

AMSSEE

This stands for the Area Museum Service for South Eastern England - now you can see why we use the abbreviation! AMSSEE is an independent company limited by guarantee, with charitable status, and exists to help museums in south eastern England. There are some 600 provincial museums in that area ranging from the smallest village museum to the great university and city collections. AMSSEE is funded by members' subscriptions (particularly those of local authorities), by fees and charges, and by annual grant from central government via the Museums and Galleries Commission. One of the prime functions of AMSSEE is to act as a channel for this central government funding to provincial museums. Membership is open to all organisations which run museums or galleries, but eligibility for grant-aid is restricted to local authorities, universities and bodies with charitable status.

The Society was invited to join AMSSEE towards the end of last summer. At the same time we were invited to send delegates to a seminar in November, which consisted of talks about planning and putting on exhibitions, care of collections, labelling, etc. The decision as to join or not was left until after the seminar. Five members of the Committee attended the all-day seminar at the Norwich Castle Museum. They all found it very enjoyable and instructive and were so impressed that an application to join AMSSEE was recommended at the next Committee meeting. Our application was considered by the Executive Council of AMSSEE in December and notification of acceptance of our application was received in January.

AMSSEE offers all sorts of benefits to a small museum such as Bishop Bonner's Cottage. They can advise on conservation, design and display, storage methods, security, documentation, publicity, and a host of other things which have to be considered from time to time. Grants are also obtainable by full members (such as ourselves), and we hope to apply for a grant to publish a booklet based on Mr. Bayfield's recent lecture on William Hyde Wollaston.

OBITUARY

The Society lost one of its earliest and keenest members when Mrs. Dinah Knight died just before Christmas. We shall miss her a great deal. She seldom missed a meeting or an outing. For years she typed and duplicated our notices, and was always willing to help to deliver them. After she retired she was able to take a turn at the Museum, and at exhibitions. She gave more than her share of help.

We have heard also of the passing of one of our oldest members, Mrs. Ethel Jones. She died suddenly on January 8th, a few days after her 93rd birthday.

Mrs. Jones came to Dereham in the 1930s to be the first Headmistress of the Girls' Department at the Crown Road Modern Secondary School. She joined our Society soon after it was formed. In 1970 she became Vice-Chairman and served as Chairman from 1972-4.

The Society extends condolences to the loved ones of our former members.

THANKS!

Hardly was the ink dry on Newsletter No. 2 and two members had responded to our appeal for items for Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum. Mrs. Thompson kindly donated a sideboard and Mrs. Cross some polystyrene heads. Thank you ladies.

WANTED

Does anyone have a spare Bishop Bonner's Cottage mug or Dereham and Fakenham Times Centenary mug they are willing to sell, or know where I can locate one? If so I would appreciate it if they would phone Dereham 696348.

DEREHAM ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY ~

MEZUS

Issue No. 3

Winter 1988

INTRODUCTION

A belated Happy New Year to all our readers! As this is the first issue of 1988 it was thought appropriate to devote most of the space to providing an update on projects with which the Society has been involved during 1987.

THE RECORD OF MONUMENT INSCRIPTIONS IN THE PARISH CHURCHYARD

Shortly after reading that we hoped to type this research, Mrs. Skittrall contacted us to say she had already done so. As it was some years ago and given to another person, she did not know where it was at the present time. A few days and several phone calls later the typescript was found - all 56 pages!

Meanwhile Mrs. Craske has added details of tombstones inside the Parish Church and noted a few apparent discrepancies. Mrs. Cook is now checking these, weather permitting, and bringing the location map up to date.

When completed an index will be compiled and copies produced for the use of genealogists. The research, in its present incomplete form, has already proved very useful to two or three researchers who have traced their ancestors to Dereham.

It has been realised that there are a few unrecorded tombstones at the non-conformist Churches in the town. It would be nice if details of these could be added to those of the Parish Church to provide a complete record of all burials in the town prior to the opening of the Cemetery. Would one or two members like to volunteer for this task? If so please contact the Editor.

INVENTORY

This work is progressing well. Sessions were held at fortnightly intervals during the summer by half-a-dozen stalwarts. Small items have been removed to the warmth of Mrs. Cook's living room and the work has continued weekly during the winter.

Less than a quarter of the collection has been listed, so there is still quite a lot of work still to be done. Especially as the inventory has now been expanded into a catalogue containing as much information as possible about the items. Eventually this will be very useful both for Museum staff and visitors.

If you are particularly interested in this area of work, especially if you have a portable tape recorder, please contact Mr. Harrison.

CONDITION OF BISHOP BONNER'S COTTAGE

As predicted in Newsletter No. 2, the recently applied exterior paintwork has already started to peel. A huge bare patch has appeared on the south gable, and elsewhere the plasterwork is cracking and coming away. We have not had a particularly bad winter either, goodness knows what state the exterior would be in now if we had. However we understand our landlords, Dereham Town Council, have this matter in hand.

We also understand that the Town Council has earmarked an additional sum for repairs to the thatched roof. The ridge is to be replaced and damage caused by birds made good.

A visit is awaited by a structural engineer to report on cracks which appear to have widened recently.

It is to be hoped the repairs are completed before the summer season so that the present tatty appearance is improved before visitors start to arrive.

Bishop Bonner's Cottage and the Town Sign are probably the most photographed objects in Dereham. Neither are in the state of repair which encourages the visitor to take home favourable impressions of our town.

DEMOLITION OF NATIONAL JUNIOR SCHOOL

The old iron cross rescued from the gable of the National Junior School was repaired, painted and put on display for the 1987 season. Unfortunately the metal was too brittle to weld so the broken part had to be pinned and super-glued. Nevertheless a very effective and invisible repair was carried out thanks to the workmanship of Mr. Brian Siggins, who also restored the Town Scales last year.

The stone plaque was not removed until November. When we made enquiries about collection we were told it was going to Gressenhall Rural Life Museum! Apparently they had been very quick off the mark, setting a very good example to us all, by asking the auctioneer to ensure the purchaser was made aware of their interest in preserving the plaque. We are pleased to say Bridget Yates withdrew their claim and the plaque is now at Bishop Bonner's Museum awaiting a clean-up and a suitable place in which to display it.

As many adults in Dereham passed through the school during the course of their education, these two items will provide a lasting reminder of their schooldays.

We still await proof of the theory that the school was built at two different times - the original school prior to 1845 being the building furthest from the road. Hopefully all will be revealed when the foundations are uncovered.

Our sincere thanks to Messrs R. G. Carter for the donation of the Cross and Plaque to the Museum, and for the helpfulness and interest of their staff including delivery of the Plaque to the Museum. Thanks also to Bridget Yates and Brian Siggins.

PRESERVING THE PAST AND CO-OPERATION WITH THE DEREHAM SOCIETY

The incident mentioned previously about the Rural Life Museum getting in first on "our patch" underlined what we should all be doing every day as we move about the town. Every member should be alert to the danger of artifacts in the town being lost or destroyed. The old golden eagle which used to stand above the Eagle pub in the Market Place is an example of a familiar 'landmark' lost from the town for good.

If you become aware that an item, which is worth preserving, is being destroyed or is in danger of being lost please get in contact with a member of the Committee so that the Society can endeavour to do something about it.

Having a very full agenda, the Dereham Society have asked if the Antiquarian Society could co-operate in one or two outstanding projects of an historical nature. The projects being discussed are the Parish Church gates, the horse trough, the old town pump in Aldiss Court and the Victorian hydrant at the bottom of Theatre Street. More news on this subject as it becomes available.

Meanwhile, on a similar vein, the Society was pleased to be involved in the restoration of the Cowper Memorial in the Market Place. We donated £25 to the cost of cleaning and re-letting, and the memorial now looks very tidy. The task was initiated by the Dereham Society, but is another example of the type of work we could become involved in to help our colleagues, who are heavily committed to other non-historical aspects of preserving our town.

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions are now due - £2.50 for the year. Please send to the Treasurer: Mrs. J. Cole, 28 Cemetery Road, Dereham.

SPRING PROGRAMME

February 10th - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

March 9th - NORFOLK FROM THE AIR by Mr. Derek Edwards

Derek is Survey Officer for Norfolk Archaeological Unit and is responsible for discovering archaeological sites by surveying from the air. He also records the changing scene and maintains the aerial photography records of over 28,000 photographs at Gressenhall. His photography was recently published in a book bearing the same title as his talk.

April 13th - THE WYMONDHAM MURDERS by Mr. Philip Yaxley

Philip is a keen and prominent member of The Wymondham Society and an expert on the history of Wymondham. He has written booklets on Wymondham, including 'Wymondham Pubs', and 'Memories of Old Wymondham'. He is a keen collector of Wymondham ephemera, such as postcard views.

May 3rd - ANNUAL EXHIBITION AND SLIDE SHOW, at the Phoenix Hotel, Church Street, Dereham. (Helpers wanted - details later).

May 11th First visit of the summer to Oxnead Church, to see the Paston Monuments, and Blickling Hall - which hardly needs an explanation.

May 25th (Evening Meeting) A visit to the Norfolk Fire Service Museum at Hethersett Fire Headquarters.

Notices of visits and booking forms will be distributed to individual members prior to the visit in the usual way.

Note: Earlier copies of the full programme unfortunately show the incorrect date for January 1989 meeting. The meeting is on the 11th, and not 14th.

BISHOP BONNER'S COTTAGE MUSEUM REPORT 1987

Despite the inclement weather and a slow start, this has been another successful year at the Museum with takings of £303.88, the second year to exceed £300. This would not have been possible without our loyal helpers, whose efforts have enabled us to open for every session including, for the first time, Bank Holiday Mondays, which proved very worthwhile and must definitely be continued.

As our annual payments for rent, insurance and electricity totalled £297.58 you will see that the takings just covered them and we need extra income from our Friends and from the sale of publications for maintenance, extra expenses and to build a reserve for future needs.

Our visitors numbered approximately 989, coming from 13 different countries. Their appreciation can be gleaned from remarks in the Visitor's Book; the Museum being described as 'Absolutely fascinating, enchanting, charming, nostalgic, quaint and superb'. The collections are listed as 'Beautifully kept, a remembrance of old England, an interesting display well presented, and a fund of information so well planned'.

I am sure it will give great encouragement to our helpers to hear that they have been designated 'Helpful friendly staff, charming guardians, and lovely ladies!' Many thanks to all, please keep up the good work in 1988. If the above comments inspire anyone else to offer their help we will be only too pleased. We can always fit in more helpers and I am sure you would find the work very rewarding.

Following a very good suggestion last year we will be organising a 'Gettogether', just prior to opening for the season, to show 'lovely ladies' how to become 'helpful, friendly, and charming guardians' and assist in the day to day running of the Museum and welcoming our visitors. (The sexist overtones in the references to 'ladies' do not preclude the men from volunteering!).

Joan Seaman (Museum Treasurer).

PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE (2)

As briefly reported in Newsletter No. 3, a group has been formed within the Society to endeavour to keep an eye on the town's artifacts, and to see what can be done about replacing some of those which have been removed in recent years.

The District Council have undertaken to create an attractive feature at the northern end of the Market Place, near the Cabin Restaurant. The old horse trough, which used to stand on the triangle now occupied by the War Memorial, is to be replaced as part of this refurbishment. We claim no responsibility for this, as decisions were taken before our group was formed.

Two items which will become targets for our attention, however, are the old churchyard gates and the old water pump in High Street. Initial talks have been held with the Dereham Society to establish what thoughts that organisation had about these items. We now await establishment of ownership before pondering what can be done with the artifacts in question. In the meantime, any ideas would be welcome.

Other projects have been earmarked, such as a listing of all Dereham's dated buildings and a list of streets and roads and the reasons for their names.

AREA MUSEUM SERVICE FOR SOUTH EASTERN ENGLAND

In July, Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum received a visit from Karen Hull, the Museums Development Officer for AMSSEE. She was quite impressed with our collection and was able to make several helpful suggestions. It is hoped to implement some of these for next season, but more about this later.

Unfortunately we were unable to secure a grant to publish a booklet on the life and work of William Hyde Wollaston. This is to be written by Mr. Bayfield and based on his recent research, which he presented as a lecture to the Society recently. AMSSEE did invite us to re-submit the application in case more funds became available. Meanwhile, the committee has agreed that the work is of particular importance, as Wollaston was one of Dereham's sons who is yet to receive due recognition, and the booklet will be published from our own funds should the grant not be forthcoming.

AND FINALLY . . . Some didn't like the small print used in previous Newsletters, so at e-n-o-r-m-o-u-s expense I have bought a new printwheel for my printer - hope you like the result!

Newsletter Editor: Terry Davy, 7 Elm Park, Toftwood, Dereham, NR19 1NB

DEREHAM ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY -

MEZUS

Issue No. 5

Autumn 1988

FLIGHTS OVER DEREHAM

The poor summer weather fortunately improved sufficiently, on 20th July, to allow our programme of flights over Dereham to take place. During the afternoon thirty-nine members and guests made their way to Shipdham Airfield for their flights. The first flight took off just after 2 pm and, until 6 pm, shoppers in Dereham must have wondered why so many aircraft were buzzing low over the town! As she opened the Museum for the afternoon, Mrs. Cook said she waved enthusiastically to the first flight but the occupants, Ivan Emson and Terry Davy, failed to notice!

For many it was their first flight in a small aircraft, for others it was their very first flight. For some it was a trip back in time, as at least two of those taking part have previous flying experience as pilots. Ivan Emson flew small aircraft whilst serving in the Fleet Air Arm years ago (he didn't specify exactly how many years ago!) and Mrs. Murphy was a ferry pilot during the last war. Both were delighted to be allowed to take the controls for a time.

'Star' for the day was Mrs. Isobel Harland, who celebrated her birthday with a flight over Dereham. Photographs of Isobel enjoying the occasion appeared in the Eastern Daily Press, the Dereham and Fakenham Times and the Mid-Norfolk Advertiser, in reports of the event. Hopefully this very welcome publicity has created the impression, in the minds of the public, that we are not stuffy archaeologists who spend all their time unearthing ancient bones!

The suggestion for the flights came from Glynn Burrows who, on hearing Derek Edwards was to speak to the Society about aerial archaeology last year, thought it would be a good idea to see what Dereham looked like from the air. The large number of people who said how much they enjoyed the flights was an indication of what a good idea it was! Many taking part expressed an interest in repeating the flights next year, but with more time in the air. Watch this space...!



AUTUMN PROGRAMME

- Oct. 26th **Annual Dinner at the King's Head Hotel.** After dinner entertainment is provided by Mr. Derek Hankin, a teacher from North Walsham, who is an interesting speaker on Heraldry. He has also been known to produce a surprise at the end of his talk!
Book now on the enclosed form.
- Nov. 9th **An Armchair Walk around Fakenham,** conducted by Mr. Jim Baldwin, publisher and Fakenham historian.
- Dec. 14th Mr. Geoff. Robinson takes us on a tour of the **Glorious Ruins of Norfolk,** from his book of the same title.
- Jan. 11th **Do you know what is in the Parish Chest?** Mrs. J. Lodey makes a return visit to tell us.
- Feb. 8th **Annual General Meeting** - your chance to air your views and volunteer to stand for office!

PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE (1)

Readers of these columns will know that we already have two relics from the demolished National Church School in the Museum collection. Last year we were pleased to acquire the old iron cross from the roof, and the stone plaque from the gable.

Thanks to the vigilance of Bartrum Harrison, we now have further acquisitions from the old school, namely four bricks! However, these are no ordinary bricks as, it is believed, they were all made in Dereham. Two are lettered 'WL 90' and 'WL 91', which were made by William Larner, presumably in 1890 and 1891. Another carries the initials 'MJ' of another bygone Dereham brick maker, Matthew Jarvis. The last is marked 'LB' which, at the time of writing, is posing a mystery. Can anyone put a name to those initials?

We had hoped to prove the theory that the original school prior to 1845 was, in fact, the small rear building standing at an angle to the main part nearest the road. It was hoped the foundations would reveal the answer. Unfortunately, after work on the site had progressed at a painfully slow pace for some months, the foundations were removed by a JCB digger at great speed before Bartrum had a chance to investigate. And so the mystery continues.

MYSTERY OBJECT

Have you ever wondered why 14 lb. weight is called 'a stone'? Do you know what the objects are below? The answers to both questions are closely related! The objects are wool weights, which were carried by tax-men to check the weight of wool sold by merchants and farmers.

The ones illustrated were made of bronze and each weighed 7 lb. Often a farmer would keep a stone which had been carefully chipped until it exactly balanced the two 7 lb. weights.

Sometimes the local blacksmith attached a ring to the top of the stone for ease of handling. Hence, it is believed, the origin of the term 'stone'.



NEWS OF MEMBERS

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Glynn Burrows on the birth of a baby daughter in July - a splendid effort to increase membership!

One or two members have not enjoyed the best of health recently. We hope Mrs. Emson, Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Craske will have regained better health by the time this Newsletter is published.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our Exhibitions and Slide Shows have been valuable sources of funds to meet our ever increasing outgoings, but next year we are trying something different! An ANTIQUES ROADSHOW, no less. It is still in the planning stage, but it is hoped to have a couple of antiques experts on hand to identify and value your treasures. More news later, meanwhile why not dust down that old thingummygig you were given as a wedding present - it could be worth a fortune!

Norfolk is reckoned to have the highest density of mediaeval churches in the country - over 600 at the last count. It is almost impossible to be out of sight of a church, as you travel around the county. But how many realise that most can boast some unique and interesting feature. For instance, St. Swithin's Church, Ashmanhaugh, has the smallest round tower in Norfolk and is possibly the smallest in England. The two towers of Wymondham Abbey were built separately after the monks and townspeople disagreed about the hanging of the bells. The square tower was built by the townspeople and the hexagonal one by the monks. The tower of Burgh St. Peter Church is most peculiar. It starts off as a normal square tower but decreases rapidly in width at intervals so that the tower looks as if it is built of toy bricks. The tower of Wheatacre Church is built of brick and flint square panels in a most attractive chequer board pattern.

Monuments are usually carved in stone, but Stow Bardolph Church has one which is modelled in wax in the effigy of Sarah Hare, who is supposed to have died after pricking her finger whilst sewing on Sunday. Halvergate Church has two brass memorials. Nothing odd in that, I hear you say, except these are double sided and used in different periods!

The font of Burnham Deepdale Church has panels representing the "Gardener's Year". Little Barningham Church has a pew end post carved as a shrouded skeleton holding a staff and an hour glass. Beighton Church as one depicting a sow at the trough and five little pigs each side enjoying their supper!

Old Hunstanton Church has an old notice giving details of Church fees payable in the Parish. A Churching cost 6d., a vault in the Church (two coffins in width) cost £4.4.0 to the Vicar and £1 to the Clerk. Breaking ground for the burial of a non-parishioner cost £1 to the Vicar, 7/- to the Clerk but the same for a parishioner was only 1/6 to the Vicar, 5/6 to the Clerk.

Churchyards also are revealing places to search for oddities. West Somerton churchyard contains the grave of Robert Hales, the Norfolk Giant. He was eight feet tall and weighed 32 stone. In Woodton churchyard is to be found a tombstone with the inscription, "Here lies John Rackett in his wooden jacket. He kept neither horses or mules. He lived like a hog and died like a dog. And left all his money to fools."

In Westwick Churchyard is a memorial stone to Jeremiah Cozen, which has the following epitaph, "All you that do me pass by, Remember death for you must dy, For as you are so once was I, And as I am so must you be, Therefore prepare to follow me."

Terry Davy

DEREHAM ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY -

MEZUS

Issue No. 6 Spring 1989

+++++ BATH REFLECTIONS +++++

I wonder how many members have a favourite town or city? Mine is Bath.

I first saw Bath in 1979. As the coach, in which I travelled, crawled down what must have been the steepest of the seven hills surrounding the city, there before me in brilliant sunshine and through a slight heat haze, was the most magnificent panorama I think I have ever seen - almost an aerial view. I have visited Bath many times since then, but never again have I approached it from that hill. Nowadays very little of the beauties of the city are revealed to the coach traveller until he actually arrives.

Always the first sight-seeing tour has to be the Roman Baths. I shall never forget my first sight of the Great Bath; open to the sky, though once covered by a barrel-vaulted roof, the sun showing up the cloudiness of the hot water from which steam was gently rising, and the awe with which I realised that my feet were actually treading the same pavement that Roman feet had trodden so many centuries ago.

On a subsequent visit I found the Great Bath had been drained and I was able to see what the density of the water had previously hidden - enormous solid lead plates with which the Romans had lined their bath, unrestored so far as I know, and still water-tight. Eighteen months later the bath had been re-filled, and as I sat beside it dreaming dreams of long ago I became aware that the bath was indeed occupied - not by the Romans of my imagination but by several large black fish, very similar to those in the moat of Oxburgh Hall. They seemed quite at home in the hot mineral water, but what, I wondered, would the original bathers have thought of such companions of their social hours.

Recently, after a gap of four years, I was once again beside the bath and pleased to see that it had returned to its impressive tranquility.

The King's Bath is also open to the sky and sited immediately above the sacred spring. Below ground there are three more baths and the fascinating area of the hypercaust and cauldarium. As I was trying to absorb the remarkable plan of the latter two for the first time, I heard the sound of a waterfall close by. Further investigation proved that it was in fact the overflow

thundering down from its channel to be carried away by the main drain. I peered through a cloud of steam at the channel, stained orange by the mineral water, but could see little of the Roman stonework until a year or so later, when the flow had been reduced to a trickle, it was clearly to be seen. Now the flow and fall of the water has been increased to half volume and the rising steam is just a haze.

Bath is so beautiful and has so much to offer the visitor. To me it is as familiar as my own home, yet on my latest visit it still had something new to show me. On the ground floor of a house in Gay Street (named after John Gay, I hasten to add!) is a small bare room with a tall shallow recess entirely lined with blue Delft tiles. This is a GENTLEMEN'S powder room to which guests could retire to have their wigs re-powdered before leaving the house. The powdering was done in the recess so that the excess powder could slide to the floor instead of sticking to the walls - though I feel sure a certain amount must have done so.

Will there be other treasures for me to discover when next I go there? Only Bath will know.

Rosemary Richards

+++++ SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE! +++++

Yes folks, it's that time round again! If you haven't done so already please let Joan Cole have your subscription for 1989 (£3) as soon as possible. Joan's address is 28 Cemetery Road, Dereham.

+++++ REPORT FROM THE MUSEUM +++++

I expect all of you have seen the new and very professional thatched ridge to the Cottages and matching finish to the one thatched dormer window. It really does add to the attraction of the building, and it would be nice if the sadly peeling outer walls could be re-decorated in time for the opening next season.

It is very pleasant to report a very successful season at the Museum this year, with visitors numbering 1,200 plus, 87 of whom were from abroad representing 14 countries. It is equally pleasant to report takings at just over £350. Both are records and all this would not have been possible without our loyal band of supporters, some of whom were first time volunteers. To all I offer my grateful thanks, particularly to those who stepped in at very short notice, and to those who put in more than one afternoon in a week.

But I must still make the annual appeal for more volunteers as more help really is needed, either on a weekly or fortnightly basis or as a reserve. All and any help will be more than welcome. For those who may have an afternoon to spare but hesitate to offer your services because you know nothing about the Museum or its contents, Mrs. Cook and I are willing to organise tours of the Museum (mornings or evenings to suit the convenience of

members) when it is set up for opening. Perhaps provisional arrangements for this can be made in March or April when I will be asking personally for volunteers. Do think it over.

Rosemary Richards

+++++ ANTIQUES ROAD SHOW +++++

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, this year's main fundraising effort will be an Antiques Road Show. We have secured the services of Radio Norfolk's resident antiques expert, Mike Hicks, who will identify and value your heirlooms at the Assembly Rooms in the Market Place. Some of you may have seen the teapot on BBC's Antiques Roadshow recently. It was valued by the experts at £6,000 and subsequently sold for £14,600! Who knows what will turn up in Dereham! More details nearer the time, but be having a look in the attic now!

+++++ SPRING PROGRAMME +++++

March 8th, WINDMILLS AND WINDPUMPS - Mr. Lawrence Wilton-Jones
April 12th, GEORGE BORROW IN RUSSIA - Mr. Martial Rose
April 25th, Tuesday evening - PRESIDENT'S EVENING at Horsford
June 3rd, Saturday - ANTIQUES ROAD SHOW
June 14th, Wednesday, (provisional) - HEYDON HALL

+++++ UP, UP AND AWAY! +++++

By popular request we are repeating our flights over Dereham again this year. Wednesday, 9th August is the date for your diaries. Most people who enjoyed last year's flights said they thought the time sped by so quickly and expressed a desire to have a little longer in the air. So, instead of 20 minutes, the flight time will be half an hour - time to fly approximately 10 miles from the airfield and back so you will not have to restrict yourselves to the Dereham area if you wish. Details later.

+++++ WORK AT THE MUSEUM +++++

It is hoped that by the start of the new season a few changes will have taken place. A change to the layout has been suggested, which will move the shop area into the first room. New display boards are planned and we now have access to a heat-sealing machine at the Rural Life Museum at Gressenhall which will allow us to make some smart new labels.

The AMSSEE Newsletter constantly reports thefts from Museums up and down the country, so we are taking precautions by fitting locks to all our display cabinets and are hoping to construct a barrier in the upper room containing the farming equipment and tools. The Town Council have also recently fitted Chubb security locks to the main door.

David Fisher the Second took charge of the company after the death of his father, but remained for only six years. The reins were then taken over by younger brother Charles, but he also left after three years to take up a position in a Glasgow theatre. Another brother, George, stepped into the breach, but by 1844 he had decided to disband the company. Many other companies were in the same situation, caused by a general financial depression and the rapid growth of the railways. This meant that the gentry, who paid the major share towards the cost of any production by paying comparatively high seat prices, no longer were dependent on the local country theatres but could easily travel further afield to the provincial theatres.

Gradually Fisher's theatres were sold and used for other purposes. The one at Swaffham became a Roman Catholic Church, Bungay a laundry, whilst the theatre in Dereham was used as a store for agricultural machinery, a drill hall and lastly as additional classrooms for the National Junior School at the end of Theatre Street. It was, however, the last of Fisher's theatres to be used for the purpose for which it was built. It was restored in 1935 and used for concerts and dances but in 1977 was demolished and the town's first purpose built doctors' surgery erected on the site.

Terry Davy

+++++ COWPER SOCIETY +++++

Our President's Evening was enjoyed by all and our thanks are extended to Rev. and Mrs. Jonathan Boston for their hospitality. Coincidentally the evening fell on the anniversary of the death of William Cowper. The Cowper Society, whose main function used to be the annual Cowper Dinner, is now dormant and Rev. Boston suggested that we might consider some sort of annual event either on or near the anniversary of Cowper's death. Work has already commenced on next year's programme and Mrs. Cook, Programme Secretary, would welcome suggestions.

+++++ ANOTHER REMINDER! +++++

Subscriptions are overdue! The society depends on members' subscriptions to help run Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum, to hire meeting rooms and pay speakers' fees, as well as all the other expenditure necessary in the day to day running of an active Society. Therefore if you haven't already done so please send your 1989 subscription to the Treasurer, Joan Cole, 28 Cemetery Road, as soon as possible - just a modest £3.00.

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**DEREHAM
ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY -**

MEZUS

Issue No. 7 Summer 1989

+++++ TOMBSTONES AND EPITAPHS +++++

We often send visitors to the West end of the Church to look at St. Withburga's Well and Jean de Narde's grave. There are also other interesting stones in the Churchyard.

Near the West door is a stone to Theodore Stoakley who, as Master of the National School for 22 years, "performed his duty with steadiness, attention and kindness, and died suddenly in the school on the 1st January 1834, in the 60th year of his age, surrounded by his scholars, and in the presence of the Vicar, who thus bears testimony to his worth."

Two interesting stones stand near the Well: "In memory of Charles, son of Wm. and Elizabeth Chambers who died Jan. 2nd 1830 aged 19 yrs. This stone is erected by the remaining Brothers and Sister, James, John, and Priscilla, after twenty years absence in the Colonies, South Australia, 1855"; and "In memory of William Chambers, who died Nov. 14th 1831, also Elizabeth, his wife who died Jan. 13th 1830. These are renewed by the remaining family, John and Priscilla, after an absence of 40 years in the Colonies, Adelaide, Australia, 1876. Restored by Mary Blades and Priscilla Chambers, son of the above 1907."

I wonder if any of the later generations have returned since then.

Beside the path to Washbridge there are stones to no less than 13 members of the Bayfield family, who were farmers and butchers in Norwich Street. The earliest date is George Bayfield, who died in 1727, so this family served the town for over 250 years.

By the Churchyard wall stand 25 stones removed from the space between the South Transcept and South Porch to make a garden for cremation ashes. On is "In memory of David Fisher, Actor-Manager, who died Aug. 6th 1832, aged 73 years. Erected in 1936 in place of the original stone by members of the public and in recognition of his services to the drama in Norfolk and Suffolk."

Next to it is "James Philo, Clerk of this Parish for 50 years. Born Oct. 3rd 1745, Buried Dec. 1829". He is mentioned in George Borrow's "Lavengro".

Beside the main path lies his son "George Philo, 1829, Clerk of this Parish for years, who fell asleep Dec. 6th 1890." Father and son must have served the Church for 100 years.

Opposite the Chancel door is a stone to the Revd. C. W. Wollaston, last Rector of this Parish.

On the North side of the Chancel stands a Flanders Cross to Lieut. C. A. S. Bidwell, killed in action 21-9-1915. This was brought to the Church when the War Cemeteries were laid out with tomb-stones.

Below the Cowper window is a small stone to Margaret Perowne, his great friend. On the other side of the path are stones to Charlotte Wenham, and David Wenham the famous clockmaker who lived and worked at 13 Market Place.

Facing the entrance to the Churchyard is a memorial to Revd. Benjamin Armstrong, his wife and daughter. In his diary for May 7th, 1856 he writes, "Our child's monument put up. It is a Gothic Cross at head and foot. As this is the first Catholic monument to be erected in Dereham Churchyard I almost fear some sacrilege."

Mildred Cook

++++ SUMMER PROGRAMME +++++

- June 3rd **Antiques Roadshow** at the Assembly Rooms, Dereham from 2 pm to 4.30 pm. Radio Norfolk's resident antiques expert, Mike Hicks, and Mike Barlow from G. A. Key, Fine Art Auctioneers, will be on hand to value and identify your treasures. Reduced charges for members.
- June 14th **Visit to Heydon Hall.** A rare opportunity, as this hall is open by appointment only.
- July 5th **Visit to North Norfolk Railway and Heavy Horse Centre, West Runton.**
- July 26th **Visit to Sutton Windmill and Broadland Museum**
- August 9th **Flights over Norfolk** - by popular request, another chance to get up, up and away with half-hour flights from Shipdham airfield. See separate booking form and information sheet. Book early.
- Sept. 13th **Fakenham Gasworks Museum and Local History Museum** (evening visit).
- Oct. 25th **Annual Dinner** - speaker Mr. Don Urry, Chief reporter for the Dereham and Fakenham Times (again!).

++++ THE FISHERS OF DEREHAM +++++

The earliest mention of a theatre in Dereham was in 1759 when it was situated in a barn belonging to the King's Head Hotel where touring theatrical companies produced performances.

One of the earliest theatrical circuits with its own chain of permanent theatres in the country was organised by David Fisher. He was born at Hethersett in 1760 and was apprenticed as a carpenter in Norwich. He joined an amateur theatrical company and it was soon realised that he had great talent and David Fisher was persuaded to become a member of a company then based at the Theatre Royal in Norwich. In 1792 he joined with William Scraggs (who previously had toured with his own company) to form the Norfolk and Suffolk Company of Comedians.

At first performances were given in improvised buildings, such as the King's Head barn, previously mentioned. However, it wasn't long before sufficient interest was aroused to encourage David Fisher to build theatres in some of the towns in which the Company performed. Each theatre was visited for two months every two years, and performances normally given on three nights a week. Coupling his early training as a carpenter with his knowledge of the theatre, David Fisher designed, erected and decorated his theatres with the assistance of his sons David and Charles. In all, thirteen theatres were built from Wells-next-the-Sea in the north to Sudbury in the south. The outlay must have been considerable - probably over £20,000, a tidy sum then.

The theatre at Dereham was built in 1816 and was modelled on the old theatre at Norwich. It was described as being 'Fitted up in a style of neatness and elegance seldom found in a country playhouse.'

At the rear of the theatre, with direct entrance on to the stage, was a large house. This was used by the company, both as living quarters and dressing rooms when they were in town, and as a store and workshops for making most of their scenery.

David Fisher also registered himself as the owner of a printing press and type for the production of his own playbills for his theatres. He also saw the opportunity to save money after realising playbills could be printed on both sides!

Many of the Fisher family followed in David's footsteps. On one occasion, at North Walsham, there were no less than nine members of the Fisher family in the cast of Richard III. The family also doubled up on other activities. Sometimes they slipped coats over their costumes and went into the orchestra to play music between acts. George Fisher, after taking money in the ticket box, appeared on stage under the pseudonym of 'Mr. George.'

David Fisher spent the last years of his life in his house at Dereham, and it was here that he died in 1832. He was buried in Dereham churchyard and such was his popularity that the carriages forming his cortege stretched for over a quarter of a mile.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Since our last issue it is our sad duty to record the passing of two of our members.

In October, Mrs. Margaret Webb passed away. Due to ill health she had not been an active member for the past six or seven years, but had been a very keen participating member from the early days of the Society. She was an enthusiastic helper at Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum and made the first attempt at cataloguing the collection. In fact her notes are proving extremely helpful during the present concerted cataloguing effort. One of her last pursuits, on behalf of the Society, was to spend two summers helping to record the tombstone inscriptions in the Parish Churchyard. Some time ago this listing was re-discovered, and later a typescript copy was unearthed. Over the past few months this has been checked for accuracy and is now being typeset. The Society intends to publish a limited number of copies for the use of genealogical researchers - a fitting memorial to the work of Margaret Webb.

A few days before Christmas octogenarian Mrs. Christina Craske died. She was an original member of the Society. She was known by her childhood name of Chrissy Harrold to her contemporaries, and in her school-days helped to build up the

reputation of the Girls' Secondary School (later the Girls' High School, now Neatherd High School). She took up a career in teaching and taught at many of the surrounding village schools. She retired as Headmistress of Gressenhall School. Mrs. Craske was an Urban District Councillor and always had the town's welfare at heart. When her parent's business in High Street finished and the premises were demolished, she gave sufficient Norfolk red paniments to the Museum to re-floor the first large room. She also gave several interesting items to the Museum. Mrs. Craske also assisted in the compilation of the memorial inscription record by listing those inside the Church, which had been omitted from the original survey.

We extend our sympathies to the families of Margaret and Christina, their exit from our membership will leave a gap which will be difficult to fill.

Mrs. Cook, another of our hard working stalwarts who needs no introduction, unfortunately became very ill shortly before our Christmas meeting and had an enforced stay in Dereham Hospital. This abruptly brought to an end an unbroken record of twenty-seven years without a visit to or from a doctor! At the time of writing Mrs. Cook is making steady progress, and we all send our sincere wishes for a full recovery and hope that she will be back among us soon.

**DEREHAM
ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY**

News

ISSUE NO. 8

WINTER 1990

THE HISTORY OF A NORFOLK CHURCH

Weasenham All Saints Church can be found halfway between Swaffham and Fakenham on the A1065. It stands just off the road on the left (from Swaffham) and is a neat little Church with no tower.

But it was not always like that!

The building as it stands dates mainly from the first decade of this century. The Church was completely renovated and practically rebuilt between 1903-5. The only original pieces are the bottom of the porch, the north aisle and parts of the nave walls and piers. The screen is also part of the older church but has been extensively restored recently. The Church originally had a square tower but that fell down in the first half of the C17th. A very ugly red brick belfry was at that time (1655) added on the porch and the west wall of the nave was built further into the Church. The south aisle also dates from 1905, as the original one was demolished in 1796 to sell the lead off the roof, etc. to aid repair bills to the rest of the building. The chancel was also in a very bad state and was completely rebuilt.

In the middle of the last century the Church was in a really terrible state, it was common practice for the villagers to cut a turf to use as their kneeler!

Photographs in my collection show the building prior to 1903 and with the detailed plans drawn up by the architect we have a picture of the Church as she was. Add to that the detailed faculties granted for changes to the building and we have a good picture of how All Saints once was.

The village itself has altered greatly in the last fifty years. At one time there was a village pit in front of the Ostrich Inn and around this pit were cottages. Up Common End and Rougham End there were houses and cottages which have nearly all been demolished.

There was once a windmill in the village but that was knocked down in 1869 when the miller went bankrupt. Now we have bungalows, council houses and holiday 'homes' with a few old places thrown in but the village known by my ancestors has all but gone for ever.

Glynn Burrows

REPORT FROM BISHOP BONNER'S COTTAGE MUSEUM FOR 1989

This has been a rather erratic season for visitors to the museum. No doubt the wonderful summer weather tempted a lot of people to the coast to enjoy the sunshine and sea breezes.

So numbers are down somewhat on last year - our total number of visitors for this year being 994, with only 62 of them being from abroad. But as the takings were again over £300 it can be safely said that the season has been very successful.

This would not have been possible without our band of willing and devoted helpers, and I offer my gratitude to everyone of them.

But I must still make an appeal for more volunteers as more help really is needed.

Once again Mrs. Cook and I are willing to organise tours of the museum at the beginning of next season for those of you who have never tried it but might have an afternoon to spare.

All and any help would be most welcome, either on a weekly or fortnightly basis, or even as a reserve. The work can be both interesting and rewarding, so do give it a trial.

Rosemary Richards.

TROUGH RETURNS!

After a long absence it is pleasing to see the replacement of the old horse trough at the North end of the Market Place, together with the refurbishment of that area. It is hoped that the area will be further improved by the addition of flowers and trees in the spring.

It was somewhat ironic that, on the day Bishop Bonner's Cottage closed for the season, a direction post to the museum was erected adjacent to the horse trough! Hopefully the one which is supposed to be erected at the top of Church Street will be in place before the next season starts. It is not unreasonable to expect a considerable increase in the number of visitors to the museum if only proper signposting existed.

SOUVENIRS

Members attending our Christmas meeting were aghast when told that Bishop Bonner's Cottage was up for sale. But horror quickly turned to relief when they realised the 'property' offered for sale was just a china model of the Cottage! It has been thought for some time that the Museum Shop lacks a souvenir specifically associated with the old building. So, to redress the problem we will have two special souvenirs on sale from the beginning of the new season.

The first is an excellent china model of the cottages which will be offered at £6.50 - some £1.50 less than the normal retail price. This model is part of a series of models of ancient buildings found both in Norfolk and throughout the country. So start collecting now! The model makes both an excellent souvenir and a present for the person who thought they had everything!

Secondly we have commissioned a mug to be produced by Holkham pottery. This will depict a picture of the cottage on the front and a brief narrative on the back. This is a unique souvenir, only obtainable at the Museum.

REFURBISHMENT AT THE MUSEUM

The committee has approved plans to refurbish the top room at the Museum, which usually contains artifacts from Dereham's past trades. The initial stage will cost about £750 and involve building display cases right across the room. This will provide a secure method of displaying small items and prevent access to a large area beyond, in which it is intended to place just two or three specialist displays. This will greatly improve both the security and appearance of this room. The work is on course for completion before the new season commences.

CALENDAR FOR SPRING 1990

○
Wednesday 14th March
at Methodist Church
Schoolroom
**The recovery and
preservation
of the Mary Rose**

Wednesday 11th April
at Methodist Church
Schoolroom
**Slide Show -
The Historic Burnhams**

Wednesday 2nd May
at Church House
The Lighter Side of Cowper

Wednesday 30th May
**Visit - Historic Norwich
(River Trip)**

Saturday 16th June
at the Assembly Rooms
Antiques Road Show

Wednesday 20th June
**Visit to Lavenham and
Sudbury**

Thursday 5th July
Visit to Euston Hall

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE!

Yes! I'm afraid its that time
round again - Joan Cole
will be pleased to receive
your £3 subscription as
soon as possible