on the history of the town from its origins as a medieval market town up to the arrival of the railways and to the growth of the many industries which followed. Most of these industries have now gone and Dereham is expanding again. We need an opportunity to explain Dereham's rich history to an ever widening audience. So, we are investigating the possibility of creating a purpose-made Heritage Centre and over the next few months will be exploring ideas with Dereham Town Council. The location we are currently looking at would be immediately adjacent to the cottages looking towards Church Street: by doing so, both the cottages and Heritage Centre would each be seen in context.

#### Membership issues

The Committee has been discussing what members get from the Society, but really these discussions cannot go any further without the views and ideas of you - our members - who are, after all, the whole centre of the Society. We would like to know if you feel involved in the Society, and enjoy the monthly meetings? Are there other things you would like us to do? Do you feel able to participate as much as you would like in the running of the museum and the archive? In short, what would you like to see happening in your Society? What would encourage you to keep up your membership, and indeed is there anything that would cause you to relinquish it? It would be wonderful to attract more people into the Society, and to know members valued belonging to it!

Inevitably, the cost of running meetings has risen, and the time has come when we also have to consider raising the membership subscription rate which has been £10 for a single

membership for many years. There are several ideas to consider. The fee could be raised by a modest amount, with members still paying for attending lectures, though perhaps at a higher rate. Or the fee could be put up to something like £25 for a single member, but without any further charge to attend the talks. Concessions for couples and families would still apply as now. What would suit you best? We currently charge £3 for a non-member to come to a talk - is that the right amount to charge?

Any changes to the fees and charges will have to be agreed at the next Annual General Meeting in February 2019, but it would help us considerably to have a sense of your feelings before then. Again, please send your comments to our editor, Ken Hawkins.

### **Committee changes**

Our Treasurer Julian Walker, has had to stand down as time commitments were making it difficult to perform his duties as treasurer. We are very pleased that Ken Hawkins has agreed to take over the important role of treasurer, in addition to continuing to be our Vice Chairman, Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary. We are now looking for someone to take on Ken's role of Volunteer Co-ordinator. Would someone like to volunteer, please?

We are also delighted to welcome back Stef Spooner to our team of volunteers. Stef was a previous committee member and is currently taking on limited tasks due to family commitments, but has already contributed a large amount and we hope she will be taking on a full committee role in the near future.

We will keep you updated, but in the meantime we hope to see you all at our Annual Dinner in the George Hotel on **10 October**.

### **Town Walk** *Ken Hawkins*

On 29 July, Dereham Walkers are Welcome (DWaW) arranged a town walk, visiting many of the historic sites in the town. Our chairman, Peter Wade-Martins, kindly met the group at Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum to give a brief history and allow people to have a quick look inside. By way of thanks, DWaW gave a small donation to the Society. It is hoped that we and DWaW may work together in future to explore further options, whether more guided walks or a leaflet to enable people to visit the sites for themselves.



*Peter addressing the group*



It was good to be able to open the doors to members at the Archive Centre on Thursday 20 September. Items on display included our earliest Dereham & Fakenham Times (1880), a selection of 19th century work bonnets, the original Antiquarian Society Minute Book dating back to 1952 and netting made by William Cowper together with original impressions of Cowper's seals. It was particularly good to welcome our President, Jonathan Boston, and ex-Chairman, Tony Jones. Jonathan was able to add some vital information to the very early years of the Minute Book.

Work at the Archive Centre continues; Stef Spooner and her team are currently in the midst of the annual museum stocktake which is necessary so that any conservation needs can be met and vulnerable items moved back to the Archive Centre before the cold and damp weather sets in. This will be a challenge given our archive space constraints but we're optimists and sure the task will be met. Robena

Brown is organising custom made boxes for the older and more vulnerable editions of the Dereham and Fakenham Times which will further aid their conservation. In the meantime, we continue to work our way through the collection identifying any items with uncertain provenance - which can be a lengthy (but satisfying) process and will be aided after November by society member, Trevor Ogden, volunteering to join the archive team. Our Archive Manager, Natalie Small, has been on an extended trip to Australia, but hopefully by the time you read this she will be back with us and organising several projects which she will be updating you on in the next newsletter. Overall, it has been a very good Summer in our new Archive Centre, which we have found very convenient being situated in the town centre and only two minutes from the Museum; the only thing we are currently lacking is more volunteers, so if you have detective abilities that could be put to good use, or think you could give a couple of hours a month to 'one-off' projects, please do contact us: whatever your skill, we're sure we could use it.

## Notes from our recent meetings *Ken Hawkins*

### 11 July Dereham: Looking back into the past - Gordon Olley

While many were watching England being pushed out of the World Cup, Gordon Olley was entertaining us with a selection of his photographs from Dereham in the past - with many helpful current comparison shots to help place memories along. His 90 minute 'show' covered churches, schools, businesses, services (especially the Fire Service, shown fighting one large fire), entertainment (cinemas and theatre), retailers (butchers and bakers), cars and more. Particular reference was made to Hobbies, Jentique, Metamec and Crane Fruehauf. And for those of us interested in the railway, there was a short video along the Dereham to Wendling line. A most satisfying evening.



## 12 September: Beer and brewing - Norfolk's Rural Pubs Dr Megan Dennis

At the first meeting after the summer break, Dr Megan Dennis gave us a fascinating talk on beer, brewing and pubs in Norfolk. She noted that Norfolk was good for growing barley, and so at one time had had a large number of maltings and hundreds of breweries. Over time, the smaller breweries were absorbed by a small number of ever larger breweries, leading to their total loss in the 1980s, though with a few microbreweries now emerging once more.

The pub was the heart of the community, and Megan commenced by showing us a plaque by the artist John Moray-Smith which illustrated this - an interesting comparison with modern day pubs, showing only one woman (and she was serving), smoking and live music.

Megan showed us the artefacts and processes of malting the barley, noting the two maltings here in Dereham, one converted to residential housing, the other still standing unused (listed category 2\* but very difficult to develop). The barley was germinated on the floor of the maltings, so needed heat and water, and workers to keep it moving around and evenly treated. Maltings were therefore big employers of both men and women.

Moving on from the maltings, Megan took us on a tour of some of our local breweries, following their decline and takeover by larger companies such as Steward and Patteson, Bullards and the inevitable Watneys. Now some microbreweries are emerging, managing the same processes but with different equipment and much more automation.

The last destination for the beer was, of course, the pub, and we saw a list of the 46 pubs which at one time were open in Dereham. She showed us photographs of a selection of these, nearly all now closed. Similarly, community activity, like the pub outing, had fallen away, but here too there were some new initiatives, like *pub is the hub* and some community owned pubs.

At the end, Megan invited us to explore the range of items and photographs she had brought with her.

She also reminded us of the exhibition at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse until 28 October -

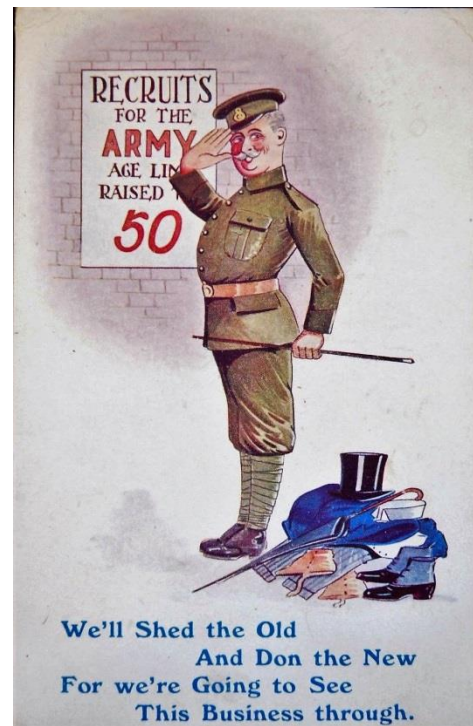
<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/gressenhall-farm-and-workhouse/whats-on/beer-and-brewing>.



## Dereham and Fakenham Times - 28 February 1914 *Robena Brown*

Another piece found by Beanie Brown during her work on the Dereham and Fakenham Times, complemented by the postcard image from 1917 - though the conscription age was never raised as high as 76!

The newspaper campaign to obtain recruits for the Army resulted in nearly three hundred letters being sent from Norfolk to the War Office. The order was given that each man was to be interviewed in order that a report might be made as to his suitability for His Majesty's service. Now one of the applicants for the booklet setting forth the advantages of a soldier's life gave the address of Beech House, Gressenhall, and the sergeant set out from Dereham to visit his man. He found that "Beech House" was the workhouse, and the likely recruit a hale old fellow of seventy-six years, who wore the Queen's uniform in 1855, and was at Cork on the termination of the Crimean war. The veteran was pleased to see the sergeant, and told him he wanted to see what the conditions of the service were like nowadays in order that he might advise some of his young friends who thought of joining the service. The sergeant was charmed, and said he did not mind the three miles walk, and apart from his duty it was a pleasure to meet an old comrade. Next time he would call to see a veteran and not a recruit.

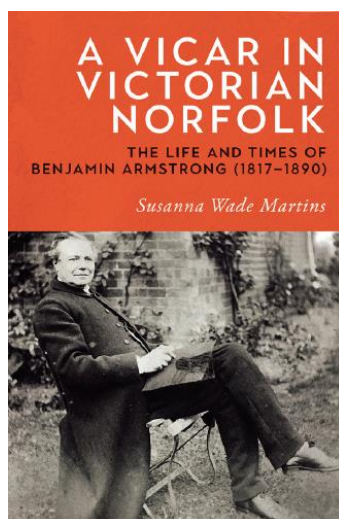


and 16 November 1918

**HOW DEREHAM RECEIVED THE NEWS.**

The town quickly put on an appearance of holiday making on Monday as soon as the news arrived that the armistice had been signed. Flags and bunting were seen flying from every shop and house in the principal thoroughfares. Bells were ringing; drums and instruments of all kinds were in use by the soldiers and wounded. Parades were made in the town, and most of the works were closed. At the noon hour Mr. C. Pearse spoke from the King's Arms balcony. Cheers were given for the King, General Foch, the Boys who've died, Mr. Lloyd George, and the future freedom of the good old country.

## Book review: *A Vicar in Victorian Norfolk*, by Dr Susanna Wade Martins The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2018 *Reviewed by Catherine Hawkins*



I have written this review not as an academic, but as someone who has very much enjoyed reading the extracts from Benjamin Armstrong's diaries compiled by his great grandson Christopher Armstrong (*Under the Parson's Nose*, Larks Press 2012) - and also the two earlier volumes printed in 1949 and 1963 edited by Armstrong's grandson, sadly no longer in print. There being no more diaries to read, I was very pleased to learn of the recent publication of a biography of Benjamin Armstrong, written by Susanna Wade Martins.

Susanna Wade Martins is an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of History at the University of East Anglia. Her previous publications are numerous, and include *The East Anglian Countryside: Changing Landscapes 1870 to 1950* with Tom Williamson (2008), *Coke of Norfolk, 1754-1842* (2009) and *The Conservation Movement in Norfolk - A History* (2015).

Benjamin Armstrong was vicar of Dereham (East Dereham then) for 38 years, from 1850 to 1888. He was a prodigious diarist and wrote eleven volumes recording his personal and family life during a time of great economic, social and ecclesiastical change. Armstrong was one of several clergyman diarists and the author sees such diaries as an important corrective to the earlier histories of the Victorian Church that were written from 'on high' by theologians, bishops and Ecclesiastical Commissions.

The reader is taken through Armstrong's early years - his attendance at school and university, choice of career, ordination, marriage and his first two incumbencies at Crowle in the Lincolnshire Fens and Little Stanmore-with-Whitchurch in Middlesex. Then follows Armstrong's arrival in Dereham in 1850, with descriptions of his family life and leisure pursuits over the ensuing years, and his work as vicar in the religious, social and public life of the town.

As I read the book, I discovered the importance of the second line in the title "The Life and Times of Benjamin Armstrong", for Armstrong's biography is combined with detailed information on many aspects of Victorian life at a time of rapid change. The author weaves her narrative seamlessly between developments at a national level, within the church and society, and how these were manifested both in Armstrong's own life and in the town of Dereham. The author sees Armstrong's diaries as of unique importance - the 'grass roots history' (p10) providing a fascinating window into the experience of a Victorian middle class family. The final chapter notes that Armstrong was a man of his times and that a biography is "more than simply the story of a life ... it is also a contribution to an understanding of the times in which that life is lived" (p271).

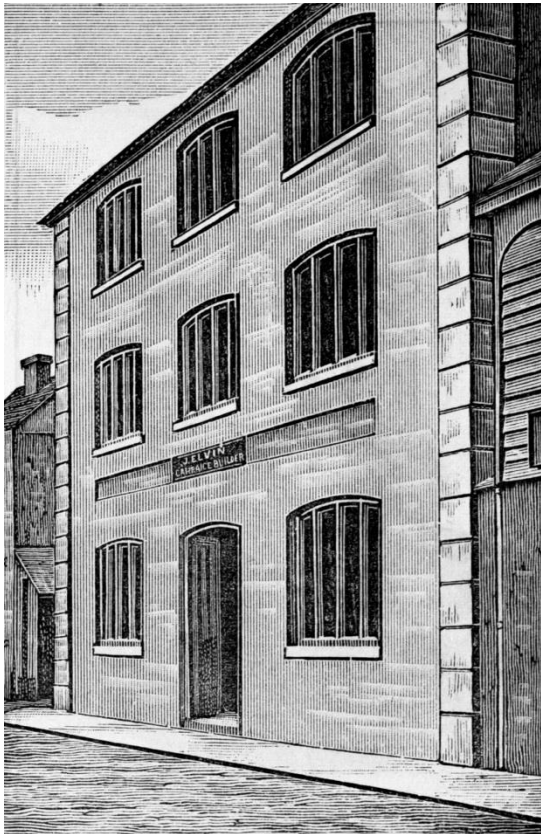
I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the history of Dereham in the mid to late 19th century, and to anyone who is interested in the reforms and developments taking place within the Victorian Church during that period. The book is clearly written with many illustrations including old maps of Dereham, and provides a thorough and enjoyable biography of Armstrong and sets the context of his diaries admirably. I almost wish I had read this book before reading the diaries - maybe it's time for a re-reading.

With this Newsletter, you will find an offer from the publisher to buy the book at the discount price of £18.75, plus £3.70 postage. We have a small supply which we are selling at meetings for £20: if you would like one, please let Ken Hawkins know and he will reserve a copy for you - or have a look and buy one at the next meeting (provided we have some left!).

## Norfolk 1890 *Ken Hawkins*

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. If you need an added incentive, it is now an award winner, having been gained the award for 2017 for Best Voluntary Society Publication from the Association for Industrial Archaeology. Copies will be available at each of our meetings, but it may be possible to arrange supply at other times - please contact Ken Hawkins.

In recent Newsletters, we have, by kind permission of NIAS, reproduced one of these views, with a current photograph of the same location. In this edition, our final extract concerns *W Elvin: Carriage and Harness Manufacturer* on Norwich Street - now Dereham Memorial Hall. (See also the notes on the Autumn 2008 Newsletter - page 9). We would be interested to hear of any comments or reminiscences it calls forth.



## Museum opening

The Museum has now closed at the end of the 2018 season. Your Committee is currently reviewing opening arrangements for next year, and the exhibitions to be displayed. We will give more information in the next Newsletter, but if you are interested in helping to staff the museum, please contact Ken Hawkins.

## Programme of events 2018-19

Here is our programme up to February 2019. Full details are also available on our website ([www.derehamhistory.com/talks.html](http://www.derehamhistory.com/talks.html)), which will also carry any necessary last minute changes. They are printed into our 'Talks Programme' cards - available at all of our meetings.

Wednesday 10 October 2018  
**Annual Dinner - see below**

Wednesday 14 November 2018  
**Elementary education in Victorian rural Norfolk**  
Speaker Dr Susanna Wade Martins

Wednesday 12 December 2018  
**Milestones and Waymarkers**  
Speaker Carol Haines

Wednesday 9 January 2019  
**Rethinking the Romans in Norfolk: 12 years of research at Caistor Roman Town**  
Speaker Dr Will Bowden

Wednesday 13 February 2019  
**Dereham Antiquarian Society AGM**  
Speaker Lizzie Scott, National Trust

Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are at Trinity Methodist Church, 31 Trinity Close, Dereham NR19 2EP (off Theatre Street), and start at 1930. 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 (donations welcome).

### **Annual dinner - last minute bookings invited urgently** Ken Hawkins

Our Annual Dinner this year is at The George Hotel in Dereham on Wednesday 10 October. The George has given us the menu below, and needs to know our choice of all courses well in advance, so **I need to know your choices by Monday 1 October at the latest**. The cost, payable directly to The George Hotel on the night, is £15 for 2 courses or £20 for 3 courses, plus extra if you want the cheese board for dessert (£4) or tea/coffee (£1.50). If you plan to attend, but haven't yet booked, please let me know as soon as possible. If you have already booked, please let me have your menu choices. If you have any allergies or food intolerances, please contact The George directly (01362 696801).

#### STARTERS

- 1 Crispy whitebait, lemon mayo
- 2 Grilled beetroot and goats cheese salad
- 3 The George Prawn Cocktail
- 4 Pork fritters, blue cheese sauce, red onion marmalade
- 5 Tomatoes, baby mozzarella, bruschetta

#### MAINS

- 1 Adnams beer battered haddock, hand cut chips, crushed mint peas
- 2 Mushroom, pea, blue cheese sauce, homemade tagliatelle
- 3 Seabass, crushed new potatoes, vine cherry tomatoes, sage pesto, Norfolk samphire
- 4 Slow cooked pork belly, dauphinoise, cider sauce, spinach
- 5 Steak & kidney steamed pudding, new potatoes, seasonal vegetables, jus

#### DESSERTS

- 1 Raspberry frangipane tart, roasted local plums, vanilla cream
- 2 Vanilla crème brûlée, shortbread
- 3 Homemade Profiteroles, chocolate mousse
- 4 Baked lemon cheesecake, blackberry cream
- 5 Apple & Blackberry crumble, homemade custard
- 6 Selection of ice-creams & sorbets
- 7 Norfolk cheese board (Selection of local cheeses, homemade chutney, celery, grapes, biscuits) **£4 extra**

TEA/COFFEE **£1.50 extra**

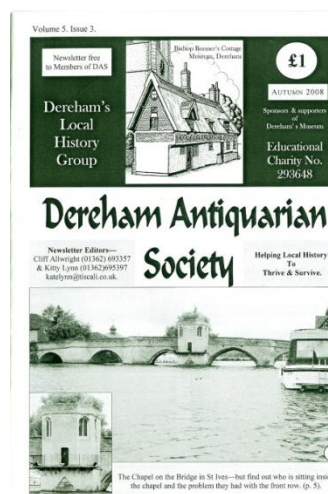
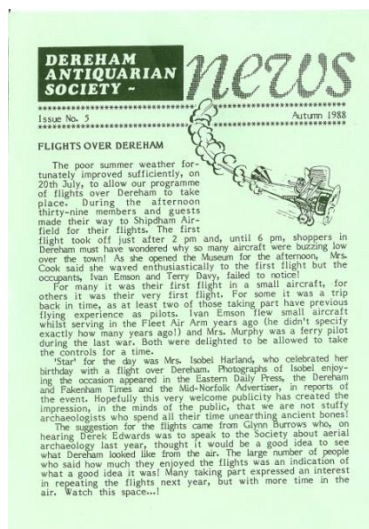


30

20  
years ago

10

no autumn issue in 1998



In 1988, the Newsletter reported on the Society's aeroplane flights over Dereham, taking off from Shipdham airfield. As if this wasn't enough in the way of 'different' events, there was also a report of plans for an Antiques Roadshow the following year. 20 years later, the reports were of visits to St Ives (Cambridgeshire, not Cornwall!) and Tittleshall church, plus a full report about Dereham Day in August 1925. Also of interest, given our Norfolk 1980 item (page 7), is an article about Dereham Memorial Hall, including photographs of its use as shops, the swimming pool and Picture Palace.

## Membership matters

Our membership year runs annually from the AGM in March, but we are pleased to offer reduced price membership (or late renewal) to March 2019 for any new member joining after 1 September.

These reduced rates are

- Individual - **£5** (usually £10)
- Couple at the same address - **£8.50** (usually £17)
- Family at the same address - **£11.50** (usually £23)

You can join at any of our meetings, or use our membership form from the website at [http://www.derehamhistory.com/uploads/1/6/2/3/16236968/membership\\_leaflet\\_2018.pdf](http://www.derehamhistory.com/uploads/1/6/2/3/16236968/membership_leaflet_2018.pdf), but return it to Ken Hawkins, 26 Hillfields, Dereham NR19 1UE, with your cheque payable to 'Dereham Antiquarian Society'.

## And finally

We plan to produce a Newsletter every quarter, in January, April, July and October. The press date for the next issue is **15 December**: if you have material for this issue, please send it in 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](http://www.derehamhistory.com) is updated regularly so please have a look now and again.

**Can you save us some money?** If you did not receive this Newsletter via email, but would be willing to do so, please let me have your email address: 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.