



# **Civic Society of St Ives**

Annual Report 2015

# THE CIVIC SOCIETY OF ST IVES

## Our legacy statement:

**“That future generations will be able to easily recognise the historic character and heritage of our town despite the inevitable changes that have happened down the years”**

The Civic Society of St Ives was formed in 1968 to fight the proposed plans to route the St Ives Bypass down Ramsey Road, across The Waits, Holt Island and Hemingford Meadow.

The siting of the St Ives Bypass today is a result of our early campaigns.

The Society continues to care for the beauty and character of the town, as well as working to stimulate public interest in civic matters and to provide an information service for those who wish to know more about the town's history and development, and of the surrounding area.

The Civic Society of St Ives is a registered Charity, registration number 257286.

Its web-site can be found at:

[www.stivescivic.org.uk](http://www.stivescivic.org.uk)

The society is a member of:

The Campaign to Protect Rural England

[www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk)

and

The Cambridge Antiquarian Society

[www.camantsoc.org](http://www.camantsoc.org)

## CONTENTS

The Civic Society of St Ives - Its Aims	2
Chairman's Report	4
Annual Accounts	6
Treasurer's Report	9
Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting - 2013	10
Annual General Meeting 2014 - Agenda	13
Slepe Hall, St Ives	14
Bridget's Bursary	19
Summary of Talks 2014 - 2015	20
Programme of Talks 2015 - 2016	26
Hands on the Past (STAG)	49
A Wonderful Hands On Gloves On Session	50
Hubert Coop - Artist (see painting on front cover)	52

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It seems scarcely a year since I wrote the last report in July 2014. In reading it again I am struck by the fact that many of the same issues still face us. Perhaps it is worth quoting a few sentences:

"We continue to try and uphold the original aims of safeguarding the Town's heritage and raising awareness of just what a special place we have here in St Ives. Keeping it that way whilst accepting and shaping inevitable change is a major challenge."

This text was reinforced when we listened to a talk by Alexa Cox on the Whitney Archives of old photographs of the Town. From this we developed a legacy statement for the Civic Society:

"That future generations will be able to easily recognise the historic character and heritage of our Town despite the inevitable changes that have happened down the years."

This may sound like a statement of the blindingly obvious ( I also apologise for the split infinitive) but take a look at Huntingdon town centre – I rest our case for the legacy statement.

Developments this year have continued but at a frustratingly slow pace. Two major and immediate concerns are J D Wetherspoon possibly coming to the town centre and the preservation of the heritage (black painted lights) street lighting in the centre of town.

We have objected to the introduction of J D Wetherspoon in line with the authorisation you gave at our last AGM. We do not want to see our local pubs, most of which are Listed Buildings, unfairly threatened or closed by fierce economic pressure from J D Wetherspoon. This view, along with others, was put to the Planning Committee of the Town Council. They recommended to the District Council that change of use and Planning permission be refused. Round one is won but I fear there are more rounds to come.

On the topic of heritage lighting, we have met jointly with the Town Council and Balfour Beatty (the Contractor). David Stewart (our Committee member) has put together all the extraordinary detail on lighting ownership and sent it to the Town Council where it will be debated in September. However, the Contract lies between Balfour Beatty and the County Council and we may well have to reinforce our work at a higher level.

On a lighter note, the St Ives Archaeology Group (STAG), which is directly affiliated to our Society, has continued with their fascinating work. By the time you read this, they will have excavated a puzzling rectangular enclosure close

to the Chubb Stream. We may have the results of their dig in time for our AGM.

Another project in the pipeline is the creation of a Local List. This List will include buildings, places and items not deemed to have national significance (ie not English Heritage Listed status) but of interest to those of us that live here. This initiative is currently on the back burner as we do not have the resources to deal with this and the Wetherspoon/heritage lighting issues.

In sum, 2015 has been a busy year with more to come including the development of RAF Wyton, the third River crossing and of course the Octagon, where new plans and community uses are emerging following a grant from Mick George. None of the work would be possible without your Committee and I would again like to use this report to thank them all publicly. They are:

Pat Allan	Basil Belcher
Helen Eveleigh	Peter Jackson
Margaret King	David Knights
Jane McKee	Peter Newbould
Richard Probyn	Barbara Richmond
Peggy Seamark	David Stewart

Outside of the Committee but providing invaluable assistance are:

Brian Richmond (Webmaster and Annual Report compiler)

Mike Davison (Note Taker at our monthly meetings)

Al Hunter (STAG Chairman)

Dianne McGoff (Accounts Examiner)

The Free Church staff

All those who help to distribute the Annual Report.

Finally, as I announced at the 2014 AGM, I will stand aside as Chairman this year. After over 5 years before the mast it is time for another to take the helm. It has been a great privilege to serve the Society and one which I have enjoyed thanks to your constant support. I hope my efforts and those of the Committee have made a positive difference to this lovely town

***Peter Baker***

Chairman

**Civic Society of St Ives Statement of Income & Expenditure**  
**as at 30th April 2015**

<b><u>Income</u></b>	<b>Year to</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>	<b>Year to</b>	<b>Year</b>
	<b>30/04/15</b>	<b>2014</b>		<b>30/04/15</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Subscriptions/Donations	2,636	2,923	Hall Hire	335	339
Slepe Hall Donations		504	Annual Report	878	794
Visitors	70	108	Speakers	350	298
Memorial Fund			Memorial Fund		
Social Evenings	150		Social Evenings	110	
Raffle	56	206	0 Raffle	28	0
Interest	<u>        </u>		0 Insurance	<u>        </u>	161
Gift Aid	415	442	Antiquarian Soc Subs	20	20
Heritage Weekend	25	86	CPRE Subs	36	34
Trips	52	396	Trips	45	956
Bequests	100		Donations/Gifts	592	350
Deposit Acc Transfer			Deposit Acc Transfer	1,000	2,000
			Administration	378	598
Donations	1,229		Postage	53	117
			Phone		20
			Travel		
			Web Site	69	499
			Heritage Weekend	110	45
Remembrance Collect'n	1,962		Remembrance Collect'n	1,748	779
<b>£</b>	<b><u>6,695</u></b>	<b><u>4,459</u></b>		<b><u>5,912</u></b>	<b><u>5,853</u></b>

**Balances from**  
**30 April 2014**

Current account	3,015
Deposit Account	8,779
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,793</b>

**Plus**

Surplus for year	784
Dep Acc Transfer + Interest	1,088
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,664</b>

**less**

2012 Payments	164
<b>£</b>	<b><u>13,501</u></b>

**Balances at**  
**28 February 2015**

Current account	3,851
Deposit Account	9,866
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,717</b>

**add**

Receipts after Period end	0
---------------------------	---

**less**

Cheques yet to be presented	216
-----------------------------	-----

<b>£</b>	<b><u>13,501</u></b>
----------	----------------------

**Report to the Trustees & Members of The Civic Society of St Ives, Charity No 257286, on the Accounts for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015 which are set out on the attached.**

### **Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- To follow procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act), and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### **Basis of independent examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.


### **Independent examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
  - a. To keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act

b. To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or

(2) To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:  ..... Date: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Name Dianne McGoff BSc (Open)  
4 Seathwaite, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 6NY



## TREASURER'S REPORT 2015

We ended the year with a £784 surplus on our current account to which must be added £88 interest from the deposit account and the £1,000 transferred to deposit in the year. Our overall true balance for the year is, therefore, a surplus of £1872.

This surplus has been largely generated by some generous donations received during the year from Bob King, Bob Burn-Murdoch, Phillip Simpson, Pat Hogan and Daphne Loveday; coupled with a kind bequest from George Dellar.

During the year we have made donations totalling £592 supporting Music on the Waits, the Free Church's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Bridget Smith's Bursary and providing a new A Board for the Bridge Chapel.

Gift Aid contributed £415 this year representing 14% of our base income and is therefore vital to our finances. Any member who pays income tax can have their subscription included in our future applications by completing the forms available from Helen Everleigh or me.

Our deposit account has produced annual interest of £88.

Annual Subscriptions are due in September and will remain at the current level of £7 for single membership and £12 for household membership. Payment can be made at meetings, by standing order or left at the Norris Museum in a named envelope. Standing Orders are preferred and forms for this are available at any meeting from Helen Everleigh or me.

We hold reserves for future expenditure, but as a small charity, we have no reserves policy.

The year's accounts have been independently examined and approved. The Examiner's report and statement precede this report.

***Basil Belcher***

Treasurer  
August 2015

# MINUTES OF THE 46th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014, at the Free Church, St Ives

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Nick Dibben, John & Veronica Smoothy, Jonathan Djonagly MP, Philip Cooke, Freda Done, Pat & Margaret Hogan, Paul & Vicky Faupel, Lizzie Wright, Dr Tim Reed, Tony Barraclough, Basil & Sue Belcher, Norma Head, Colin Sanderson, Peter & Ann Theakston.

## **2. MINUTES OF THE 45<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:**

The minutes had been published in the Annual Report. It was proposed by Ed Kelly and seconded by Barry Wills that the minutes were accurate and should be signed by the Chairman. Passed unanimously.

## **3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:**

Nothing to note.

## **4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

I will not read out the words from the Annual Report but instead will update it and give an overview using specific examples.

In my monthly email I gave details of the Grand Quiz to be held on 5<sup>th</sup> December. Our benefactor for the Quiz is Philip Simpson, a St Ivesian who now lives in the Dordogne and has done so for the past 22 years. He offered your society £1000 if we collectively can get 75 of the 100 questions on St Ives correct. He will also give us money to buy liquid refreshments and nibbles. A further prize has been donated by Stuart Clements of Slepe Hall – a Sunday Lunch for 4 plus a bottle of house wine to be enjoyed in the new year.

Turning to Archaeology, STAG (St Ives Archaeology Group) and part of the Civic Society have had a busy and exciting year. The search for the Lost Priory with a dig on the Priory lawn in August – we didn't find the Priory but did find lots of interesting pottery, some dating back to Roman times. Anyone can join STAG and a range of activities are available apart from digging. Their website for further information: [www.stag2012.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.stag2012.blogspot.co.uk)

The Town Team continues its business with the introduction of the Old Riverport. That theme, which is designed to be a Unique Selling Point for St Ives, has been copied on the new map and a new one-stop website which is already being produced. New notice boards have been ordered and the rolling calendar of events is now established. In addition, a multi-page survey of footpaths and cycleways has been passed to CCC for action.

This year, the Town won another Silver Gilt award for our efforts in St Ives in Bloom. We were only 2 points short of a Gold award. I think that the Town Centre especially looked as good as it ever has this summer.

Now for the difficult issues, and I'll start with the Heritage lighting in the Town Centre. Throughout the town Balfour Beatty has been replacing street lights under contract from CCC. It doesn't seem to be the best co-ordinated project, and David Stewart – one of your Committee members, has been delving into the details of the Town Centre. He has discovered that it is by no means certain that we will retain our heritage lighting i.e: the black painted lamp standards. Of course we will fight to keep them. David will speak on this issue at our November meeting. In the meantime I am writing to Town and County Councils on the topic.

JD Wetherspoons - this company has an option to buy the Warehouse Clearance shop before the end of the year. They have not applied for Planning Permission or a licence yet. The problem lies in that Wetherspoons, as a national chain can offer their products of alcohol and food at much lower prices than local pubs. These locals are already running on a slender margin and harsh economic competition might well see at least some of them close. Of course many of these locals are Grade II listed buildings and are restricted by the landlords. No landlord / no maintenance – boarded up windows and deterioration in their condition. As an aside these buildings do not readily lend themselves to change of use. Your Committee is therefore not in favour of JD Wetherspoons taking over the Warehouse Clearance Shop – do you agree?

The latest topic to rear its head is the Octagon. Your committee has been advising the concerned residents, so let's share the facts. Your Society has been working for some time on ways to preserve the Octagon, as have SITI and the Town Team. A few months ago HDC who own the building, offered it for free to our Town Council who refused it. HDC then asked the Civic Society to look at uses for it, along with our partners; a plan has hatched to use half of it as a 70 seat tiered theatre / cinema and the other half for a Tourist Information Centre and possibly Shopmobility Centre. Those plans were gradually taking shape when a licencing application was noticed pinned onto the buildings wall. I immediately queried this with HDC and received a reply that all avenues were now being explored and all the options would be examined. You will note the Town Council has not changed its stance, but I believe the Planning Committee will be coming out against the Licencing Application as will numerous residents. Finally, HDC has said, and I quote 'the building has historic value which means HDC would insist on it being kept in its present form, rather than being broken down'.

That concludes my report

## **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

Nothing to note.

## **6. TREASURER'S REPORT:**

The Treasurer's Report and annual accounts for the year had been published in the Annual Report.

Proposed by Bob King, seconded by Margaret King.

## **7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE:**

Chairman: Mr Peter Baker was re-elected as Chairman. Proposed by John Davies, seconded by Bridget Smith and elected.

Hon Secretary: Pat Allan is standing down after many years' service but will remain as Committee member dealing with local planning issues. Thank you Pat. No nominations.

Hon Treasurer: Mr Basil Belcher – proposed by Margaret King, seconded by Peter Newbould and elected.

There were 9 nominations to re-elect Committee members:

Barbara Richmond

Helen Eveleigh

David Stewart

Peter Jackson

Richard Probyn

Peggy Seamark

Pat Allan

Jane McKee

Peter Newbould

Barry Wills will not be staying on the Committee. Thank you Barry for all your work.

Proposed by Bob King and seconded by Ed Kelly *en bloc*.

We have 2 Committee vacancies and of course the Secretary post. We do need to keep your Committee well manned so we can share tasks. The Chairman thanked the Committee for their hard work during the year.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

Appointment of an accounts examiner. Dianne McGoff to be appointed as accounts examiner for the coming year. Proposed by Peter Newbould, seconded by Bob King.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8:00pm.

CIVIC SOCIETY of ST. IVES  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
16th October 2015  
AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 46th Annual General Meeting.
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Matters arising from the Chairman's Report.
6. Treasurer's Report and to accept the Accounts for the year to 30 April 2015.
7. Election of Officers and Committee.
8. Any Other Business, including:
  - a. Appointment of an accounts examiner for 2015-2016

**Resolutions:**

Accounts Examiner: To appoint Ms. Dianne McGoff, BSc, ACIB as independent accounts examiner until the conclusion of the 2016 Annual General Meeting.

## ST IVES HALL, SLEPE HALL and SLEPE HALL GIRLS SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES



*By kind permission of the Norris Museum*

The first Slepe Hall was originally called St Ives Hall and was built in the centre of St Ives, on the site of the current Cromwell Place, and was a red-brick building of considerable size. It is said to have had a ballroom with carved ceiling, a huge reception hall with a black and white marble floor and elaborately laid grounds with trees and yew hedges in ornamental patterns. The earliest record was in 1632 when it was occupied by Squire Lawrence and his family.

In 1688 Sir Edward Lawrence, presumably the squire's son, was in residence, and in the 1740s Taylor White married Sir Edward's daughter and the hall moved into the White family's ownership. The family enjoyed considerable wealth from lead mines in Yorkshire, and their fortunes increased in 1788 with a bequest of land in and around St Ives from Sir Thomas Fowkes, godfather to the White children

In 1800 Colonel Taylor White became owner, but as a memorial in the parish church shows, when he died in 1847 he was survived by just one daughter of his six children. The colonel had lost his money on farming projects at Burleigh Hill, and had latterly rented his house to the Rev Mr Rugeley to be used as a school for Ladies. The census return of 1841 lists 26 pupils, one teacher,

three servants and four member of the Rugeley family who ran the school. Mr Rugeley employed an African called Mr Sambo in the town, whose real name was Andrew Fellowson.

The house was pulled down in 1848 as the new railway ruined its grounds and the Rugeleys had to seek another site for their school, the current building in Ramsey Road, completed around 1850. In its building they recycled the sun-dial and flag stones from the old Hall, while the entrance went to Bluntisham rectory, stonework to New Bridge Terrace and marble hearth slabs and surrounds to houses in St Ives and Hemingford Grey.



*By kind permission of the Norris Museum*

The 1851 census listed 33 occupants, including various governesses, scholars and servants. Rev Rugeley's sister ran the school until she married and moved away in 1860, when the local vicar's wife ran it before selling to a Mrs Marshall, whose daughter, Grace, ran it, before she, in turn, married and moved away in 1874.

When Mrs Marshall put the building up for sale in 1877 great interest was shown by the Roman Catholic church, but several prominent members of the Free Church together purchased the Hall and installed Rev Lloyd and his wife to run the school. Innovations were made, such as three terms per year instead of two, and no longer was it necessary for two girls to sleep together in the same bed! Their daughter, Martha, was the guiding spirit of the school: she had studied in France and Germany and taught Anglo Saxon, as well as being known as a mountaineer – the first lady to climb the Matterhorn. Mar-

tha ran it following her mother's death in 1913 until 1928 when she was in her late 60s.

H M Inspector's 1925 Report says that the kitchen of the adjoining cottage had been fitted with modest equipment for practical work and science, and a green house had been erected for botanical work.

Mrs Hilda Newton became Headmistress in 1928, retiring in 1946 to be succeeded by Miss Buckfield, when the 1949 Inspector described three acres of grounds and an adjacent playing-field of four acres. Miss Buckfield retired in 1961 and was followed by Miss Palmer who resigned after one year due to ill-health. From 1962-1965 the school was run by Miss Bebbington.

H M Inspector's Report of 1962 gave a total of 116 pupils, 53 of whom were boarders. It says that a housecraft room and a classroom with cloakroom and sanitary accommodation had just come into use. *Another block contains a room for science, an art room and a classroom. The last two are thrown together for morning assembly and for boarders' dancing in the evening. There are four other classrooms, which though small, are adequate and a gymnasium of 27' by 19'6".* Tuition fees were £30 per term, and a further £65 per term for boarders.

Slepe Hall was purchased in 1965 by local farmer, George Brown and Ian Stiles, the local baker, and was converted into a hotel in 1966.

### **Some memories of past pupils**

What is now the Brunel Suite was the science block, not then joined to the main building, and the small garden to the right-hand side of Slepe Hall was the Headmistress's – which pupils never entered! Where the bungalow to the right of the Hall now stands was a domestic science/sewing block, and beyond that two grass tennis courts with a hedge behind separating it from the vegetable garden, and both a wire fence and hedge at the boundary, where the fire station now stands.

Beetroot and cabbage were regularly grown in the vegetable garden – beetroot and cold meat was regularly served for lunch, plus rice and tapioca pudding.

The house still on Ramsey Road, The Dovecote was a classroom downstairs, with the housekeeper and her son living upstairs. The Headmistress lived in rooms in the main building.





*By kind permission of the Norris Museum*

The library was opposite the current hotel's reception area, and the Headmistress's office was in what is now the restaurant.

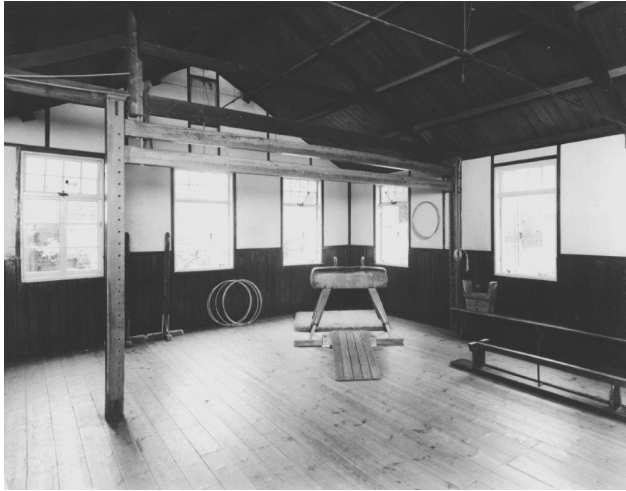
Under no circumstances could the front staircase be used by pupils.

Every dormitory consisted of five wrought iron beds with a mat and chest of drawers each, and were all on the first floor at the front. There were three or four bath cubicles which held a short deep bath (you had to sit with your knees under your chin) and a chair; you bathed every three days. There was a washroom upstairs with about ten basins.

Some pupils lived in rooms in a house on The Waits at the end of St George Road.

Yes, the small wooden building you can still see at the front was the gymnasium, where one young lady couldn't remove her shoe at the end of a lesson, swung her leg, and the shoe catapulted through the window, landing in the tennis court, now the car park; the Headmistress sent a large bill to her parents.

What we now know as Slepe Hall Playing Field was the school's, also used by the town's Cricket Club, with both a gated fence and a hedge around it. A pavilion stood in the corner where the play equipment now stands.



*By kind permission of the Norris Museum*

“Looking back, playing any kind of sport was certainly “different” as the classes were so small ..... so teams were not evenly matched. We had to wear huge baggy green knickers. So you can imagine the ribbing .... from the locals.”

Sports teams went to compete against a private school in Ramsey and Cedar House School in St Neots, and pupils went by bus once a week to Cambridge Parkside pool to swim.

Even primary aged pupils were given self-defence lessons in the gym by Mr Cuttress, a small man who was a monumental mason in the town.

During the last few years the classes were very small, only about ten in each at primary level, and held in The Dovecote, where Mrs Helen Eason took most subjects, although Mr Glen-Howell taught geography – the solitary male influence. “The awful green overalls we had to wear to lunch. They had long sleeves and wrapped round to completely cover the uniform and therefore keep us spotless!”

If we were in trouble we were sent to be disciplined by the prefects in a room, now the bottom end of the bar, with a door to the outside; we had to stand “on the black mat” just inside the door.

When President Kennedy was assassinated they got up the boarders in their

pyjamas (teddy bears and all) to sit around an old radio to listen.

*Sources: '19th Century St Ives' by Dr Mary Carter, Slepe Hall Hotel, the Norris Museum, Sarah Stiles, Jo Garton (nee Hart) and Julia Papworth (nee Stocker).*

*Barbara Richmond*

## BRIDGET'S BURSARY

When Bridget Smith, a former Civic Society Chairman, passed away at the end of December many friends in Hemingford and St Ives wanted to do something to remember her. She was an inspirational member of Hemingford Grey Gardeners' Society, as a speaker and as an experienced gardener who was always delighted to give the plants she had nurtured from cuttings to friends and neighbours.

It was important, when thinking of a memorial to Bridget, to take into account her opinions, and we all know how forceful they were! It was important to Bridget that everyone should learn to appreciate wild life, flora and fauna.

Lynne Farrell has known Bridget for many years and worked with her at the Nature Conservancy Council, then based in Huntingdon, where she was Head of Training Branch. Lynne benefited from attending various training courses arranged for NCC staff and suggested that we could create a bursary for your people (18 – 30) from the Cambridgeshire area to attend Wildlife Trust Training Workshops, as Bridget was particularly interested in encouraging young people and helping them develop their interest in the natural world.

So Bridget's Bursary was established and Hemingford Grey Gardeners' Society will administer the bursary. Several local groups and societies have already given generous donations, and we will keep them informed about the take up of courses, and also invite their members to spread the word to local residents so that younger people are encouraged to follow Bridget's love of the natural world.

*Annie Waters*

a friend, a neighbour and Secretary of the Hemingford Grey Gardeners' Society. Enquiries about Bridget's Bursary: Tel: 01480 467077 or Email: [annie@applemead.com](mailto:annie@applemead.com).

## SUMMARY OF TALKS 2014—2015

*The new season of talks began on 26th September 2014 with a talk by  
Dr Mike Osborne:*

### **Resisting Invasion in World Wars I & II**

The United Kingdom has for a long time lived with threats of invasion, going back to Spanish Armada days, and leaving out Scottish invasions. Various kings were poised to invade, the French threatened, the Jacobites rebellion, Napoleon had 150,000 troops ready, Philippe threatened. Static fortifications were built to deal with these threats.

- port at Falmouth, Weymouth, Solent, Southsea Castle
- 1565 fortifications became revolutionary in design

1805 Martello towers – several located around the coast - carried guns – manned by militia in camps close by

Mobile defences put into place. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the Warrior, a steam and sail battleship - still to be seen in Portsmouth harbour – was a response to perceived threats from French

A commission was set up in 1859-1860, to recommend fortifications. The report was a large document costing huge sums of money, to be spent on enormous guns, installed from the Solent, Isle of Wight, Plymouth, Landguard.

New generations of battle ships, Dreadnoughts, first launched in 1906 when fears of imminent invasion. Then in WWII it was Hitler who kept hundreds of thousands of our troops in readiness. Yet no foreign troops have landed on our shores since 1066.

William le Queux was a novelist, a correspondent for Daily Mail, and possessed of a creative imagination. He predicted invasions from several places – Russia included – so conscription was recommended to repulse these, the threat temperature raised to instil fear, primarily to have conscription put in place. He put around details of what was about to take place, where Germans were going to paddle across to this country, requiring thousands of British troops exercising in the Humber. The Daily Mail serialised le Queux's predictions: but there was no invasion.

Miscellaneous means of defence continued to be developed and put into use.

- In time, coastal batteries were built, Pill boxes designed by the war office, with steel doors and shutters, and set along the east Anglia and Lincolnshire coast.

- On the Humber towers were erected in which to put twelve pounder guns. Tilbury had such guns too. Pre WWI cruiser guns were used, about 150 of these placed around the British coast. Six inch guns came from Gibraltar, for taking out troop transport.
- Cyclists – yeomanry units – in east Anglia where they had trained – they were a home defence force.
- British generals returning home from the Boer war believed field guns would be useful to defend the UK coast
- the armoured train was another development which came out of the Boer war. There were two of these; one in Scotland and one in Norfolk. An armoured train with a six pound Hotchkiss gun from a battle ship.

Clacton beach – scaffolding, spikes, barbed wire field guns all in place to defend the coast line – and these tactics were used along much of the coast

A motor truck mounted with a heavy gun was used in WWI, in London as air defence, and as an anti aircraft battery.

In 1910 there were but a dozen or so airfields, but by the end of WWI there were hundreds. Airship hangers, large enough to hold an eight storey building. The Cardington hanger is still there. These airships were important especially for patrolling, in tandem, with a disguised boat, to seek out and destroy subs.

Later, airfield defence structures were erected up to 1944. Concrete structures providing 360 degree slits (see photographs on next page). The Alan Williams turret can be seen in places today, looking like an inverted bowl, made of steel.

Several attempts were made to provide a means of picking up noise from incoming aircraft, some in north east of England. A concrete sound wall 200ft x 20ft high to pick up engine sounds. This was before radar came into use. There are about six radar towers left in the country now, but there were many of them.

Manpower was key to the defence of this country. The Whitehall defence plan – for central London key buildings, had guards ringing the areas with road blocks. The Home Guard companies had their own areas to cover, and were professional units by 1943. Farmers and farm labourers who knew the countryside, were in place and ready for an invasion. They would be used to harass an invasion force, and were equipped with special weapons - knives, tummy guns.



*Pill boxes with the appearance of concrete mushrooms may be seen near Oakington, where a former airfield was located.*



*A pill box is still in place at the St Ives park and ride bus station*



*After the AGM on 17th October we were treated to two short talks:*

## **Re-development of All Saints Parish Church**



Rev Mark Amey, the vicar of All Saints St Ives, explained the ambitious plans to give the Grade 1 listed building a new lease of life as not just a place of worship but also a community hub, a role which parish churches used to have in the good old days before television, i-pads and the construction of separate village halls and community centres. The ideas had been prompted by the realisation that, sited as it is on the edge of the town centre, All Saints has become somewhat peripheral, and the Free Church had become the de facto hub – even being mistaken by visitors for the parish church, much to Father Mark's exasperation!

Inevitably, the building's listed status makes the planning of any alterations complex and time consuming, with the added bureaucracy of necessary oversight by the Church Commissioners and the many organisations having a stake in the preservation of ancient architecture. Guidance is still awaited from HDC on outline plans, and there would be extensive consultation with the local community; Father Mark distributed copies of the plan and invited members of the Civic Society to contribute comments and ideas.

Many hoops remain to be negotiated, but the critical hurdle of funding had been largely settled. The Ely Diocese agreed that the Church Hall and adjacent cottage could be sold for re-development of the land, and the proceeds used for the church project. The proposals potentially represent the largest scheme ever undertaken in an English Grade 1 listed parish church, but if they come to fruition All Saints can hopefully be once more an important and well-used centre of community life.

## Every Man Remembered



Alan Scott, Branch Secretary of the St Ives and District Branch of the Royal British Legion spoke about “Every Man Remembered”, a national project run in conjunction with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to ensure that every one of the 1.1 million service personnel killed in World War 1 is remembered in a local ceremony held as close as possible to the date on which the individual died. Within the area covered by the Branch 178 servicemen are identified on war memorials, although relatively few of those are actually buried in their own parishes; most lie in one of the many war cemeteries across the Channel. The first local act of remembrance was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2014 for Private Anthony Hull of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment. This is a unit which will figure prominently in the events over the



next four years because it was the local recruiting centre for our district.

Not all those being remembered were soldiers of course. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014 Stoker Lenham Yates was remembered. He had been aboard HMS Aboukir on blockade patrol when the ship was torpedoed by a U-boat. Tragically two other warships which came to the aid of HMS Aboukir were also torpedoed, and the disaster resulted in the loss of 1400 lives. The next ceremony would be on 9<sup>th</sup> November, marking the death of Private William Roden, also of the Bedfordshire Regiment, at the first battle of Ypres – he has no known grave.

In addition to the ceremony, each individual is commemorated by a framed certificate designed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. In 2015 there will be 21 acts of remembrance, but most will be in the following two years, reflecting the increasing scale of carnage on the Western Front 100 years ago.

*On 21st November we were listened to a two talks about:*

### **Heritage Lighting** followed by **The Godmanchester Stirling**

The gathering on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014 was another double header, with the Society's very own David Stuart providing the warm-up act. David spoke very passionately about the chaos and confusion surrounding the replacement of street lamps under Cambridgeshire County Council's PFI contract with Balfour Beatty. The programme has proved controversial in many ways, but David emphasised that his concern was only with the heritage lighting in central St Ives, much of which was only about 10 years old and of a pattern well-suited to the town. The lighting contract had included an option for low energy heritage replacements provided local communities paid the extra cost. At a consultation meeting in the early stages of the programme it was suggested that some streets in St Ives would retain existing heritage lighting, some lights would be removed altogether and the future for others was in abeyance pending clarification of what was required. Heritage lighting in both Ramsey and Stilton had already been refurbished under the contract, but there now appeared to be some doubts about whether this option was available to St Ives. David also revealed that there were many inconsistencies in the drawings both for the locations of existing lights and the replacement programme. In all this uncertainty there was a real risk that the Town's heritage lighting would be arbitrarily replaced, and David urged everyone to lobby their County Councillors individually to press for an urgent review and a more coherent and en-

## PROGRAMME OF TALKS 2015 – 2016

All monthly talks are held in the Free Church, St Ives at 7.30 pm.  
Non-members are always welcome and a donation of £2 is requested to help cover costs.

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2015 | Richard Carter (The Norris Museum):<br>Law, Order & Disaster in St Ives.                                       |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2015   | <b>Annual General Meeting</b> to be followed<br>by John Souter giving a talk on The Old<br>Riverport, St Ives. |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> November 2015  | Bridget Flanagan: Barnes House & the<br>St Ives 18th Century Mercantile Heritage.                              |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> January 2016   | Beverley Bond: A History of the Swiss<br>Gardens at Old Warden.  |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> February 2016  | Alexa Cox: Huntingdon Records Office.<br>More Pictures from the Whitney Archives<br>Collection                 |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2016     | Veronica Bennett: Sutton Hoo - Anglo-<br>Saxon Buried Treasures.   |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> April 2016     | John Chapman: War Graves   |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2016       | Jason Peters: Lost Forests of Hunting-<br>donshire   |

Please visit our website [www.stivescivic.org.uk](http://www.stivescivic.org.uk) for programme changes.



## **CIVIC SOCIETY OF ST IVES**



### **Application for Membership**

If you would like to join the Civic Society of St Ives, please complete the form below and send it with your annual subscription to:

Civic Society of St Ives  
88 Warren Road  
St Ives  
Cambridgeshire  
PE27 5NN

**Household Subscription: £12.00 per year**

**Individual Subscription: £7.00 per year**

Please complete and return the attached Standing Order mandate  
or  
enclose a cheque made payable to **Civic Society of St Ives**

I/We would like to join the Civic Society of St Ives:

Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_ First Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/ \_\_\_\_\_

Interests/ \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

vironmentally appropriate solution. The Chairman added that he had already stated the Society's position in letters to Councils and to the Hunts Post.

Having thus enlightened (or maybe not!) the audience, David handed over to the main attraction Roger Leivers. Roger recounted the story of the Godmanchester Stirling, an aircraft of No XV Sqn RAF Wyton which had crashed on the outskirts of the town in April 1942. He did so by tracing the story of the aircraft's skipper on that fateful day.



*Matthew Drummond at the controls of a Blenheim*

Matthew Drummond Henderson Wilson was born in 1914 and educated privately in Edinburgh. As a youth he developed a great interest in cars, and on leaving school he became a mechanic. Both his parents had died and on receiving his inheritance at the age of 21 he was able to indulge his passion in motor racing; amazingly his own Squire sports car survives to this day. Such an adventure-loving young man almost inevitably turned to flying in the 1930s and he learned to fly in the RAFVR, demonstrating a natural aptitude. Unfortunately, whilst flying from Newcastle Aero Club in 1938, he crashed and was quite badly injured but he recovered and was able to re-join the RAF in 1939 as war threatened. He served as a flying instructor, ferry pilot and test pilot, flying many different types of aircraft and acquiring a reputation as a skilled aviator, before joining XV Sqn in 1941.



*Drummond Wilson (4<sup>th</sup> from L) and his first crew. His Sikh co-pilot is standing next to him*

The Sqn was only the second unit to receive Stirlings, having previously flown Blenheims and Wellingtons. It had been based at RAF Wyton since the outbreak of war and the crews regarded St Ives as their home town; they adopted The Golden Lion as the squadron pub. Because the Stirling was so big it would not fit in Wyton's hangars, and the squadron operated from the satellite

airfield at Alconbury. Drummond Wilson's first crew were typically drawn from a variety of backgrounds, and his co-pilot was a Sikh, one of only 24 pilots in the RAF recruited from India during WWII. XV Sqn's aircraft were in the thick of bombing operations over Europe, including the raids on Brest in an effort to disable the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the cruiser Prinz Eugen, which posed a serious threat to wartime convoys. The raids were largely unsuccessful and, much to the embarrassment of the British, in early 1942 all three ships escaped under cover of darkness through the English Channel to the relative safety of Norway. The Sqn also contributed to the several attacks on the battleship Tirpitz, operating temporarily out of RAF Lossiemouth to reach its very well-defended fjord base in northern Norway. Early efforts were unsuccessful and losses were heavy; it was not until 1944 that the battleship was sunk. Interestingly, one of XV Sqn's aircraft was named MacRobert's Reply, purchased with a donation of £25,000 from Lady MacRobert who had tragically lost three sons flying with the RAF. Two Stirlings were so named during the war (both crashed) and the tradition continues to this day with the name now carried by a Tornado. Drummond Wilson's Stirling also crashed after an abortive raid on Kiel became an opportunistic attack on Syllt and the aircraft was damaged by anti-aircraft fire. They struggled back to England, but when two engines failed the aircraft crash-landed near Mildenhall. Sadly the front gunner was killed, having not heard the order to move aft because his intercom was disconnected, but the rest of the crew survived. The aircraft had only completed 18.5 flying hours from new, an operational life which was not untypical.

Drummond Wilson's last completed logbook entry was a Hamburg raid, and his final, fatal mission was an attack on Essen on the night of 10/11 April 1942. The weather was poor, 14 aircraft were lost and little real damage was caused. Stirling N3703, Wilson's aircraft on this operation, was badly damaged by flak but he nursed her home. Unfortunately on the approach to Alconbury he was told to go round again because there was another aircraft on the runway, but circling over Godmanchester the Stirling suffered a double engine failure and crashed. Drummond Wilson and his upper gunner were killed but the rest of the crew survived, thanks in no small part to the heroism of his co-pilot who rescued two crew members from the wreckage despite his own injuries. Wilson is buried in Wyton churchyard.

The Stirling was never entirely successful as a heavy bomber, and it was withdrawn from service as more Lancasters emerged from the factories. XV Sqn

re-located to Bourn just two months after the Godmanchester crash, and then to Mildenhall where it re-equipped with Lancasters. Perhaps the most famous Lancaster of all, LL806, flew 134 operations and 765 hours with XV Sqn, in defiance of the average aircraft survival rate of just 21 sorties.

The attrition rate amongst Bomber Command crews was horrifying, so it is not surprising that very few of the crew members with whom Wilson flew from Wyton survived the war; one of them was the Sikh co-pilot, who went on to become the deputy Chief of the Indian Air Staff. Happily the navigator who rescued his mates from N3703 also survived and was awarded the MBE for his bravery. Having pieced together the story of the Godmanchester Stirling, Roger Leivers managed to make contact with a number of relatives of crew members who had served with Drummond Wilson and an emotional “reunion” was held in 2014. He is committed to keeping the memory alive.

*On the 18th January Fiona Lucraft spoke about:*

### **Dining with The Georgians**

On a chilly, damp evening in January Fiona Lucraft transported us back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the gastronomic delights of the Georgians – the period from 1714 to 1837 covering the reigns of Georges I-IV and William IV.

But it wasn't all delights, as she began by looking at the lot of the poor, of whom there were very many. Life in rural, agricultural Britain was certainly hard but at least the labourer and his family probably had a small plot of land on which to grow vegetables and perhaps keep a few hens. In Ireland, however, even this basic existence was shattered by the potato famine, which lasted on and off from 1807 to mid-century. A rare drawing of the time, with the accompanying “Irish Poet’s Grace” summed-up the misery of crop failure and the resulting starvation of thousands, although the image – of a family at a meagrely-set table – was clearly not of the very poorest. At least this family *had* a table, covered with a cloth, and also a couple of chairs some pots and plates and food of sorts; the poorest would have sold all their possessions in a desperate attempt to stay alive.

Accounts, and particularly images, of domestic life for the poor at this time are very rare, but one organisation does give us an insight. The Workhouse was



the focus of poor relief in parishes up and down the land, and records have survived (one Workhouse has also survived largely intact in Southwell, Nottinghamshire and is in the care of the National Trust – well worth a visit). Life was not intended to be comfortable, to discourage dependency, and the diet was basic and monotonous: bread, cheese, broth, porridge, such vegetables as could be grown by the inmates and beer brewed on the premises. Surprisingly, though, some meat was available, served roasted on Sundays and cold for as long as it lasted during the week.

Beer was drunk by almost all at the lower levels of society, partly because water was not reliably clean, but beer was actually a valuable source of nutrition. Hogarth's famous cartoons *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, dating from 1758, pointed up the benefits of beer for the masses as opposed to the demon drink gin, which was the cause of much misery, crime and destitution in the cities. In *Gin Lane* the distiller, the pawnbroker and the undertaker are the only businesses thriving; the rest of the scene depicts drunkenness, squalor and ultimately death. Of course not all the working poor succumbed, but Hogarth wanted to draw attention to the problems that gin caused, particularly in London.

If the diet of the poor was so bad that they could barely keep body and soul together, at the other end of the social spectrum the problem was gluttony. Gilray's cartoon of King George III at supper lampoons the appearance, manners and excessive eating and drinking of the great and good, and his son the Prince Regent was even more caricatured. For those who aspired to polite society the lavishness of their entertaining and the food they served were important indicators of their status, and portrait paintings of the period (the equivalent of the family photograph) suggest that "plumpness" was commonplace.

For Georgian gentry the manner of eating was vitally important; the design and symmetry of a table setting mattered almost as much as the food itself, with colours and texture all contributing to the effect. Every dish in a single course was put on the table at the same time, and the dishes could comprise both savoury and sweet. A diner would eat the dishes nearest on the table, so not necessarily sampling everything that was presented. When that course was over the dishes would be removed and another eclectic mix set out, for as many courses as the lavishness of the banquet dictated. The British Library has a collection of periodical articles from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century which are in effect a guide to catering for dinner guests. In one of these articles



*On 20th February we listened to an unusual talk about:*

## **Spartan Rescue**

On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015 the Society was treated to a very professional double act by the two Richards – Spartacus and Morris – on Spartan Rescue, a national specialist rescue and safety training organisation with a branch based at Alconbury. The company is privately owned and generates its income from commercial contracts to support the statutory emergency services and deliver specialist advice and support to major public events. The staff are mainly ex military or blue light services who are trained in rescue techniques, particularly in water. The company has representatives at all the national water sports centres and is on call to help fire and rescue teams in floods and water emergencies. In the latter scenario Spartan Rescue staff often remain on the scene after first responders have left, recovering evidence or, sadly, bodies. Although many of the staff are fully-qualified divers, the teams have specialist equipment such as remotely operated underwater vehicles which means they do not have to put themselves at risk in dangerous underwater situations. Training others in water safety is another important aspect of the work, often done in schools for example on a voluntary basis by staff members.



There can be no doubting the potential danger of water, even in the seemingly benign rivers and drainage ditches of Cambridgeshire and the Fens, and the presenters went on to explain why. If you fall into a river the first hazard is thermal shock; even in summer water temperature is likely to be 10 degrees below ambient, and in winter the shock to the body could be almost immediately fatal or result in death very soon due to hypothermia. If you enter a river flowing at just 3mph and attempt to stand up, the water will be exerting a force of about 150 kilos on your body. In a current of 9mph the force is a massive three quarters of a tonne; no-one could resist this, and they would be carried away. In the process they could be exposed to further hazards such as rocks, floating debris or underwater obstructions. Man-made features such as weirs or pilings can cause severe injury if you are swept into them. The message has to be never enter unknown waters except at a recognised bathing spot; you do not know how deep the water is or what dangers lurk beneath the surface. It is also not a good idea to jump in attempting to rescue someone else, as all too often this results in two casualties; indeed there have been many cases of the original victim reaching safety and the rescuer drowning. If playing the hero and jumping in to save a person is not recommended, you should certainly never, never risk your own life jumping in to rescue a dog. It may seem amusing, but every year there are accidents as a result of people who are worse the wear for drink straying too near the water's edge and falling in – a particular hazard at waterside pubs! It is also not un-common for fishermen wearing waders to get into difficulties; if the waders fill up the weight of water makes it impossible to move and hypothermia could soon result. Needless to say, the presenters advised that waders should *not* be worn.

Water accidents involving vehicles are surprisingly common. People are remarkably foolish attempting to drive through flooded sections of road, or cross fords through rivers in spate, without knowing exactly how deep the water is. The presenters showed a video clip in which even a large 4x4 was swept downstream by the force of the water at a flooded ford. Of course, if water enters the vehicle engine via the exhaust pipe or air inlet you are then marooned in what may be rapidly rising waters and praying for the arrival of the emergency services! In recent years there have been several well-publicised fatalities as a result of vehicles crashing off Fen roads and into the drainage channels which run alongside; the local Spartan team had assisted at these accidents.

To emphasise the prevalence of accidents involving water the presenters quoted some statistics. Every year in the UK some 400 people drown in accidents. Remarkably, around 10% of UK deaths of young people in water occur in Cambridgeshire; the 12-18 age group are most at risk, and young drivers particularly so. Accidents often occur in seemingly benign conditions; the classic falling through ice scenario is very rare, perhaps because we no longer get very severe winters.

What should you do if you fall in? Don't attempt to put your feet down. Turn on your back with your head upstream (this helps to keep your face clear of the water and also enables you to see where you are going). Don't fight the current and wait for slacker water to try and make your way to shore. Stay calm.

What should you do if you see some-one else fall in? Throw a line or a life-belt, making sure the shore end is anchored. Use a branch, coat or jacket as a lifeline if the victim is close enough to the bank (don't offer a hand direct as you may be pulled in too). Call the emergency services. Resist the temptation to be a hero! On this latter point, a questioner raised the issue of, for example, policemen refusing to enter the water to rescue someone in distress; this had received adverse publicity in the media. The presenters explained that most blue light staff were not trained in water rescue and, like any member of the public, would be putting themselves at risk. The criticism was unfair, but in the heat of the moment it is undoubtedly very difficult to stand by and watch someone drown whilst waiting for specialist assistance.

*On 20th March Alexa Cox from the Huntingdon Records Office spoke about:*

### **The Whitney Archives Collection 1860-1930**

On 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015 Alexa Cox from the Huntingdon Records Office spoke to the Society about the collection of over 2000 glass plate photographs of local scenes and activities known as the Whitney Collection. Arthur Maddison, a professional photographer based in Huntingdon in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, began compiling a photographic record of Huntingdonshire life, and the work was continued by his stepson Frederick Hinde, who took over the business. Ernest Whitney joined as a young apprentice in 1903, but he then set up on his own, became a successful photographer and bought out Maddy-

son and Hinde in 1927 when Hinde died. The collection was further enlarged by Whitney, who lived a long life and served in both World Wars. He bequeathed the plates to Huntingdon Archives when he retired to New Zealand in 1971. In 2007 work began on re-cataloguing and digitising the collection, with the result that some 1200 images and descriptive text can now be viewed on line.

To illustrate the range of subjects in the collection Alexa began by showing images of two people with very different life stories. Sarah Aspittal was photographed in Huntingdon jail in 1876, after she was sentenced to 14 days hard labour for stealing. Maddison had a contract to photograph prisoners so he must have seen quite a lot of the low life in the county, but he also had as clients many of the leading lights, including the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich, owner of Hinchbrooke House, photographed in all his finery.

The rest of the talk was based on a selection of the photographs grouped under various headings. Personal moments such as studio portraits, weddings and school photographs contrasted with public events such as sports, Royal visits and celebrations (including Queen Victoria's jubilee).



*Huntingdonshire Military Band, pictured in ~1910 (WH1/318). Perhaps the Wyton Voluntary Band are their spiritual successors*

Huntingdonshire's military connections were recorded, notably aviation at Portholme and RAF Wyton. Trains and cars were a popular subject, and railway buffs were no doubt swooning over the picture of Dominion of Canada, a sister locomotive of Mallard, approaching Huntingdon Station in c1940. Cars featured perhaps because Whitney had a personal interest but also because a local business, Windovers carriage works, made bespoke bodies in Huntingdon in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The largest part of the collection consists of views of businesses, shops and interesting buildings in and around Huntingdon. These ranged from the humble - Tom Rule's smithy in Ramsey, captured in the 1930s, and the old boathouse at Hemingford Grey (alas no more) – to the grand domestic such as Laleham House in Fenstanton, once the home of a Lord Lieutenant of the County, Thomas Coote (still there but now surrounded by houses and trees) and Houghton Grange, residence of Charles Coote, JP and Mayor of St Ives (related to Thomas?), which is sadly now in a state of dereliction at the heart of the defunct poultry research establishment. Churches also figured prominently in the collection, and the views of Trinity Church, which dominated the High Street in Huntingdon for nearly 80 years, were particularly poignant given that it was demolished in the 1960s because of unsafe foundations and the site is now occupied by shops.



*Floods were a regular occurrence and the problem here at Victoria Terrace on Hemingford Rd has only recently been solved (WH2/33)*

Photographs of St Ives were of particular interest to our audience. The interior of All Saints Parish Church was shown both before and after its Victorian restoration, and is therefore a very valuable architectural record.

The vicar of All Saints in 1907 was also captured, shown not in his clerical role but in pictures of St Ives football team and also the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hunts (St Ives) scout troop, with which he was obviously associated.



*Ready for a play at the former Slepe Hall girls' school (WH1/319)*



*Still recognisably Bridge St (WH2/96)*



A view of Bridge Street in the 1890s revealed that the road was cobbled and the bridge still had its three stories, being then a private house; in most other respects the scene was remarkably unchanged. Views of the Quay showed Stratton's Dye Works in the 1870s, at which time lightermen still manned the horse-drawn barges plying the River Great Ouse. River traffic was brought to a standstill in the winter of 1890/91 however, when a great freeze meant that a horse and cart could be photographed driving across the ice! St Ives was still a major livestock market in those days, and pictures were shown of sheep pens on Market Hill in the 1890s and the new cattle market, built in 1886 at the not inconsiderable cost of £15,000. A picture of the old Fountain Inn (now Greggs bakers) showed how little the street scene has changed.



*People apparently came from far and wide to buy the new machinery on sale at Parkers of St Ives in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century(WH2/232)*

The Civic Society can perhaps feel re-assured that, despite the appearance of some modern monstrosities, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century architecture of St Ives has survived remarkably well – only the shop names have changed!

*With thanks to Huntingdon Records Office for permission to reproduce the photographs*

And then on 17th April we heard a talk by Liz Carter on:

## In and Out of the Workhouse

On 17<sup>th</sup> April Liz Carter gave a most informative talk about life in the Workhouse, an institution established in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which continued to help the destitute and homeless until the introduction of the welfare state after World War II. Local communities had been responsible for their poor from the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century but the provision was patchy. The Industrial Revolution and a succession of bad harvests increased levels of poverty, and the French Revolution caused the Government to become increasingly concerned that idle and disaffected citizens might also threaten Britain with mass unrest. The prototype workhouse at Southwell in Nottinghamshire had been built as a local initiative in 1821, but its design and modus operandi were considered so good that in 1834 an amendment to the Poor Law was rapidly passed requiring all parishes to make proper provision along the Southwell lines. Unions of groups of parishes were set up, run by a Board of Guardians, and funds were raised to construct workhouses up and down the country.

SCHZD. A.		UNION.				ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE				
* See the Provision in the Statute 11 & 12 Vict. c. 110, s. 10.										
ADMITTED.										
Year, Month, and Day of the Month.	Day of the Week.	Hour of Admission.	Names of Casual Pauper, Wife, and Family.		Age.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Calling or Occupation.	Where he Slept last Night.
1890										
Dec. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Thurs	6.0	Brown	George	27	1			Lab	Scalford
" 13 <sup>th</sup>	Sat	4.0	Carruthers	Joseph	52	1			Stonecarver	Ely
"	"	8.0	Dawley	Hammad	47		1		Fieldwoman	Whittlesea
" 15 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	5.0	Jordan	James	46	1			Wooller	Peterborough
"	"	6.0	Dine	John	44	1			Lab	Whittlesea
"	"	6.0	Bashon	Willie	84	1			"	Ely

An extract from the St Ives workshop register listing itinerant workers passing through

The Board, with volunteer representatives from each parish and a paid Clerk who did all the administration, appointed the paid staff, comprising in almost every case a master, matron, nurse, cook and porter. Master and matron were often a married couple. A doctor and priest were on call. Many workhouses also employed a school-teacher; much effort was expended to prepare orphans and the children of inmates for a useful life in employment. The

institutions were financed by a levy on all the residents of the parishes, but if you had to enter the workhouse anywhere other than where you lived the Union would ask for payment from your home parish. The exception to this rule allowed vagrants and tramps to use the workhouse temporarily as a rough bed and breakfast facility, together with anyone who was in transit seeking work elsewhere; in fact workhouses had to be not more than 20 miles apart – the distance that could be walked in a day.

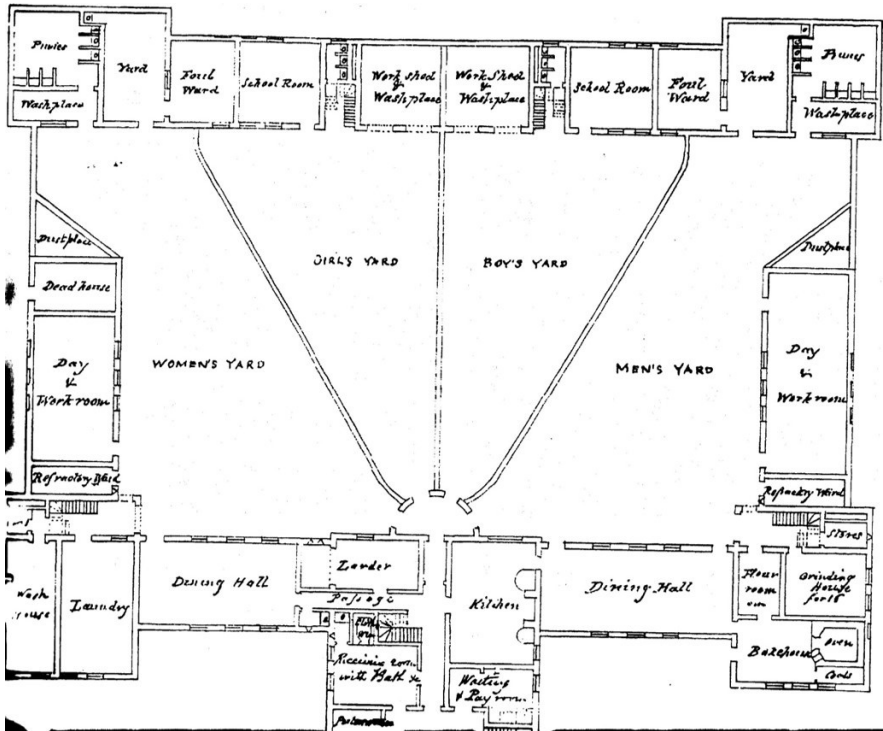
The rules for the operation of workhouses were laid down in great detail by the Poor Law Commission in London. These rules were often amended and the Clerk had to interpret them and take the necessary action. In 1860 an investigation was conducted into exactly who was in the workhouse. There were 67,800 inmates, of whom 14,216 had been there for more than 5 years, mainly as a result of old age or physical and mental disability. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there was little understanding of mental illness and the workhouse provided care in cases of dementia or depression for which there was no other provision.



*St Ives workhouse as it is today, the exterior much as during its working life*

In Huntingdonshire each of the main towns had a workhouse. The St Ives facility was a large and imposing building on Hemingford Road now known as The Limes. It was designed by the renowned architect John Nash and built in 1837 to an unusual courtyard plan. It could accommodate 400 inmates and cost several thousand pounds – borrowed by local councils using the rates as collateral. In the 1841 census there were 87 inmates at St Ives, split 50/37 male/female (elderly spinsters or widows were more likely to be kept in the family home to assist with chores). At that time there was a broadly even dis-

tribution of ages, but by 1901 the inmates were predominantly elderly, reflecting a national trend for workhouses to become more akin to old people's homes. The records suggest that St Ives workhouse never operated at full capacity, which was perhaps a comment on the general state of economic and social well-being in our area.



*St Ives workhouse plan. The day rooms were on the ground floor and dormitories above*

Workhouses were obliged to keep detailed records, so we know quite a lot about daily life there. Those seeking aid were processed initially by the porter. They were first given a cold bath – horror, as many would never have experienced a bath! – then checked for lice and infectious diseases. Their own clothes were fumigated and they were issued with the workhouse uniform. This varied from place to place – some used different colours for different classes of inmate, with prostitutes and unmarried mothers for example rather cruelly singled out – but was warm and practical. Men and women were seg-

regulated and only young children stayed with their mothers; association, even for married couples, was usually banned. A simple but filling basic diet was laid down, probably far better than most experienced outside. Some meat was on offer, together with any fruit and vegetables which were grown in the gardens or small farms often attached to the workhouse. The elderly might receive a small extra allowance for luxuries such as tea and jam.

aid down, probably far better than most experienced outside. Some meat was on offer, together with any fruit and vegetables which were grown in the gardens or small farms often attached to the workhouse. The elderly might receive a small extra allowance for luxuries such as tea and jam.

Life was hard; inmates were roused at 6am (7am in winter), worked a full day, with lights out was at 8pm. Women did domestic chores and men physical work in the fields or for example breaking stones for roads. Breaking the rules would be punished severely by the master, with restricted rations perhaps or at worst solitary confinement in a “lock-up”. It was important that inmates did not feel that workhouse life was a comfortable option; the aim was if possible to get them back to regular work and independence. Just as the poor sought help from the workhouse freely, usually as a last resort, they were also free to leave at any time provided they did not abscond in workhouse uniform – this would be stealing and incurred the full force of the law. The other way to leave was, of course, to die; many poor old folk spent their last years in the workhouse, and because life was relatively comfortable compared with outside it was not uncommon to live beyond 70 years – a good age in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, for the elderly who were not required to work life would be very boring, and it was only in the later years of the workhouse organisation that any attempt was made to provide stimulus and amusement.

Interestingly, although being in the workhouse carried a stigma, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries respectable married women might enter to give birth in the infirmary, as health care in the community was almost non-existent. It was also certainly the case that children raised in the workhouse had an advantage because of the education and encouragement to the habit of work they received, so they went on to live productive lives and break the cycle of destitution. However, by the early 1900s liberal acts of parliament began to address social issues in the community, and workhouse occupation declined. In 1930 the Unions were subsumed into local government, and the 1948 National Assistance Act, giving birth to the welfare state, heralded the end. The last workhouses closed in the early 1950s, but many were given a new lease

of life as hospitals and care homes. Two workhouses survive in their original form and are open to the public – the prototype at Southwell and Gressenhall, East Dereham – as poignant reminders of Victorian philanthropy and how social attitudes and provision have moved on in 200 years.

*Finally on 15th May we heard a talk by Peter Lee on:*

### **Developing a Local List**

For the last talk of the season on 15<sup>th</sup> May Peter Lee, the chair of Eastern Civic Voice (an umbrella organisation for regional civic societies), spoke about the experience in Peterborough of identifying buildings and other assets which are of local importance but do not enjoy the protection of national listing.

The 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the right of local councils to compile a list of assets which are of significant local interest or value so that if their future were to be threatened in any way some measure of protection might be afforded. The list can include buildings of architectural or historic significance but which do not qualify for Grade 1 or 2 status, and other assets which are deemed to be of community value. Examples of the latter might be a local shop, the closure of which would threaten the way of life in an isolated community, or an open space used for leisure or sport. The asset could be public or privately owned but in either case listing could prevent sale or change of use, or at least delay action until community effort could be mobilised to determine a satisfactory way forward. In the case of a shop this might be to run it as a community project or to re-locate it in another building. The interpretation of community value can vary widely. The example was quoted of Uttlesford DC enthusiastically identifying 117 assets, but their criteria were somewhat under-mined when one listed asset came up for re-development and no community interest could be roused to save it! In Peterborough the football ground and a particularly popular area of allotments are amongst sites which have been identified as community assets. Allotments certainly need protecting from the pressures of housing development, but were Peterborough United ever to aspire to a new stadium it is difficult to see listing standing in the way of re-development of the old ground to pay for it!

The experience of Peterborough in developing a local list was examined in some detail. Greater Peterborough consists of an urban core surrounded by 25 villages, with a total population of 185,000. About 1,000 buildings enjoy national listing status but the 2005 local plan had only identified informally 15

surrounded by 25 villages, with a total population of 185,000. About 1,000 buildings enjoy national listing status but the 2005 local plan had only identified informally 15 other buildings of local importance. The weakness of this position was highlighted when the demolition of the Great Northern Hotel was included in a re-development proposal. The Hotel is part of Peterborough's rich railway heritage, but because it was built after 1840 national listing was unlikely and it was not one of the 15 worthy buildings listed by the council. Fortunately action was taken and the building was spared, but this near disaster emphasised the need to take a more rigorous approach to local heritage protection. Peterborough Civic Society took the lead in assessing all assets in the City, and after consultation and specialist input a final list of 225 was agreed and published as an annex to the revised Local Plan.



*The Great Northern Hotel—saved from demolition*

A standardised approach to the assessment was achieved using a set of criteria based on the NPPF and now published in a guide to local listing by English Heritage. Factors to be considered are: age, rarity, aesthetic value, group value (the asset within a setting such as an industrial site), evidential value (records relating to the asset), historic association, architectural interest, designed landscapes (such as a park), landmark status (even such a humble item as a signpost or milestone) and social and community value.

Three particular buildings in Peterborough were mentioned as examples of how the local list can help. The first was the old RAF Westwood Officers' Mess, a typical 1930s RAF design but one unique to the City. It came up for sale just after the Local List was published and was bought by a housing as-

sociation. A pragmatic and sympathetic plan resulted in the surrounding land being developed for housing and the Mess building being beautifully refurbished as a company HQ – a win-win situation for developers, occupiers and the City.



*RAF Westwood Officers' Mess before its refurbishment*

The saga of Sages Tower was not so satisfactory. This water tower, built in 1902, became part of a housing development scheme in 2011 with the intention of converting the tower into 2 flats. However, by 2013 the conversion was deemed not viable and an application to demolish the tower was submitted. The listing provided grounds for this to be declined and the tower was then sold again, with new plans for a sympathetic conversion being prepared. There is as yet no conclusion, but hopefully the listing will ensure the tower is preserved in some form or other. The third example was 270 Eastfield Rd, an apparently anonymous detached house which was *not* on the list. In 2013 an application was made to demolish it and build student accommodation. This met with fierce local opposition and the application was refused on a technicality. The building has some interesting architectural details, but more importantly it was realised that several prominent local industrialists had lived there. The opportunity was taken to include it in the Local List and the house has now been preserved as part of a care home.

In discussion and Q & A after the talk it was evident that Huntingdonshire DC had not done anything about a local list for the district, so with the help of some keen and reasonably knowledgeable volunteers the Civic Society would be initiating an assessment process for St Ives. Provided this is done in accordance with the guidelines, a Local List for the Town can stand alone with the same status and legal force as one adopted by the local authority.



## HANDS ON THE PAST

### St Ives Archaeology Group (STAG)

One afternoon in May I held a Viking spearhead from Stibbington, a 7th century bottle-shaped pot found in the Conygear, a small narrow clasped medieval buckle found at Southoe and so many other local finds - did I mention the medieval shears found at Earith? This was no archaeologist enthusiast's dream, I was part of a 'behind the glass display cabinets' visit to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, organised by STAG.

The visit was another aspect of the programme STAG continues to put together that combines professional input, a sharing of our own experience, and doing a bit of digging and carrying out metal detecting. The visit to MAA is the latest in a series of workshops where members are able to handle finds. At an earlier visit to the Norris Museum we were able to combine handling objects with experiencing an insight into the process whereby items are catalogued.

The Priory Garden Dig completed by the Group in August 2014 provided us with the opportunity to handle our own finds. The dig had focussed on the excavation of a trench positioned on a feature identified from a previous geophysics survey of the site. This trench revealed a section of a Roman enclosure ditch that had been in use during the 1st – 4th centuries. From the trench and the layers above we collected pottery sherds dating from the 2nd century to modern times. Members of the Group subsequently visited Oxford Archaeology East in Cambridge and observed Stephen Macaulay, Alice Lyons, Steven Wadeson and Carole Fletcher bring their combined expertise to the complicated process of the identification and dating of the pottery we had found.

On the basis of the information they provided we were able add considerable detail to the report of The Priory Garden Dig, and importantly come away with a valuable resource for the future. In March we were able to arrange our own workshop using these finds. Tables were organised with examples of the various types of pottery, such as Roman Nene Valley Colour Coated, Roman Horningsea, Roman Grey Ware, Medieval Shelly Ware, Medieval Ely Ware, Staffordshire Slip Ware and many others. STAG members were able use this opportunity to begin to recognise for themselves the different identifying traits of each pottery type, whilst at the same time enjoying the Dolphin's comfortable facilities.

The Dolphin Hotel was also the setting for an unforgettable talk given to us by Time Team's Dr Carenza Lewis on the impact of the Black Death in our local

area and in general across the country. Most of the spare chairs from around the Dolphin had to be gathered up as we attempted to seat an audience of almost eighty. Fascinating for us was her use of data gathered from test pits dug in Houghton and Wyton over a three year period. By carefully analysing the pottery found in these test pits a picture emerged that showed the shrinking of the villages when the plague was at its height and then their subsequent re-growth. The devastating impact of the plague was clearly visible from the maps and diagrams that Dr Lewis used to good effect in her presentation.

In June STAG will be sharing a Godmanchester school playing field with an encampment of Roman soldiers. The school is organising a fete with a Roman theme and we have been invited to organise a 'fun dig' for the pupils. A professional dig was once carried out on the site that found evidence of the nearby Roman road. Many little hands will help us take off the very top layer of a six metre trench, and who knows what we will find? However we are grateful to have been offered the chance to go back on another occasion to dig deeper, should any interesting features appear.

For our own excavations this year we are planning two small local projects, plus organising a visit to the site of a moated manor near Alconbury Weston. Our first project will be digging a small trench across a feature we originally identified using Google Earth. The site is near the 'Old River' in St Ives and has the form of a sub-rectangular feature. Essentially there is evidence of a ditch that forms the shape of a rectangle and we would like to find out more about its story. Our second activity this year will again involve the opening of a small trench that will hopefully tell us more about the history of rope making in St Ives, and will build upon the story of the town as an inland port.

As members of STAG we are able to take part in the many training opportunities provided by Jigsaw, the community outreach arm of Oxford Archaeology East. As part of their programme the Jigsaw team will be running a two week training dig at Covington, where training will be provided in all aspects of managing a dig - from taking up the turf to recording features and finds. As well as being an important source of equipment, Jigsaw provides a great service by giving us expert information on the technical aspects of archaeology, enabling us to match our enthusiasm with actual skill development. A huge thanks to them from STAG!

This brief summary takes us towards our next AGM in September, when we will once again be looking forward to laying the groundwork for our continued

archaeological endeavours in and around St Ives. Do join us and keep up to date with our activities, see our website [www.stag2012.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.stag2012.blogspot.co.uk)

## *Alan Hunter*

Chairman, St Ives Archaeology Group

Article written in May 2015.

### A WONDERFUL HANDS ON GLOVES ON SESSION

A fascinating behind the scenes handling session at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



Imogen Gunn, Collections Manager at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology led members of STAG through a fascinating handling session of wonderful locally found Roman, Viking and Medieval items selected from the Museums vast collection. May 2015.

***Front cover photo: The Bridge Chapel by Hubert Coop***

## **Hubert Coop (1872-1953)**

**This watercolour by Hubert Coop shows the Bridge Chapel with the Dolphin Hotel in the background.**

Hubert Coop was born in Olney, Buckinghamshire, the son of the Revd Thomas Coop. He was educated at Wolverhampton and Birmingham, and after a short period in business, went to study at the Lincoln School of Art where he obtained a First Class Degree in Design. He moved to North Wales to take up painting as a profession, concentrating on painting river estuary and coastal scenes from nature. By 1913 he had moved to Lowestoft, Suffolk, where he continued to paint coastal scenes and windmills around Southwold and up the coast into the Norfolk Broads. He then resided in St Ives, Huntingdonshire, for a short period before taking up residence in Kettering, Northamptonshire. His 1918 entry to the Royal Academy has an address in Newland Street, Kettering. In the late 1920s he moved to Bideford, Devon, where he remained for the rest of his life. The Burton Art Gallery & Museum in Bideford has a selection of his watercolours and oil paintings on permanent display. His paintings can often be seen at the Alfred East Art Gallery in Kettering.

Coop was elected a member of the Royal Society of British Artists in London in 1895, aged 22, and subsequently exhibited 24 works there. He also exhibited at the Royal Academy (20); the Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham (20); and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (39).

*Published by the Civic Society of St Ives © 2014  
Registered under the Charities Act 1960 (No 257286)*

*Printed by The Artworks 01487 842687 E-mail: [artworks@sundial.co.uk](mailto:artworks@sundial.co.uk)*