



Civic Society of St Ives

Annual Report 2016

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

The society is a member of:

The Campaign to Protect Rural England

www.cpre.org.uk

and

The Cambridge Antiquarian Society

www.camantsoc.org

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2016 has been an interesting year with positive developments on nearly all fronts. I will take them in turn.

The Octagon. This structure holds significant status in the history of St Ives as it was the final place for the auction of cattle. Its history has come down from the Broadway cattle market which was once the biggest livestock market outside Smithfields in London. Indeed the New Bridges on London Road were built primarily as a drove for livestock on their way to London. Nowadays all that remains of the market are the original entrance Lodge Houses, some railings and a few cobbles. The Octagon with its distinct shape and colour dominated the area but was falling into disrepair. We knew that the chances of registering it as a Listed Building were slim as it is not very old (built in the 1940's) and, as an auction ring, was not rare. We applied gentle but firm diplomatic pressure to have it conserved as a building of importance to the heritage of St Ives. This approach worked and with the support of the District Councillors representing St Ives, a sum of £50,000 was allocated for the renovation of the building. As you may now see the structure is indeed restored to its former state. Thanks must go to the District Council for this work. It remains to be seen how the building will be used in the future but it will need to be financially self sustaining.

The Annual Quiz. Once again our generous benefactor, Philip Simpson (a St Ivisian living in France) gave us a challenge. He and Bob Burn-Murdoch put together a quiz of 100 questions on St Ives. Philip also funded nibbles and refreshments for the evening. The challenge was to answer 75 out of the 100 questions correctly. Remarkably we achieved 94% and thus gained the £1000 prize. Our thanks go to Philip and Bob for a most enjoyable evening.

Vice Presidents. Most of us are aware that we elected Bob Burn-Murdoch MBE to be our President following his retirement from the Norris Museum. It occurred to the Committee that there are some others who have also given of their expertise and, in some cases, considerable sums of money to your Society. We have agreed that they should have their commitment recognised through the creation of a limited number of Vice President positions. This will involve an amendment to our Constitution which will be put to you for debate and, hopefully, approval at our AGM in October.

J D Wetherspoon. We unsuccessfully represented the case against J D Wetherspoon opening an outlet here in St Ives (threat to local pubs in Listed Buildings). However, we have moved on from that era. We persuaded J D Wetherspoon to paint over the Warehouse Clearance sign over their premises in time for the Anglia in Bloom competition. We also arranged with great help from the Royal British Legion to post WW1 posters commemorating the Battle of the Somme across the steel frontage of the premises. This linked appropri-

ately with the floral troughs round the War Memorial. I am told that the judges thought well of this correlation.

The Golden Lion. By now most will know that Michael Purchas has sold the Golden Lion. The new owners are the Coaching Inns group led by Kevin Charity. This group has several similar properties and they are well aware of the value of Listed Buildings to the local culture. I have no doubt that the Golden Lion is in safe hands especially as Kevin's wife's mother used to live in St Ives.

Michael Purchas still owns the Robin Hood and he was kind enough to put up hanging baskets outside the pub for Anglia in Bloom. Michael is preparing for retirement and is building a family home in a Conservation Area village just outside Nottingham whilst mulling over the future use of the Robin Hood.

The Old Bridge Chapel of St Leger. The County Council's Bridges Department has now finished the restoration of the inside of the Chapel. It has been completed using materials and plaster befitting the Chapel's age. In addition, the Town Council has finally solved the continual problem of the Old Bridge lighting. We are most grateful for these works.

Town Centre Heritage Lighting. This is a campaign that has been running for over two years. David Stewart of your Committee discovered discrepancies in the County wide contract between the County Council and Balfour Beatty (the contractors). Unfortunately, a good number of our black columned town centre heritage lights were missing from the contractual database. It has been steady but progressive work to add these lights back into the contract lest they be replaced by grey metallic poles. We are grateful to the Town Clerk for acting as an intermediary in this project and also to our two County Councillors representing St Ives who have supported us. We have nearly succeeded!

The Society's own light project. All the work on the town centre lighting gave birth to another initiative. It was discovered that the original Grade 2 Listed light overlooking the Parish Church churchyard (area depicted on the front cover painting) had been replaced by a garish sodium light sometime in the mists of time. As part of our efforts to get the lighting right we came up with the idea of restoring this light. Application was made to the Goodliff Fund (administered by the Huntingdonshire Local History Society) for a grant towards replacing the current light with a Victorian replica. The Goodliff fund has granted us £750 towards the £1500 needed. We are thus launching a public appeal for the remaining money. When you see the appeal flier (entitled Lighting the Way) please donate as you think fit in your historically generous manner. We will all be very grateful.

Your Committee. I am sure you will remember that I tried to stand down as Chairman at last year's AGM. Over the last few years I have not enjoyed the best of health and this, coupled with being your Chairman for nearly 10 years, has given me cause to reflect on the amount of voluntary work I have taken on. To encourage a re-think of the main positions we will bring a suggested amendment to our Constitution at our AGM. It will propose that the 4 key positions of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary are limited to 3 years unless the post holders wish to stay on. In which case there will be an election.

Whilst on the topic of your Committee I would like to thank publicly, on your behalf, our current Committee for their work throughout the year. They are:

Pat Allan (sadly deceased)
Helen Eveleigh
Margaret King
Jane McKee
Richard Probyn
Barbara Richmond
David Stewart

Basil Belcher
Peter Jackson
David Knights
Peter Newbould
Tim Reed
Peggy Seamark
Peter Whatnell

Once again, outside of the Committee but providing invaluable assistance are:

Brian Richmond (Webmaster and Annual Report compiler)
Mike Davison (Note taker at our monthly meetings)
Dianne McGoff (Accounts Examiner)
The Free Church Staff
All Annual Report Distributors

Finally, it has been a great privilege to serve the Civic Society of St Ives. It is and I hope will remain a non-political organisation which seeks to influence through diplomacy and tact wherever possible. A point I made very clear in my broadcast on Huntingdon Community Radio back in July. Thank you for your loyal and generous support during these past years. I am sure you will do the same for your next Chairman.

If you would like to comment on my report then please email me at ptbaker@supanet.com or ring 01480 462783. Alternatively, please feel free to speak at our AGM.

Yours most sincerely,

Peter Baker

Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT 2015

This year's receipt and expenditure resulted in a £288 surplus which, when the £96 interest from the deposit account is added, gives an overall surplus for the year of £384. This is significantly less than last year but is more representative of our normal financial situation, as last year we received several large donations and a bequest.

We received generous donations during the year from Bob King, Bob Burn-Murdoch and Philip Simpson.

We again supported Music on the Waits, with a £350 grant.

Gift Aid contributed £338 this year and remains an essential part of our income. Any member who pays income tax can have their subscription included in our future applications by completing the forms available from Helen Eveleigh or me.

Our deposit account has produced a miserly £96 this year.

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, or by standing order. Standing Orders are preferred and forms for this are available at any meeting from Helen Eveleigh 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 follow this report

Basil Belcher

Treasurer

Civic Society of St Ives Statement of Income & Expenditure
as at 30th April 2016

Income	Year to	Year	Expenditure	Year to	Year
	30-04-16	2015		30-04-16	2015
	£	£		£	£
Subscriptions/Donations	2,602	2,636	Hall Hire	392	335
Slepe Hall Donations			Annual Report	978	878
Visitors	39	70	Speakers	389	350
Memorial Fund			Memorial Fund		
Social Evenings		150	Social Evenings		110
Raffle	0	56	Raffle	0	28
Interest			Insurance	216	161
Gift Aid	338	415	Antiquarian Soc Subs	20	20
Heritage Weekend	140	25	CPRE Subs	36	36
Trips		52	Trips		45
Bequests		100	Donations/Gifts	350	592
Deposit Acc Transfer			Deposit Acc Transfer		1,000
			Administration	261	378
Donations	127	1,229	Postage	48	
			Phone		53
			Travel		
			Web Site	100	409
			Heritage Weekend	110	69
Remembrance Collection		1,962	Remembrance Collection	58	499
				110	110
				58	1,748
	3,246	6,695		2,958	5,912
Balances from 30 April 2015			Balances at 30th April 2016		
Current account	3,851		Current account	4,194	
Deposit Account	9,866		Deposit Account	9,963	
Total	13,717		Total	14,157	
Plus					
Surplus for year	288		add		
Dep. Ac.Transfer + Interest	96		Receipts after Period end	0	
Total	14,102		less		
less			Cheques yet to be		
2015 Payments	216		presented	271	
£ 13,886			£ 13,886		

Report to the Trustees & Members of The Civic Society of St Ives, Charity No 257286, on the Accounts for the year ended 30th April 2016 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: 3rd August 2016

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

MINUTES OF THE 47th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 16th October 2015, at the Free Church, St Ives.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies have been received from: Theresa Norrris, Freda Done, Ian and Evelyn Penfold, Ann Allen, Norma Head, Colin Sanderson, John and Veronica Smoothy, Phillip and Maureen Miller, Ed and Joan Kelly, Ron and Kate Saunders, John Archer.

2. MINUTES OF THE 46th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

The Chairman advised the minutes have been published in the 46th Annual Report.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

The Chairman noted that he had detected nothing that would not be covered in his report, he requested questions be asked after his report.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The Chairman commenced by noting we were all aware that Bridget Smith died earlier in the year. Her diminutive stature, coupled with her enthusiasm and determination will live on in our memories for a long time. She was an outstanding Chairman of the Society. We have posted a Testimonial on our website.

He continued with news of Morrisons; that despite store closures across the country Morrisons have bought the land adjacent to the Marsh Harrier. It means that when the building work starts it will trigger £6,000 of Section 106 money for town signage.

Regarding the Old Bridge and Chapel the Society works closely with Cambridgeshire County Council Bridges Department, this pays dividends. The interior of the chapel has been re-rendered and cleaned up and the Bridge Stonework has been refurbished where necessary. All this work has to be passed by English Heritage which insists on sympathetic conservation, as they did for the work to the Arches of the New Bridges. It is an expensive business. The Town Council has also played a major part in having the old bridge lighting repaired. We have nudged for some time, but the Town Clerk has pushed and prodded and the work is now complete. The Chairman thanked Alison.

Next J D Wetherspoon and the proposed use of the Warehouse Clearance Shop. Their application for change of use from retail to public house is coming before Huntingdon District Council's Development Management Panel this

coming Monday evening at 7pm at Pathfinder House. A paper recommending approval has been prepared for the Councillors sitting on the panel but it pays scant attention to our Society's objections and no real reference to the Town Council's objections. The Chairman has asked to speak on behalf of the society and either Nick Dibben or Martin Collier will speak for the Town Council. Mark Shaw will speak for close residents.

The Chairman then turned to the recent Heritage Open Days weekend and said it was the best ever. The weekend was blessed with good weather and churches of all denominations, mosques, the Masonic Lodge, Town Hall, Bridge Chapel, Norris Museum, Holt Island and the Corn Exchange were all open. The sheer diversity and enthusiasm of this national event continues to surprise as such diverse organisations all co-operating and putting on putting on a really good show.

Next he spoke about the heritage lighting. The black painted lamp standards in the town centre. The Society has provided the Town Council with a mass of detailed information on who owns what and it is clear that up to 14 lights are orphans. As the Cambridgeshire County Council's indirect contract with contractors Balfour Beatty is fixed, we could have an impasse. Nothing will happen in the short term as your society's line to ensure this work is done properly and sympathetically has the support of our MP, who is a friend of the society and receives our annual report. Information is awaited from BB before the Town Council debates the issue. We will be there.

The Chairman then spoke about the Octagon. He read out a statement recently received from Huntingdon DC. *"The District Councillors for St Ives have acknowledged the good work the Civic Society has done in raising the historical and potential economic added value of the Octagon. As such they are in the process of securing £40,000 for the external refurbishment as set out in the condition survey report. Purely commercial uses are no longer being pursued and the District Councillors for St Ives are now working with interested community groups to explore options for the future."* The Chairman knew that HDC will only charge a peppercorn rent for the building and that they will retain ownership. However, internal refurbishment and maintenance will be up to the successful applicant. The Save The Octagon Group have put forward their proposals but if there are any other bright ideas about its future, the Chairman requested them.

In the wider area of future planning, there is to be a public exhibition the following weekend in Huntingdon Library. To be put on by Crest Nicholson, the developers. The Society's comments have been forwarded and involve infrastructure, in particular drainage and surface water run-off, from 3,750 houses and roads which will pass to the north east of the former airfield and drain down to Parsons Drove, passing the Manchester Arms and thence to the riv-

er. When the river is in spate it will be difficult for the water to escape and it will inevitably back up. Meanwhile STAG (the archeology group are busy digging holes, they have recently investigated a rectangular enclosure close to the Chubb Stream.

Another proposal is to build 1400 homes at Giffords Farm near Needingworth. This also has infrastructure challenges, both roads and drainage.

The Chairman then commentated he may sound to be something of a NIMBY, far from it, your Society recognises the need for change but tries to influence it intelligently. If you reflect for a moment, all that we have achieved has been done by working with central and local government at all levels. This work has led to 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 Chairman then concluded his admittedly lengthy report by mentioning a couple of items. Our ambassador in France, Philip Simpson, is again compiling a quiz but this time the hundred questions will be shared with our Life President Bob Burn-Murdoch. The prize remains at £1,000 for our society plus a substantial allowance for nibbles, wine and soft drinks. The date for the quiz will be announced later.

The Books of Remembrance and Honour have been updated and new pages for the Book of Honour will be placed in the Parish Church, after consultation with Father Mark Amey, in time for Remembrance Sunday.

You may also recall that Peter Plowman, under the aegis of the Civic Society succeeded in having our Memorial registered as a listed monument by English Heritage. It is now protected and cannot be subjected to the vagaries of local planner's whims.

Finally the Chairman asked the committee to stand for acknowledgement of their work. The Chairman then invited questions.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Nothing to note.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT:

The Treasurer's Report and the Annual Accounts for the year have been published in the Annual Report

.7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE:

The Chairman commented that he did not intend to stand again, and suggested that the post of Chairman be dealt with last.

1. Basil Belcher has offered to stand again as Treasurer.
2. The post of Secretary remains vacant unless there are any volunteers
3. Committee members: We have welcomed Margaret King and David Knights onto the committee and the following are willing to continue:
Pat Allan Helen Eveleigh
Peter Jackson Jane McKee
Peter Newbould Barbara Richmond
Peggy Seamark David Stewart

Now to the Chair: The Chairman has not been able to find a volunteer to take on the post from within the Committee; he asked if there was a member of the society who would volunteer for the post? He advised that he was prepared to continue on the committee for one year and would mentor any successor. No offer was made from the membership present so the Chairman advised he intended to leave the room for a couple of minutes to allow a discussion amongst the membership unfettered by his presence. After an interval the Chairman returned, no offer having been made.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Appointment of an accounts examiner for 2015-2016. The proposal is to appoint Diane McGoff BSc, ACIB as an independent witness examiner until the conclusion of the 2016 AGM.

Proposed by Paul Cooper and seconded by Nick Dibben.

The Chairman's own AOB was a vote of thanks to the following:

Brian Richmond - Webmaster and Annual Report compiler
Mike Davison - Note taker at monthly meetings
The staff at the Free Church
The Annual Report distributors
Diane McGoff - Independent accounts examiner

The Annual General meeting was concluded.

CIVIC SOCIETY of ST. IVES
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
21st October 2016
AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 47th 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 2016.
7. Election of Officers and Committee.
8. Any Other Business, including:
 - a. Appointment of an accounts examiner for 2016-2017

Resolutions:

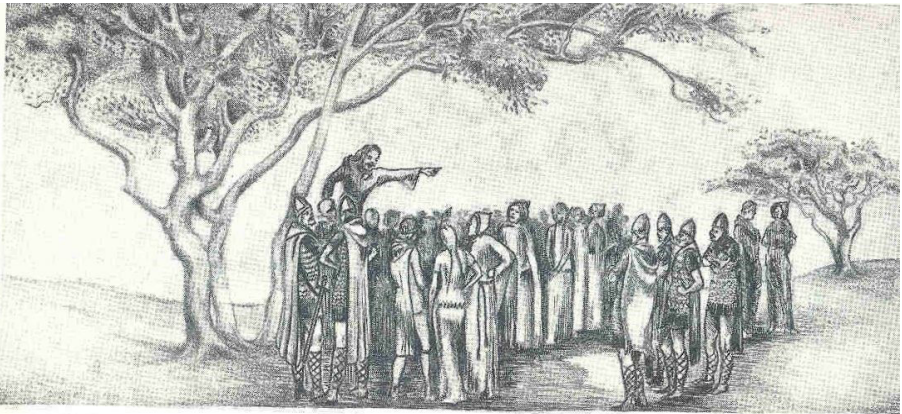
Accounts Examiner: To appoint Ms. Dianne McGoff, BSc, ACIB as independent accounts examiner until the conclusion of the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

SUMMARY OF TALKS 2015—2016

The new season's programme began on 18th September with a talk by Richard Carter from the Norris Museum. As an ex police officer, has a particular interest in the history of maintaining law and order.

LAW AND ORDER IN ST IVES AND DISTRICT

Although the framework of law and order as we understand it today dates from as recently as the early 1800s, it would be wrong to think that life before then was simply a “wild west” of arbitrary power and cruel summary justice. In Anglo-Saxon times the modest settlement beside the River Great Ouse called Slepe would have been part of a well-established system of local government based on folk right, or what we might now call common law. This was a generally accepted view of right and wrong based on tribal customs, in our case in the kingdom of East Anglia. The ultimate authority was the king, but local administration and justice were based on the geographical sub-divisions of the shire, the hundred and the tithing (the latter a group of around 10 freemen, typically a hamlet, with ten constituting a hundred). The hundred was the hub of the community, and each of these areas had a Reeve appointed by the crown to administer it. Slepe was in the hundred of Hurstingstone, part of the shire of Huntingdon, and the Reeve oversaw the work of the peasants, ensured that they paid their tithe (normally in the form of work on behalf of the local lord) and administered the hundred court at which disputes were settled and punishments for wrong-doing meted out.



HOLDING A SAXON COURT UNDER A THORN TREE

After the Conquest this system was continued and expanded, because it enabled the new Norman lords to exercise control over their subjects. At the level of the manor or hundred the Bailiff assumed the tasks of the Reeve, the latter title being retained for the “enforcer” of the shire – hence shire-reeve, later corrupted to Sheriff. The Sheriff of Nottingham is perhaps the best known example of this powerful crown servant, and the title of Sheriff continues to this day, albeit now a largely ceremonial appointment to acknowledge contributions to local society. The Bailiff was not only responsible for enforcing law in the hundred court but also for local administrative matters such as rubbish disposal. In St Ives he also organised and policed the increasingly important fairs. In Victorian times the Bailiff’s legal duties were taken over by the constabulary, and today the name lives on only in the very specific role of debt collection – except in the Channel Islands where the title still denotes the senior law officer.

The officer most likely to be encountered by the average citizen was the Constable. The Statute of Winchester in 1285 laid down the appointment of two Constables in each hundred, and in late mediaeval times it became the parish Constable who enforced the law at the very local level, apprehending drunks and vagrants and delivering those who had committed more serious crimes such as theft or assault to the court. Miscreants would often be held in local lock-ups (such as that preserved in Needingworth) until they could be transferred to the county jail. Constables were assisted by Watchmen, one of whose duties was to call out the time on the hour in local communities where otherwise only the position of the sun gave any indication of the passage of time.

Constables were not trained and their duties were ill-defined, so there were no doubt many abuses; it was not until the 1839 Police Act that the parish role ended and the constable became the lowest rank and the mainstay of newly created police forces.

A law officer was able to enlist help in catching a criminal by raising a “hue and cry”, which empowered citizens to give chase. If caught, the felon was dealt with by the Justice of the Peace or magistrate; convictions were usually based on a confession (however extracted!) backed-up by witnesses.



A smartly attired local constable makes an arrest with the aid of his trusty truncheon

Punishments ranged from fines – 6d seems the favourite amount, a lot of money in mediaeval times - to execution, and what to us may have seemed fairly innocuous crimes were often severely dealt with. Corporal punishment was common; there was a pillory in Huntingdon (a particularly painful contraption so the felon usually only had to suffer an hour), and there is evidence for a set of stocks in St Ives, thought to be located outside what is now Tom's bakery. Between 1610 and 1868 transportation – almost always for life – was widely used as a punishment for crimes such as burglary.

Although capital punishment was reserved for the most heinous crimes as many as 220 capital offences were listed in 1810, including surprisingly poaching; by 1861 the list had been reduced to murder, treason, setting fire to a naval dockyard and piracy. For centuries executions had been public; this was certainly intended to deter others from crime but the popularity of such events must also have tapped into the same sort of ghoulish delight which

had gripped spectators at the Roman Colosseum. This dubious entertainment ceased in 1868. Happily there is no record of any capital punishment in St Ives, and in 1965 it was abolished for murder (though amazingly not for treason and piracy until 1998).

Unusual or very public crimes have always attracted the most attention. In 1449 St Ives Priory was attacked; we don't know why, but the Church under the Abbot of Ramsey, which owned most of Huntingdonshire, was extremely powerful and extracted much money from citizens in the form of taxes and levies, so perhaps this was a protest. Surprisingly, there is no record of anyone being punished for what would have been seen as a very serious offence. In 1652 two highwaymen from Fenstanton, under the influence of drink, tried to hold up a heavily guarded coach on the Great North Road occupied by none other than Oliver Cromwell! Shots were exchanged and one man got away, but the other was hit, treated for his wounds, and then hanged! In 1798 on a market day in St Ives there was a riotous assembly protesting about the price of food. Shops were looted but eventually the crowd dispersed, and again surprisingly there were no arrests. At a more mundane level, it is recorded that in the 16th century a man was flogged through the streets of Huntingdon for stealing flour.

One of the more intriguing local crimes concerned PC Lamb of Huntingdon, who failed to report for duty one day in 1841. His body was found months later under the river bridge, but there was no evidence of violence. A family with which he had been in some dispute was arrested but acquitted. Many years later another criminal, when routinely questioned, revealed that he had seen the family members throw the PC's body in the river; they were re-arrested but again acquitted, presumably because there was no corroborating evidence.

The first lock-up in St Ives was built in 1842, and the first town constable was appointed in 1847. The constable's independence did not last long however, and the office was incorporated into the Huntingdonshire Constabulary in 1857. The police station was enlarged in 1884 and remained in use until someone with a sense of humour built the new station on Pig Lane! The old county was never a hotbed of crime, but strangely in the 1960s was notorious for road traffic accidents. It is a measure of the changing times that in the 1980s there were 25 officers on duty at any given time in the district; now there are just 6 for a population which is significantly larger!

After the AGM on the 16th October there followed a talk by John Souter, Chairman of the St Ives Town Team.

THE OLD RIVERPORT ST IVES

It was clear that for many people living in St Ives the decision by St Ives Town Council to call the centre The Old Riverport was a bit of a mystery. This talk sought to explain why this had been done and how the name was helping the town to attract visitors.

A display was mounted highlighting the river history for members to see prior to the AGM.

John initially explained that the title did not mean that the better-known past of St Ives as a market town was being edged out or forgotten. Far from it the market history and the current award winning Farmers' Market are promoted with vigour.

It is the core of the conservation area of the town that has been named **The Old Riverport** in recognition of the importance that the river had, and still has to the town both aesthetically for residents and as a major attraction for visitors.

At one time about one third of all jobs in St Ives were connected with the river trade and for centuries St Ives was a nationally significant inland port due to the Ouse being easier to navigate than the Nene and its connection to Kings Lynn, one of the busiest ports.

John also explained that calling St Ives The Old Riverport was a recent invention. The Town Team who has been instrumental in promoting the town, launched The Old Riverport on March 29th 2014. Some residents thought history was being re-written and John explained this wasn't the case and neither had any roads been re-named.

The Old Riverport recognises the history of the river but more importantly today it is a way of branding St Ives. In an era where small towns have to compete to attract shoppers and visitors the title The Old Riverport sets us apart from all the other market towns around. Indeed there is no other Old Riverport in the country so it is a unique selling point. The new logo St Ives Cambridgeshire it is hoped will help to separate us from our larger namesake that tops the Google search engine.

John went on to explain that the Town Team spend time and money on ways to keep the town vibrant and help retain the shops and businesses that make living here so attractive.

They developed a new website 'The Old Riverport St Ives' which is updating the main town sites and gives a free presence to all town businesses. It hopes

to offer all the information about St Ives in one place with links to the Town Council Council, Norris Museum, Corn Exchange and Our St Ives the community site. It is also the place to find out what is going on.

Most importantly the Town Team have a large display in Cambridge's Tourist Information Centre which has 300,000 visitors a year and their website which has 1.2 million hits a year. These are important campaigns which enable us to attract many visitors from Cambridge along the Guided Busway. We are also working with Stagecoach on publicity and promotions that we hope will encourage some of the 5 million visitors to Cambridge to come here.

John concluded by talking about the other promotions the Town Team had done. Namely The Old Riverport St Ives Jazz & Blues Festival at the end of September and the calendar currently on sale. All promoting St Ives as The Old Riverport.

Finally the talk ended with a short film about the Discovery Day held in July as part of the OuseFest fortnight.



Bridget Flanagan spoke to the meeting on 20th November about
**BARNES HOUSE AND THE ST IVES 18TH CENTURY MER-
CANTILE HERITAGE**

Thanks to the fairs and a thriving market, St Ives had become during the late medieval period an important and comparatively wealthy local centre. This importance waned somewhat after the dissolution of the monasteries but was given a new lease of life when, in the face of considerable opposition from the owners of the many water mills, sluices were built along the River Great Ouse to control water levels and facilitate the movement of barges and other vessels as far upstream as Bedford. St Ives became a thriving inland port, connected by the navigable river to Kings Lynn and the North Sea, enabling the export of the region's agricultural products and the import of goods and raw materials, notably coal. From the early 18th C to the coming of the railway, the river was the catalyst for a new age of prosperity, the mercantile era.



Barnes House today. The oldest part is in the centre.

The nature of this success can be illustrated by an exploration of the history of Barnes House, one of St Ives' finest domestic buildings. This property is situated just west of the parish church in the old part of the town known as Slepe. Its exact age is uncertain, though the earliest surviving parts are probably 17th C, and it has been much altered and extended over the years, being at times

one, two and three separate dwellings. The story really begins when Samuel White moved to St Ives with his two brothers in 1690; their father Thomas had allegedly been a leading member of Cromwell's model army, and this association may have influenced the family move. However, the Whites were also Dissenters; they may well have been drawn to St Ives because it was a centre for non-conformists, and they quickly assumed a central role in the local movement. With what was clearly an eye for an opportunity the brothers bought up some key sites in the town cheaply after the terrible fire of 1689 had destroyed about a third of the properties, and they established a drapery and clothing business. They were clearly successful, and the relationships and networks established through the expanding and prosperous congregation of the non-conformist Meeting House (later to become The Free Church) no doubt helped to oil the wheels of business. They were just the sort of merchant adventurers who had joined together to finance Vermuyden's draining of the Fens.

This success enabled Samuel to buy the fine property which later became Barnes House. It was identified in Pettis' 1728 map of the town as Sam's House, with various outbuildings and orchards attached. Pettis also describes the property as commonable, meaning the owner had the right to graze animals on common land. This relic of mediaeval land law suggests that there was a significant property on the site before the present building. The rental value was given as £24, putting Sam's House in the top 10% of properties in St Ives. Samuel White married Ann Williamson, daughter of a Kings Lynn brewer, and this business connection likely prompted the building of a maltings behind the house; unfortunately this was demolished in 1922 and few traces remain. Sam's brothers also prospered: Ephraim bought The Bull Inn in Bridge St (where West End is today) for the princely sum of £300, and lived in what is now Dunkirk House on the Quay; Benjamin owned The Mitre in Bridge St.

The river was extremely busy; this much later scene from c1835 shows many barges and sailing boats either tied up at the St Ives wharves or on passage. The rich merchants valued a view of the river – to show off their business to visitors and to keep an eye on the traffic – but Sam's House was not right beside the river. This problem was overcome by constructing a gazebo in the garden, of a design similar to those seen in Holland and also on the River Lee at Ware in Hertfordshire – recently restored. The building survives alongside

the path opposite Holt Island, though in a sadly dilapidated state. A Fraser painting of the west end of St Ives shows the wharves adjacent to Barnes House, and a slipway is still visible today, suggesting that the house was at the very heart of commercial activity



*A very busy riverport. Barnes House can be seen extreme left
(with permission of Norris Museum)*

On Samuel White's death in 1737 the house was bought by Thomas Barnes, another leading member of the community, and took on his name. He died quite young, leaving assets to what was in those days the enormous value of £5279; his memorial is in the parish church. His wife Ann married the vicar Rev Manison Warner and continued to live in the house. The estate passed 27 years later to Thomas' younger son Joseph, who built in 1770 the grand extension to the house which we see on the left of the building today. The structure is of red brick with large bay windows and a fashionable Venetian window over-looking the river. Little is known of Joseph Barnes, though he was obviously very successful and wealthy and lived a long life. After his death his widow and two unmarried daughters continued to live in Barnes

House. In 1837 one of the Barnes daughters, Catherine married at the age of 57 a wool stapler called Joseph Beetles, who was less than half her age! An insurance certificate later shows Catherine Beetles as the head of the house. When she died in 1857 the Barnes connection ended, though the dynasty continued to be prominent locally; a great grandson of Joseph, Robert Hutchinson, was the architect of the St Ives Corn Exchange, built in 1864. The house was bought by Thomas Earl, who was married to Catherine's sister-in-law, but he died a year later without ever living in it. Earl was a very wealthy businessman who owned not only Barnes House but a great deal of property in and around St Ives, including 31 pubs. His will took years to sort out, but eventually in 1877 the house was bought by Thomas Knights, a corn merchant whose brother ran Hemingford mill. Knights was a gift to historians because he kept a diary, and we know he was a pillar of society, Mayor of St Ives in 1880 and a churchwarden. He extended Barnes House again and bought the West End Brewery.

By the late 19th C the railways had all but killed-off the river trade, although St Ives continued to be an important agricultural centre, as evidenced by the new cattle market. Barnes House passed in 1902 to Thomas Knights' son and then to solicitor Henry Copley in 1922, at which point the property was divided into three separate dwellings.

Barnes House is of considerable interest architecturally but it also bears witness to 300 years of history in St Ives, including around 150 years of the mercantile heritage which confirms that the Old Riverport was indeed a vital element in the economic life of the town.

PROGRAMME OF TALKS 2016 – 2017

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.

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|---------------------|--|
| 16th September 2016 | Veronica Bennett: East Anglia Gardens of the National Trust. |
| 21st October 2016 | Annual General Meeting followed by a short talk, yet to be decided. |
| 18th November 2016 | John Deeks: History of Fenstanton. |
| 20th January 2017 | Alexa Cox: Huntingdon's Three Photographers, Maddison, Hinde & Whitney. |
| 17th February 2017 | To be decided |
| 17th March 2017 | To be decided |
| 21st April 2017 | To be decided |
| 19th May 2017 | To be decided |

Please visit our website www.stivescivic.org.uk for programme changes.

CIVIC SOCIETY OF ST IVES



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PE27 5NN

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Comments _____

The first talk of 2016 was given by Bev Bond, a free-lance horticulturalist who worked in the Swiss Garden for ten years, retaining a great fondness for it as well as a professional interest in its continuing restoration and development..

THE SWISS GARDEN AT OLD WARDEN

The earliest record of a grand house at Old Warden was in 1635, when it was occupied by the Palmer family. The estate was bought in the late 17th C by Samuel (later Sir Samuel) Ongley, a successful merchant and entrepreneur, and the purchase of adjacent land expanded it to an area of about 2000 acres. It was known then as Old Warden Park. Sir Samuel became a pillar of Bedfordshire society and was High Sheriff in 1703/4. His descendants continued to occupy the house, and it was in the 1820s that the third Baron Ongley, having undertaken the “Grand Tour” so popular with the gentry at the time, decided to establish in his grounds a garden evocative of Switzerland. Such recreations of continental landscapes and buildings were very fashionable, and wealthy landowners who wanted to flaunt their wealth and their appreciation of renaissance culture built follies, temples and gardens both formal and wild on their estates. It is not known who designed the Swiss Garden, but it was, and now is again, a remarkably harmonious and natural-looking evocation of a classical and rustic landscape.



The Swiss Cottage on its “alpine” hill

By 1872 the Ongley family was in financial difficulties and the estate was sold to Joseph Shuttleworth, scion of the Lincolnshire engineering firm of Clayton and Shuttleworth; the Swiss Garden was described in considerable detail in the documents detailing the sale and this information has been invaluable in ensuring that the latest restoration is as original as possible. Not content with the regency house, Shuttleworth demolished it and built a new home in the Jacobean style of his existing mansion, Gawthorpe Hall in Lancashire.



The beautifully restored interior of the Swiss Cottage has a curiously oriental style

The estate remained in the Shuttleworth family until the last survivor, Dorothy, established in 1946 a Trust in memory of her son Richard, who had been killed in WWII. The house became an agricultural college, but by the 1970s the Swiss Garden was sadly neglected and semi-derelict as there were not enough staff to maintain it; at the beginning of the 20th C a team of 30 gardeners had been employed. Unlike today, there was no interest in the 70s and 80s in the history or preservation of gardens and funding for such a project was difficult to obtain. Fortunately the Whitbread family, who have an estate next to Old Warden, became involved and thanks mainly to Lady Whitbread and Bedfordshire County Council a programme of restoration was begun.

Now the Swiss Garden is recognised as the only complete historic “picturesque” garden in the UK and lottery funding has enabled further restoration in recent years to as near as possible the original plan and appearance – even to the extent that scientific analysis revealed the paintwork of the frame of the glass roof and dome on the Fernery was not white, as had been assumed during the first restoration in the 70s, but pale blue.



The grotto and fernery

The Garden consists of a series of glades, each with a different character, and several buildings inspired not just by Switzerland (there is some doubt as to whether the creator of the garden ever went there!) but also by classical and even oriental design. There are many magnificent specimen trees, some pre-dating the creation of the garden, and a few are listed in the register of Champion Trees. Three ponds were carefully excavated to create a natural water flow from one to another, fed by a lake outside the perimeter of the Garden and crossed by small bridges with intricate cast iron balustrades. The structures include a Chinese Summer House, an Indian style “kiosk”, the Swiss Cottage (beautifully re-thatched), the fernery (effectively a large conservatory), a grotto (an essential feature of any grand estate in the 18th and 19th C) and a small “alpine” chapel.



Planting is mostly informal, and the Shuttleworths introduced variegated specimens which were fashionable around 1900. Small statues and urns on pedestals are dotted around at strategic points. The overall effect is delightfully quirky yet tranquil and satisfying.

A visit is strongly recommended!

WHITNEY RE-VISITED

In a follow-up to last year's talk, Alexa Cox from the Huntingdon Archives Office revealed more memories from the collection of three Huntingdon photographers, capturing everyday life in the County during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As before a thematic approach was taken, covering places, people and events.

The first picture, taken in 1925, showed Huntingdon High St being re-surfaced with concrete and, curiously, wooden blocks. It is hard to believe now that this was a major north-south highway (Ermine St), but of course there was far less traffic then and motor vehicles were still the preserve of the wealthy or of the bigger businesses. There are many pictures of grand houses in the collection. The one shown was of Brampton Park House, seat of the Duke of Manchester, which burnt down in 1907; the only surviving part became the Officers' Mess at RAF Brampton. Building exteriors give a sense of the architecture styles, but it is arguably the interiors which reveal most about people's lives. A Victorian sitting room seems to us cluttered and chaotic, as the aspiring middle classes bought ornaments and pictures to emphasise their taste and status. A 1938 picture showing a demonstration of an early Pye television (costing the enormous sum of £43) was a harbinger of domestic change, as from the late 50s the television became the focus of family life. A 1907 photograph of a shop interior in Huntingdon captures what old-fashioned retail was like before the days of supermarkets.

The many family groups in the collection are notable for showing how large families were; the Elkins, obviously well-to-do and pictured in their walled garden in Huntingdon, had 12 children! Events of the period had a charming simplicity, as a picture of a cycle parade in 1902 celebrating the coronation of King George V showed; the ladies were decked out in very imaginative fancy dress and a good time was clearly being enjoyed by all. Royalty also figures, with many photographs taken by Whitney during official visits to Papworth Hospital. He also managed to capture King George V on his horse inspecting troops on Portholme Meadow, despite the fact that photography had been banned on this occasion! Huntingdonshire's long association with the military is well covered in the collection, and one of the more unusual aspects is a picture of nurses and patients at Walden House, which was a military hospital during WWI.

Because Whitney was official photographer for the prison, there are quite a lot of “mug shots”, which can be correlated with the prison records to reveal what crimes individuals had committed. Whitney was also able to capture scenes at Huntingdon Assizes during trials.



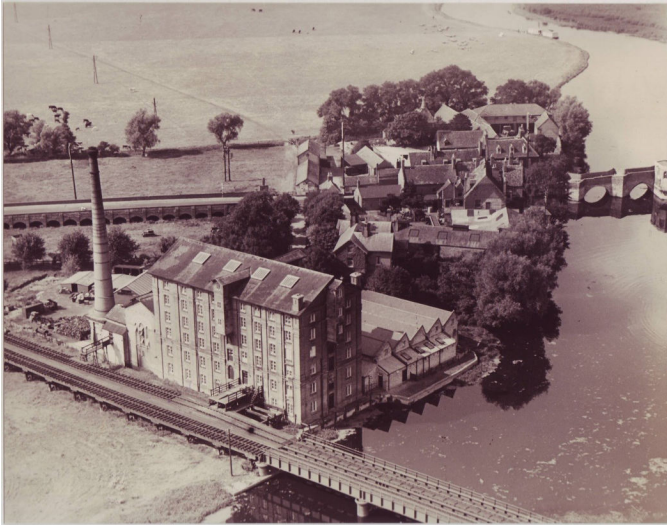
Danns and Chandler's grocery shop in Huntingdon High St 1907 (WH2/8)

Not unreasonably, it was pictures of St Ives which particularly interested the audience, revealing that although much has changed most of the Victorian architecture of the town survives and has been adapted for new uses.

An aerial view of the town south of the river shows the mill, the old toll house at the town end of the causeway, the original Dolphin Hotel and of course the railway line to Huntingdon and Kettering. The mill exemplifies adaptation to the times, becoming a printing works, Sinclair Electronics (with its links to early home computing) and now apartments. During the period covered by the collection St Ives was still a thriving commercial centre, and a view from the river shows a boat from the rowing club with the industry of The Quay in the background

There was also a picture of the slipway at the end of Priory Rd, where barges were dragged ashore for repair. The river offered many opportunities for photographs both of historic and scenic interest..

A view from 1900 reveals the upper story of the Bridge Chapel still in place, and skaters were captured on the frozen river, possibly in the extremely hard winter of 1895.



St Ives in the early 1950s (DC288).



*On the river in 1900 (WH1/308)
Tommy Doo's boatyard is in the background*



Cromwell's Barn (WH3/1947B) showing how some of the delicate glass plates have been damaged

One particularly evocative photograph showed what was locally known as Cromwell's Barn – although there is no evidence linking it to Cromwell. This splendid example of agricultural architecture was built during the reign of Elizabeth I on the site now occupied by the Shell garage, but it fell into disrepair and was demolished in the 1960s.

There is much material in the collection showing everyday life in St Ives: a group photograph outside the old grammar school from 1890; a presentation by the Mayor to the scouts in 1912; the Boys Brigade, based at the Free Church, and the Temperance Society, which was formed in 1848 and seems to have been particularly well supported in the town!

The heart of St Ives remained agriculture and the livestock market, and there are many photographs in the collection of market activities. The St Ives fair also remained a major attraction, drawing traders and showmen from all over East Anglia. The Thurston fairground family (still going strong in Norfolk) visited probably for the Michaelmas Fair, and were photographed in the late 1900s in all their finery outside the Royal Oak, the oldest pub in St Ives.



Market day on Market Hill c 1900 (DC76). The animal pens were by this time located in the new livestock market. The agricultural machinery could well have been manufactured by Rustons, a prominent local business

There were other entertainments of course, an example being a bazaar at the Corn Exchange in 1904, and public events such as the unveiling of Cromwell's statue in 1901 - the only statue of him in the country erected by public subscription. This was a bold decision given the controversy surrounding Cromwell, but perhaps the town simply wanted to mark his life as a local land-owner rather than as Lord Protector!

Photography made it possible for almost anyone to commission a portrait, and those in the collection range from the great and good (exemplified by William Warner, five times mayor of St Ives) to John Webster, who owned a drapers shop on The Pavement. Whereas before we had to rely on artists for a visual record (which rarely showed ordinary people doing ordinary things), the advent of photography has enabled us to see life in all its facets over the last 150 years. The Whitney Collection is an immensely valuable contribution to the history of Huntingdonshire.

With thanks to the Archives Office for permission to reproduce the photographs. Most of the collection can now be viewed on line

In March Veronica Bennett spoke to the meeting about the Anglo-Saxon treasure discovered at Sutton Hoo.

THE SUTTON HOO STORY

Sutton Hoo is on the top of an escarpment above the east bank of the River Deben in Suffolk. In this relatively flat landscape it is a commanding position, and the large area of humps and hollows at the heart of the site would certainly be suggestive of some long-buried human activity. Although excavations were carried out in the 19th C, and quantities of what appeared to be iron fastenings were found, it was not until just before World War II that a serious archaeological investigation was planned. The estate was then owned by the Pretty family and it was Edith Pretty, motivated by curiosity about the landscape and also possibly by her interest in spirituality and contact with the dead, who decided to organise a dig on the mounds. A local archaeologist, Basil Brown, was recommended to lead the investigation. Work began in June 1938 and more ship's rivets were found in Mound 2, suggesting a boat burial. Several cremation burials were also found. At the end of that season it was clear that Sutton Hoo was either an Anglo Saxon or Viking site but, although numerous interesting objects had been found, the excavated area had been robbed in former times. Nevertheless, there was enough evidence to suggest the importance of the location, fitting into a pattern of known sites from the 6th-10th C in what had been the Kingdom of East Anglia. With the involvement of Ipswich Museum work resumed in 1939 on Mound 1, and in a few weeks the "ghost" of a ship began to appear (the timbers had rotted away leaving a detailed impression in the ground).

The boat had been dragged up the slope from the river, placed in a prepared trench and then covered with earth, a significant undertaking which suggested a high status site. Brown suspected that the associated burial might still be undisturbed, and thanks to intense effort through the summer a burial chamber containing wonderfully preserved artefacts was found in the centre of the ship. War loomed, and as much as possible was hastily removed from the site to London. An inquest held that Autumn declared the finds the property of the landowner, but Mrs Pretty magnanimously donated everything to the nation.

It was not until after the War that detailed restoration and examination of all the artefacts began. Perhaps the most famous item is the warrior's helmet,

richly decorated in a style similar to others found in Sweden, and nothing like it has been seen in Britain until the discovery of the Staffordshire hoard in 2009.



The magnificent clinker-built boat in Mound 1, measuring 89 feet long and 14 feet wide, clearly sea-going and with positions for perhaps as many as 40 oarsmen

However, smaller items, including fittings from a three foot diameter ceremonial shield, revealed even finer craftsmanship. The use of millefiori, cloisonné and enamel work to illustrate typically horses, birds and dragons, profusely decorated with gold foil and garnets, seems to draw on Pictish, Irish, Anglo-Saxon, native British and Mediterranean traditions. A pattern-welded sword, still in a scabbard which was lined with sheep's wool to oil and preserve the blade, revealed not only the intricate decoration of the pommel and the associated harness and belt but also the skill of the Anglo-Saxon ironworkers. Other finds included a purse lid with a complex pattern of inlays, some as small as one millimetre across. The purse contained 37 gold shillings, each originating from a different Frankish mint, and 3 blank coins; although they cannot be dated precisely they suggest the burial took place some time in the period 600-630 AD.



A replica of the Sutton Hoo helmet in the Royal Armouries collection.



Although the horn and leather backing have disappeared, the fittings of the purse lid are wonderfully well-preserved

Arguably the finest piece of all is the buckle, one of only 3 found anywhere made from solid gold rather than simply covered in gold leaf. It depicts 13 intertwined animals and weighs nearly one pound. It is hollow, with a hinged back and a secret chamber which may have contained a holy relic, although there is no clear evidence that Mound 1 was a Christian burial.



The great buckle is further evidence of the superb craftsmanship of the period

A number of tableware items were found, notably 10 small matching silver bowls with a distinctive cross design inside. Accompanying silver spoons are of a design similar to the late Roman period. More prosaically, the Mound 1 burial chamber also contained a lyre, a board game and a beautifully wrought suspension chain for one of the several hanging bowls also discovered, each giving new insights into the richness of Anglo-Saxon life.

In 1982 a further excavation was undertaken at Sutton Hoo under the leadership of Martin Carver from the University of York, in the hope that new methods and techniques could reveal more about the site. Mound 2 was re-excavated, revealing that in this case the boat had been placed over the burial chamber as a seal. This burial was probably as rich as that in Mound 1, but unfortunately everything of value had been robbed. Several graves of execution victims, mostly young men, were found and it was clear that the whole site had been used extensively for burials over a period of several hundred years. A previously undisturbed burial was found to contain a man and a horse; sacrifices of animals to accompany their owner into the afterlife were not unknown. The so-called “young prince” had been buried with grave goods and, although they were of nothing like the quality found in Mound 1, he was clearly a person of some status.

Who was buried in Mound 1? The magnificence of the burial makes it highly likely that the occupant was royal, and scholarly opinion points to Raedwald, the King of East Anglia who died in about 624 AD. He had adopted Christianity for part of his life, and this leaves open the possibility that some aspects of the burial reflected that Christian background. The proximity of the royal villa at Rendlesham lends some credence to the theory that the Sutton Hoo mounds were a royal burial ground, and it is obvious that the site was of great importance for a period of about 100 years up to the time of the final interment in Mound 1. The burial mounds would have been very visible to the people living on the west shore of the Deben and to travellers on the river, a striking reminder of the power of the ruling dynasty. The finds have much similarity with discoveries in Sweden, and also chime with descriptions of Anglo-Saxon life in the epic poem Beowulf. There is no doubt that Sutton Hoo changed completely historians’ understanding of Anglo Saxon craftsmanship and of society in East Anglia, and confirmed that the Dark Ages were not so dark after all.

On Friday 15 April Jason Peters gave us a talk on:

THE LOST FORESTS OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Jason is Houghton born and bred, of farming stock, and cycled Thicket Path often. Later, having qualified as a landscape architect he discovered historical documents relating to a former family farm where his grandfather had once farmed, Sapley Farm Park. In the course of his research he discovered references to Sapley Forest, which fired his interest, leading him to become a landscape historian.

In time this led to the discovery of other forests in this area of Huntingdonshire which had existed during the middle ages. These Royal forests had never been mapped, so over a period of years he reconstructed from multiple maps and ancient documents, some dating back to the 1200s, to reassemble a computer generated map of these areas, and their boundaries. Sapley Forest had a boundary 7 miles in circumference.

Sapley, Weybridge, Harthay were Royal forests. Other places names are related to treed areas - Buckden, for example, 'great thorn wood'.

In those days, an area designated as Royal Forest was not necessarily to do with trees. Rather, the 'forest' label was a means of forbidding hunting on lands, without prior permission of the Crown.

In those early days a King would need to keep the men in his army occupied, so he gave them the right to hunt across the Royal lands. Place names and terms were of military sounding origin. A place with The Chase in its name would indicate that certain categories of people had the right to chase the deer across that division of land.

The very name 'Huntingdonshire' is indicative of the original use of the lands in this area of the country, from an imported term 'hunten' meaning 'hunting' and 'sciere' a share or division of land.

Over a period of five years, Jason was able to establish where ancient woodlands were, and recorded his findings on maps and plans, with drawings. The Thicket Path between St Ives and Houghton, passes through old woodland, and may be the last relic of ancient forests

Jason's talk covered a wide range of material relative to this part of the county; nomenclature, social status and strata, land use, division and rural authority. And overall lay the supreme rule of the Crown.

The work Jason put into this mammoth, far-reaching project lasted for 5 years, with innumerable trips from overseas where he was working at that time, back to Huntingdonshire. Copies of his work are available through the archives of Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, as well as the National Archives.

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POPULATION OF ST IVES, 1801 – 2000

The population figures for St Ives demonstrate the results of 19th and 20th century urban development. The population rose from 1801 to 1851 by 150%, but then proceeded to fall by over 20%. This corresponds with the shift from farms to the towns during the early 19th century, coupled with the subsequent patterns of emigration seen in Cambridgeshire. In addition, the percentage change from 1991 to 2000 is 5.4% compared to a district average of 8.5%.

Year	Population
1801	2099
1851	3572
1861	3395
1881	3002
1921	2797
1981	12510
1991	15314
2001	16340

Population Figures for St Ives (Source: Census Information)

No. 9 CHURCH STREET, ST IVES

When I first saw No 9 in 1986 I knew very little more than the present vista as shown below.

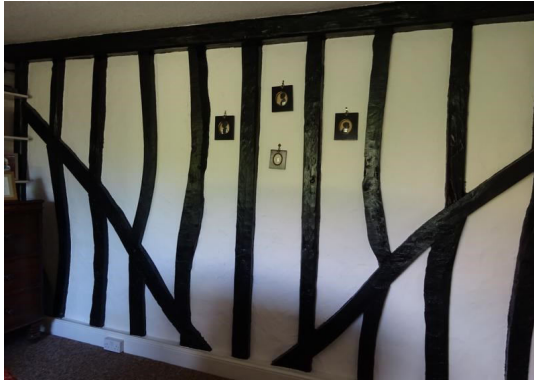


Fortunately or not I was able to acquire a copy of the full survey of the house completed for the previous intended buyer. The survey was in general unrelentingly bad, with the replacement roof (done via a grant in 1959), one of the few redeeming features. The subsequent conversation with the surveyor ran along the lines of, "am I right in thinking that if I sorted out all the things you have complained about, I would still have change from 10K?" On the basis of "Oh yes" & finding out he really did not like the vendor, I went ahead - 30 years later I am still in complete agreement as to his assessment of the vendor but love the house!

I knew that there was a deed going back to 1742 and that the house had been 'converted' and re-named 'Crown Villas' in 1899 when the bay windows were added and it became the Baptist Manse and home to the Minister and his four children. I also knew that the last remaining spinster daughter died surrounded by her cats in the early 1980s when it was 'condemned' and sold very cheaply to my vendor on the basis of a recommendation from his architect brother-in-law, that 'he could do it up and sell for a good profit'!

Like most young families there was not much spare money - hence in the early years, little more than essential maintenance was undertaken - enough however to realise that certain people should not be allowed (if only!) to buy old houses needing empathy and TLC.

It was only in the early 1990s whilst decorating the lounge for the first time that we 'discovered' the 'beams', which produced the comment from one early & knowledgeable visitor, "that dates this part of the house to the 1690s". Having had to spend an extra £1000 to strip the decaying 'lath & plaster' off the walls to fully reveal the 'beams', at the time I really did not care!



Beams exposed in the lounge

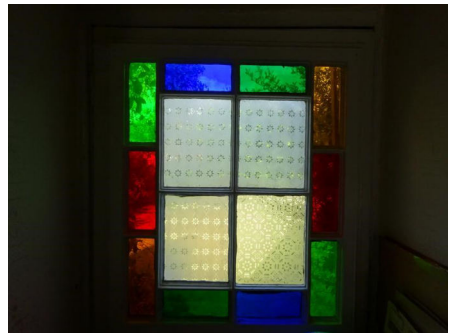
It was with more than a little surprise that some years later I discovered that a large photo of No 9 was starring prominently in the notice-board outside the Norris Museum. Needless to say nobody had bothered to tell me what it was all about! Bob Burn-Murdoch in his 'Shaping of St Ives' reveals that it was all about fashion or what was taken as the height of building fashion in the 1720s when he thought the house was built, due to the enhanced colouring of the original bricks used as opposed to the more modern approach used by John Barnes at No 1 Church Street where he used yellow-grey 'gault' bricks.

In the last twenty years one has been increasingly conscious of one's house not only because of questions raised about its age & history but also about its place in the landscape of St Ives. In particular its place in the context of its closeness to the Jacobean vicarage, thoughtfully allowed to be demolished in the 1960s, and the subsequent creation of 'Clare Court' in what was within the old 'Slepe Hall Estate'. Certainly that St Ives was a busy & prosperous 'River Port' until the coming of the railways in c1850 & then entered a marked decline like much of the 'Great Agricultural Desert' in East Anglia from the 1880s in particular (cheap grain & meat boats from the Empire!), until the airfield building boom of the 1930s produced some recovery, was a context that one cannot ignore.

Probably from the early days one had been aware of an amalgam of several houses on the site of No 9 as the next photo reveals only too well, together with a cellar where hand-made meat hooks as well as the lime-wash indicated a date of some antiquity. It is strange also that when I first came to the house there were only two toilets, 3 yards apart on the first floor! Equally whilst the 'bricked-up' window is fairly common (window-tax!), the size & depth of the understairs cupboard on the first floor is indicative of another staircase, even if not of the same type or size to the 'hidden' staircase in No1 (Barnes House).



One also does not know whether the large pieces of 'slag' to be found all over Church Street gardens are from the brickworks (probably) or some undetected 'manufactory' taking advantage of the cheap water transport available in the Ouse valley. However one can say that from the fact the cellar in No 9 has only flooded twice this century, whereas No 7 has to 'pump' out its cellar regularly; that it still retains its original door furniture as well as the charming front hall and stained glass rear door, it still remains an interesting house.



I haven't mentioned the axe attack by an 'evacuee' on the spinster owner in the 1940s, or the ghost (only detectable by ladies & cats!) - honest! or the poltergeist (detectable by teenage children)!

John Lambden

John is the present owner of No.9 Church Street and has a keen interest in the history of the house.

CATHOLIC CHURCH WRECKED AT ST IVES

An abridged article from the Hunts County News of 8 December, 1906, recording a "Madman's Astounding Attack on the Contents" of the Sacred Heart Church in Needingworth Road, St Ives.



A most remarkable affair, and at the same time an almost irretrievable disaster to the Catholics of the District, took place at St Ives on Saturday, when the interior of the Catholic Church was wrecked by a young man named Owen Aston, evidently acting under the influence of acute mania. Ashton, who is only about 22 years of age, lived with his parents at Hemingford Abbots, and carried on a small engineering business in the village. He was generally of a quiet disposition, and exceedingly temperate in his habits, but of late he had been working hard at the production of a patent to be applied to motor cars, and it is thought that the amount of study concentrated on this may have affected his mind. That he was not responsible for his actions on Saturday morning is evident. The first indication of anything wrong was about half past nine, when he called upon the Rev S Huckle the minister of the Free Church at Hemingford Grey, and told him he was going to St Ives. He also repeatedly asked if Mr Huckle had "heard the news" which Mr Huckle imagined referred to the patent alluded to, but from the strangeness of his manner Mr Huckle suspected that something was wrong and tried to induce Ashton to remain with him. The latter however refused but said he would call on his way back from St Ives. Finding it impossible to detain Ashton, Mr Huckle hurried to the residence of PC Cook with one object of imparting his suspicions to that officer. Quickly donning his uniform Cook mounted his bicycle and followed in Ashton's wake. He was able to trace him as far as the bridge over the river at St Ives but beyond that point he could not gather any information respecting him. Accordingly he proceeded to the Police Station to report what he had done.

In the meantime a man named Wm Ballard from Hemingford Grey was passing down the Needingworth Road when he saw a man who afterwards proved to be Ashton battering away at the main door of the Roman Catholic chapel with a sledge hammer and a bar of iron which he had carried with him from Hemingford. Ballard asked what he was doing whereupon Aston turned round and attempted to brain him with the iron bar. On this, Ballard, perhaps wisely, kept out of reach and made with all possible speed for the Police Station where he informed Inspector Storey of what he had seen.

The demented man Aston, meanwhile, had gained admittance to the chapel by bursting open the door. The tremendous force that had been used is shown by the way in which the heavy ironwork of the hinges and lock were smashed and that a large piece of stone was forced away from the side of the lock, evidently by the use of the crowbar as a lever. As a matter of fact the door was never locked and had Ashton simply raised the latch, he could have opened the door in the ordinary way, but apparently he did not try this easy method. Having got in side it is of course difficult to say precisely what he did, but the amount of wreck and ruin he left behind him shows the feverish haste with which he must have gone to work and the enormous strength he must have exerted in the short space of time he was in the building, almost surpassing the work of the fanatical wreckers of old. Immediately inside the door he had smashed the stonework of the font and badly damaged the leaden interior.

He further smashed a series of pictures of the Stations of the Cross, two alms boxes and the casing of the organ, a mirror, two religious oil paintings, stained glass windows, two statues, and candlesticks. At the High Altar Ashton pulled down the wooden railings and scattered them, together with ornaments, as well as smashing the top of the Tabernacle. Woodwork at the front of the pulpit as well as the top was broken, the Confessional screen was smashed and even a heating stove was attacked. The heavy wooden door of the locked Sacristy had resisted the attack, but the stonework at the side had been torn away and the door swung open, enabling further destruction inside. In the meantime Miss Osborne arrived at the Church but fled in horror to the home, next door, of Fr Ketterer, who armed himself with a stick and hurried into the Church but the man was gone. Everyone was amazed that so much destruction could have occurred in only ten minutes.

When Inspector Storey arrived at the Church, followed by two constables, Ashton was leaving, still flourishing his hammer in an aggressive manner.

Asked by the Inspector what he was doing Ashton replied that he was the Son of God, that the Old World had come to an end, and a New one had begun.that that morning the sun had risen in the south instead of the east.

Ashton admitted the destruction he had caused and said that he was now on his way to do likewise at the Parish Church. Insp Storey, dealing with him by strategy, offered to accompany him, while the two constables offered to carry Ashton's weapons, to which he agreed! It was suggested that before attacking the Parish Church there was somewhere else that Ashton should smash, and he was thereby diverted to the Police Station where an order was made to admit Ashton to the St Ives Union workhouse; three days later, after two more manic episodes, he was moved to the Three Counties Asylum.

Barbara Richmond

Footnote:

St Ives Union workhouse was built in 1837-38 at London Road, Hemingford Grey, originally to accommodate 400 "inmates" but was enlarged in 1839.

Three Counties Asylum was built on a site bordering Letchworth, Stotfold and Arlesey in Bedfordshire, and opened in 1860 to replace Bedford Lunatic Asylum. It had its own chapel, farm, laundry, railway station and fire brigade, and later became known as Fairfield Hospital. It was closed by the NHS in 1999 and the estate is now known as Fairfield Park.

Who was Owen Ashton?

Owen was the youngest of four children born in 1884 to George & Jane Ashton. It is not known how long he spent in the Three Counties Asylum but the 1911 Census records him as a 27 year old residing with his parents and two siblings, Ellen Kate and George William, at Oak lane, Hemingford Abbots.

Owen's father was a farm labourer and Owen's occupation is listed as "Engineer, general". There is no record of him having married. Owen Ashton died in 1954 at Huntingdon County Hospital, aged 70 years, when his address was recorded as Rose Cottage, Hemingford Abbots, where he had lived with his sibling's Ellen and George who predeceased him.

He left an estate valued at £2830 bequeathed to his surviving sibling, his eldest brother Charles Ashton, aged 74, a retired railway guard living in Bradford, Yorkshire.

Ellen Kemp

*Front cover photo: The Angler's Rest, St Ives by William Watt Milne
Courtesy of the Norris Museum*

William Watt Milne(1869-1949)

This painting was given to Mrs Marshall, landlady of the Angler's Rest guest house, by William Watt Milne after he stayed there. (The dates he stayed there are not known). The guest house is front right and one of the figures outside may be Mrs Marshall, they are watching a wedding party near the Parish church. Oil on canvas.

Milne was born in 1869 in Cambuskenneth, Stirling, Scotland. After studies, Milne exhibited in the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts and the Royal Scottish Academy.

Famous for his coastal scenes around Scotland, Milne emphasized the play of natural light, reflected colours from object to object and used the effects of the light in the evening or twilight. Together with William Miller Frazer, Thomas Hodgson Liddell, Robert Little, John Lochhead, William Kay Blacklock, Robert Payton Reid, John Muirhead, David T Muirhead, David Murray Smith, William Beckwith McInnes (from Australia), Keeley Halswelle, Robert Walker MacBeth and Robert Buchan Nisbet, Milne painted primarily in the area of the Great Ouse around Holywell including the villages of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey, Houghton and Wyton (now joined) and the town of St Ives.

William Watt Milne died in 1949. He was 80.

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