



Civic Society of St Ives

Annual Report 2020

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 happen 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.

The Civic Society’s website can be found at:

www.stivescivic.org.uk

The society is a member of:

The Campaign to Protect Rural England

www.cpre.org.uk

The Cambridge Antiquarian Society

www.camantsoc.org

The Great Ouse Valley Trust

www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk

FRONT COVER: The front cover photo shows Houghton Mill, a watercolour painted by Edward Walker in 1941. Courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

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CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

It will be evident to all our members the last year has been very different to any other in the existence of the Society, indeed it has been very different to any other in all our lifetimes. As the coronavirus epidemic developed in March the committee considered canceling the open meeting planned for 20th March. However, as the Government were not at that time imposing any restrictions on meetings the decision was to hold the meeting as normal. In the next few days the decision was taken out of our hands as the speaker contacted us to advise he would not be able to attend the meeting. The Emergency Response Volunteers in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire required all their volunteers to stop all fund raising events and attending public meetings. Within a day or so our speakers in April and May also cancelled.

By 16th March we were being advised to limit our "Social Contacts" and on 23rd March "lockdown" was announced by the Prime Minister. From April our committee meetings have been held via the internet, this has allowed the work of examining planning applications and reading development plans to continue and to discuss our positions on them.

Since that time the virus has ebbed and flowed but has not yet gone away. Nor will it until large numbers of the population are able to receive an effective vaccine and are then protected against the virus.

This is a major problem for the Society. Whilst the open meetings are only a part of what the Society does they are a very important part for a fair proportion of you. Since the remodelling of the Free Church we have used the Centrum for our open meetings. This upstairs space is in many ways ideal but it only has a single entrance, and is upstairs. The lift is a Goods Lift, which some of our members use. It has manually operated doors and press buttons, the stairs have handrails. Before we can recommence our open meetings we have to develop safe methods of use for everybody. We have to consider the cleaning of contact surfaces, e.g. hand rails, door knobs, seating, microphones, toilets, etc etc. Very often members chat together at the back of the Centrum, something I am always pleased to see but we would have to ask you all to sit down as you arrive and leave without in any way narrowing the corridors for others who are also leaving. The seating must be socially distanced. Best practice requires we record who attends our meetings together with contact details and seat location.

You may hold the view I am being very negative in my assessment, other organisations have found ways around the problems. However, as I write, the Government advice remains that meetings, with a speaker in front of an audience, should not take place. The advice will be reviewed in the middle of August. I have also noted The Chief Medical Officer has commented that "we are near the limit" of relaxing restrictions without causing a resurgence of Covid-19 cases.

In June I included a survey in the Newsletter, I asked when you would be happy to start attending our meetings again, many thanks to all of you that responded. In summary the results were:

- most members (90%) that responded had attended a meeting in the last two seasons.
- all members that responded would attend a meeting in the coming year.
- 40% would attend in September, this rose to a total of 56% in October and 81% in January.
- the remaining responders would not return until feeling completely safe.
- If we used the downstairs hall the numbers were slightly different but some commented on the requirement for the loudspeaker/hearing loop system to be used, this is fixed in the Centrum.

You may have noted the usual list of meeting dates and our booked speakers is not included this year, so far we have not arranged any speakers. We are not planning a meeting in September but the Committee hope to hold the AGM in October. This will either be in the Free Church or in another venue. **Please see the Stop Press notice on page 25.**

Away from our own concerns about future meetings much else has happened during the year and has already affected St Ives or may do in the future.

A report - St Ives - A Strategy for Growth - was considered by HDC. The document was not made available until a draft version was issued for consideration by the Council and having been considered was endorsed in February. The document was not subject to consultation and regrettably contains errors of fact and examples of doubtful value. It also fails to make clear how some of its objectives will be achieved. An area is marked out for development as an Innovation Quarter. Most of this area is at present the Cattle Market Car Park. The aims are laudable but where are cars to park?

The Combined Authority's *Local Transport Plan* was issued for consultation in March. The major issues for us are the proposals for the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro and the Third River Crossing. The CAM is intended to use the Busway and then continue to Alconbury Weald and maybe Peterborough. Consequently a route has to be found from the Park and Ride site towards the west of St Ives. The Plan is silent on this small detail.

The Study concluded that some minor changes in St Ives:

- reducing town centre speeds to 20mph,
- installing traffic signals for some routes at the Somersham Road roundabout,
- a right turn ban from Needingworth Road onto the A1123 and priority changes (i.e. new white lines) at three junctions on North Road and Globe Place:

will give the most benefit to the Town Centre.

The study also found that significant improvements along Harrison Way and the Harrison Way/Needingworth Road/Somersham junctions are required before any further growth i.e. housing, can be considered at Gifford's Park. This site is north of the Compass Point Business Park and east of Somersham Road.

The study identified some junctions on Harrison Way are already overcapacity, but I think we already knew that! I suspect this finding has delayed the construction of the proposed traffic light controlled pedestrian and cyclist's crossing of Needingworth Road. I mentioned in my last report this is to be funded by Aldi.

I am sure the economy will take some time to recover from lockdown. The emergency funding that was made available will have to be paid back. How the economy recovers and how quickly repayments are made will affect the speed of implementation and extent to which these ambitious plans come to be realised.

After the lockdown restrictions were introduced the weather was often warm and dry so queuing outside was not too much of a problem. That will be very different in colder weather. As lockdown eased red barriers appeared in the Town Centre to give over the footpaths to shop queues and allow pedestrians to walk in the road. Unfortunately, gaps in the barriers were not made for deliveries to be carried into the shops. So barriers were moved and blocked the intended use of the roadway by pedestrians. The reduction of parking in Bridge Street and Market Hill was a welcome sight but this caused difficulties for disabled users who found the few remaining parking spaces always full.

As an emergency measure the speed at which the proposals were implemented and the way the town, district and county councils worked together showed that changes can be completed quickly.

Over the year development has continued in St Ives as housing at the **old golf course** site is completed.

The How is adjacent to the old **Golf Course** site. In addition to the application to convert The How into apartments a further application has been submitted for 18 houses in the grounds. The Society is concerned that these houses should not be visible from Hemingford Meadow. We have asked that if the application is approved a condition will require any work to the trees to require planning permission. Otherwise, as the land is outside any Conservation Area, home owners could decide to have the benefit of the "View" they have paid for.

The two storey unit I mentioned in my last report at **Abbey Retail Park** is currently under construction. Our concerns the proposal would be harmful to the local bat colony were not considered sufficient to refuse the application. The new apartments on the old **ATS Tyres** site are now completed and some are sold, we must learn to call this site by its new name **Hopbine Yard**, named after the Hop Bine pub which stood on the site for many years.

The **Aldi Store** opened in early August.

Work to install an upper floor at the **Cromwell Surgery** (or the **Grove Medical Practice** as they are now called since amalgamating with the Old Exchange Surgery) continues. It seems to be taking a long time, no doubt one day soon the scaffolding and sheeting will be removed.

The old **Nat West** premises is being converted into a shop unit and additional flat. The ground floor window ledges are being lowered back to their original level, in a reversal of that proposed when the Bank sought permission to instal a cash machine, see Barbara Richmond's article in the 2018 Annual Report.

The **St Ives Town Football Club**, having obtained outline permission to relocate to a site off Somersham Road, have now decided to remain on their existing site near Westwood Road. They plan to upgrade the ground with an Astro turf pitch. Local residents are pleased the planned houses will not now be built on the site. However, the upgrade will permit more intensive use of the pitch.

Marshalls Aerospace have ruled out a move to Duxford, that leaves Cranfield in Bedfordshire and Wyton Airfield. The **Wyton Hill Gardens** developer has withdrawn their application because HDC will not accept further documents from them. However, they still intend to submit a further scheme.

There have been only a few proposals for new large developments. This is I suspect because the new, and up to date, Local Plan makes proposals to develop additional sites less likely to be accepted.

Since publication and consultation of the Plan the *A141 and St Ives Transport Study* has rejected the proposal for the Third River Crossing. The conclusion being that more benefit will be provided by a new Huntingdon Northern Bypass from the A141 at Wyton Airfield to the Spittals interchange.

A new proposal has been submitted to develop 105 homes on the disused **Vindis Garage** site at the corner of London Road and Low Road. In order to provide access in the case of a flood the applicant intends to install a walkway system above flood level. Whether or not this would be a viable solution is for Planners to decide. An application has been submitted to develop a new area north of **Stocks Bridge Way** for research /or light industrial way. This site is included in the Local Plan, however as the developer is not the owner of the existing Stocks Bridge Way area the site will need a new access from Somersham Road. If permitted this will create another area of conflict for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

Proposals to build new, generally small, houses in gardens, sometimes to convert a pair of semi detached houses into a terrace, and in other cases extend a terrace have proliferated. There have also been several applications to build on land that was left as small amenity plots i.e. grassed areas. Whilst the provision of more homes is welcome the Local Plan underestimates the extent of these practices. Consequently the roads are busier, schools fuller, health services stretched further, and we all suffer as a consequence.

Over the last year only a few new businesses have opened; the La Cucina site has reopened as a Kitchen Worktops business, and a second Turkish barber has opened in The Broadway. Regrettably **St Ives Beds** has had to vacate its premises in the old Free Church Hall, the owner is now seeking permission to convert the **Free Church Hall** into four apartments. In Market Hill the **Robin Hood** site remains unused.

On a more positive note St Ives **Footpath number 22** has been added to the definitive map. It runs through Long Plantation from Alabama Way to Hill Rise Park.

Further afield **Huntingdon Southern Bypass** opened in December and speed limits were progressively removed from the improved sections of the existing A14 as work was completed. Work continues to remove the bridge in Huntingdon over the railway line and complete the links so the section of remaining old A14 between Spittals and Godmanchester can be reopened.

The new route is a big improvement for through traffic although lorry access to Huntingdon remains difficult until the Godmanchester section reopens. Hopefully some lorry traffic will then no longer use Harrison Way and the A1123.

In conclusion I must again thank our committee members, Jane Amaral; Basil Belcher, our Treasurer; Helen Eveleigh, Membership Records; Peter Jackson; Peter Newbold; Dr Tim Reed; Barbara Richmond; Peggy Seemark, Talks Organiser; and finally Peter Whatnell, our Secretary. Peter gave notice last year that he will not stand for the Committee again this year.

Consequently I am appealing for a member to come forward to assist us. This could be as a minute taker at our committee meetings. We also want to improve our recording and reporting of the talks at our open meetings, again help will be very much appreciated.

If you are interested in helping, or just want to find out what is involved, please contact me.

As well as the committee we are helped by others, their assistance is very much appreciated: Brian Richmond - Webmaster and Annual Report compiler, Dianne McGoff - Accounts examiner and lastly The Free Church Staff.

We always welcome new members, this is a difficult ask when we have missed several open meeting dates. However, our work to preserve the best of St Ives continues. Meanwhile, please keep up to date with our work and our plans by reading our Newsletters. If we don't have your up to date email address you will not receive them! Our future meetings will be announced in a Newsletter as well as then being included on our website.

<http://www.stivescivic.org.uk/>

You may contact me through the Contact Us page of the website or by email to stives.civic.society@gmail.com , I welcome your feedback..

David Stewart

Chairman

IN REMEMBRANCE OF BOB KING



Bob King died in April this year, he was 95. He joined the Society at its foundation and remained a member for the rest of his life. As a younger member, Bob was part of the second generation of the Society. He knew and worked along side the founder members. From him I have learnt a little of the skills used to change St Ives for the good of all that follow.

Bob came to live in St Ives in 1955 when St. Ivo School, one of three new Secondary schools in the county, opened. He has written he became in charge of a science department of one but other staff followed as the school grew. Bob had trained as a teacher after war service, the Ivo was his third teaching post. He settled in the town, jumped at the chance to buy a building plot in Needingworth Road and did not move away from the town, the school or the bungalow he had built.

Bob has written about remembering *“one crowded public meeting in the room now occupied by the firm ‘Beds’ in Free Church Passage. From this arose the Civic Society.”* This is likely to have been the Inaugural General Meeting held on 27th September 1968, attended by ‘about 150 people’. He was a committee member from 1983 to 2001, acting Treasurer and later Treasurer from 1986 to 1988 and Chairman for six years from 1993.

After the completion of the bypass to the east of St Ives and the death of Bill Harrison, the Society’s Honorary Secretary for 18 years, the Society organised a campaign to achieve naming the road after him. Members were asked to write in support to HDC. Bob told me he wished he still had a copy of his letter to HDC. In his last article for us in the 2018 Annual Report he wrote *“One would find it hard to believe the fatuous depths and false statements some local authority employees will go to, including in this case buck passing between the HDC and CCC, in order to avoid responsibility for making a decision.”* This statement was typical of Bob, quiet, understated but measured.

Another project he worked on for a long time was the repair of the Priory Wall. Listed as an Ancient Monument since 1951 it was being damaged by a tree’s roots and its branches; perseverance again paid off. Permission to remove the tree was given. The wall repaired and later a plaque fixed to record the importance of the wall.

After he stood down as Chairman he continued to assist the Society in a number of ways. He repainted, on a number of occasions, the ‘Visit St Ives’ signs and proof read our Annual Reports. Bob and his wife Jean continued to attend our monthly open meetings.

He spoke to the open meetings on a number of topics, In 2005 he felt he could at last talk about his interest in Ham Radio and morse code and about his being recruited, aged 16, as a Voluntary Interceptor. As this work was secret, as was his later work in the Royal Signals, he had not told Jean of it until 1980. At another meeting he talked about local spies and their misfortunes. He also contributed articles to the annual reports, especially his thoughts on the changes and challenges facing the town; these are still often relevant today.

Bob's interests were broad and his energy considerable. As well as his life-long interest in Ham Radio he worked with the Citizens Advice Bureau in Huntingdon. He visited Papworth Hospital on a regular basis and talked to patients, especially those awaiting major surgery, he had undergone two operations there. For many years he volunteered his time for Papworth Hospital. He also assisted in the hospital's technical department and his last talk to the Society was The History of Papworth Hospital.

David Stewart

TREASURER'S REPORT 2019 - 2020

The year's accounts have been independently examined and approved.

The overall result in the year, after the interest on our deposit account of £76 is taken into account, is a £586 profit. This has been largely generated by savings on hall hire and speakers due to the truncated year's activities.

This year we have donated £200 towards the production of information boards for the Bridge Chapel.

Gift Aid remains an essential part of our income and this year contributed £292.

We hold reserves for future expenditure and have £1967 committed to specific projects principally the Slepe Hall Playing Field Storyboard and the Church Gate Light.

Basil Belcher

Treasurer

Civic Society of St Ives Statement of Income & Expenditure
as at 30th April 2020

<u>Income</u>	Year to	Year	<u>Expenditure</u>	Year to	Year
	30/04/20	2019		30/04/20	2019
	£	£		£	£
Subscriptions/Donations	2,094	2,290	Hall Hire	290	501
Slepe Hall Donations			Annual Report	595	672
Visitors	105	85	Speakers	278	420
Memorial Fund			Memorial Fund		
Interest			Insurance	151	151
Gift Aid	292	297	Antiquarian Soc Subs	20	20
Heritage Weekend			CPRE Subs	36	36
St Ives 2068			St Ives 2068		558
Bequests			Donations/Gifts	200	350
			Administration	142	38
Donations	56	60	Postage	42	35
			Phone		
			Travel		
			Web Site	147	73
			Heritage Weekend	135	220
Remembrance Collection			Remembrance Collection		47
Church Light					
	£ 2,547	£ 2,732		£ 2,036	£ 3,048

Balances from 30th April 2019

Current account	5,230
Deposit Account	<u>10,157</u>
Total	15,387
<u>Plus</u>	
Surplus for year	510
Interest	<u>76</u>
Total	15,973
<u>less</u>	
	£ 15,973

Balances at 30th April 2020

Current account	5,830
Deposit Account	<u>10,233</u>
Total	16,063
<u>add</u>	
Receipts after Period end	<u>0</u>
<u>less</u>	
Cheques yet to be presented	<u>90</u>
	£ 15,973

Committed Funds as at 30th April 2020

	£
Slepe Hall Old Girls Fund	901
Memorial Fund	207
Remembrance Books	109
Church Light	<u>750</u>
	£ 1,967

Report to the Trustees & Members of The Civic Society of St Ives, Charity No 257286, on the Accounts for the year ended 30th April 2020 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

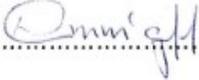
My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures 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 25/8/20

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

MINUTES OF THE 51st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 18th October 2019, at the Free Church, St Ives.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies have been received from: Jane Amaral, Colin Saunderson, Norma Head, Nick Dibben, Bob King, Peter Newbould, and Mrs Landemoo.

2. MINUTES OF THE 50th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Chairman advised that the minutes had been published in the Annual Report. There were no amendments raised.

Motion to adopt the minutes as published

Proposed: M King

Seconded: P Baker

Motion passed on show of hands

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman's reports, up to July, are printed in the Annual Report. Since that time some points of note are:

I commented in my report I would talk about the Local Plan and other forthcoming plans after the AGM. My apologies to you if you are waiting for that talk. I have stepped away from it after Bridget Flanagan offered her talk because I've recently been ill. I have prepared some notes, some copies are on the table at the back. After the AGM I will try to answer any questions.

In my report I mentioned proposals to develop part of Wyton Airfield for housing. Recently a full planning application has been submitted. However, the company based at Cambridge Airfield, Marshall's Aerospace is looking at three sites for relocation of their facilities. One is Wyton. Marshalls have made presentations to the three local district councils for each of their shortlisted sites. I gather Huntingdon District Council are supportive of Marshal's plan.

I understand the county council are likely to construct the traffic light controlled crossing on Needingworth Road in the first half of next year. This will be paid for by Aldi.

Following the closure of the lower floor of the Bridge Chapel I'm pleased to

now report the Information Boards are complete. There are seven in total, three recording the history of the Chapel and the rest showing photos of the lower floor and balcony, They were in place for Heritage Open Days in September. One is on display at the back of the hall, there are also photos of the other six.

We have made a donation to the Town Council of £200 towards the cost of preparation and printing.

The Chairman invited comments and questions from the floor.

There were no matters arising from the Chairman's report.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasure's Report had been published in the Annual Report. There were no unusual expenses

There were no questions.

Motion to accept the Treasurer's report. Proposed: J Limentani

Seconded: Mr Kelly

Motion passed on a show of hands.

6. RESOLUTIONS

To appoint Ms. Dianne McGoff, BSc, ACIB, as independent accounts examiner until the conclusion of the 2020 Annual General Meeting.

Proposed: Paul Faupel

Seconded: Margaret Hogan

Motion passed on a show of hands

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Notice had been given of the nomination timetable for the Officers and Members of the Executive Committee. No new nominations have been received

The following Officers are standing for re-election:

Chairman David Stewart

Secretary Peter Whatnell

Treasurer Basil Belcher

Motion to appoint these nominees as officers for 2019-20

Proposed: P Baker

Seconded: C Reed

Motion passed on a show of hands

The following Committee members are standing for re-election:

Jane Amaral, Helen Eveleigh, Peter Jackson, Peter Newbould Tim Reed, and Barbara Richmond.

Motion to appoint these nominees for 2019-2020.

Proposed: S Limentani

Seconded: J Ralph

Motion passed on a show of hands.

Peggy Seamark missed the deadline for submitting her nomination form, due to illness. As permitted by the Constitution, it is our intention to co-opt her to the Committee.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7:47 pm

After the AGM our guest, Bridget Flanagan, gave an interesting talk on:

THE ANSLEY FAMILY AND THE PARISH CHURCH

Bridget has been researching seven 19C and early 20C architecturally and historically important houses and their gardens on Houghton Hill. Five of these houses are already Listed Grade II and last year Historic England decided to List 'The How' in the light of new research. The architect of The How also designed the Parish Hall of All Saints, St Ives. This was William White who has been described as the "most interesting but least known" of the Victorian Gothic Revivalist architects. The future of the Parish Hall is currently uncertain – there has been an unsuccessful Planning Application to demolish it and use the site for housing. And this is where Bridget's talk began – she set out to explain the history of the Ansley family and their 100 years' involvement in All Saints, St Ives.



The Ansley family tree is complicated – and this is made more difficult by the proximity of generations in a large family, and several of their names being very similar. In 1797 John Ansley, a silk merchant, married Katherine Grace, daughter of a wealthy indigo dye merchant. In the marriage settlement, which was entailed for the children of the marriage, her father gave the Priory Manor of St Ives and with it the advowson of All Saints Church. (The advowson was the patronage of the church and with it the power to ‘present’ or appoint the vicar).

John Ansley had an outstanding political career and became Lord Mayor of London at the age of only 32. He and Katherine built ‘The Cottage’ on Houghton Hill – this was a thatched house in the style of the Picturesque – and divided their time between London and Huntingdonshire. When Katherine Ansley died aged only 39, John Ansley remarried, but the Priory Manor estate and the advowson passed to her three children: John Henry, Gilbert and Benjamin. Tragedy struck the family when John Henry and his young wife died within six months of each other leaving three small children as orphans. These children were brought up by their mother’s family of Martelli in Hampshire.

The Ansleys seemed to have been little concerned or involved with All Saints until after the death of John Ansley in 1845. In 1843 Gilbert Ansley married Mary Anne Martelli (sister of his brother John Henry’s wife, Catherine Martelli). They came to live at Houghton and rebuilt The Cottage into what is today’s Houghton Hill House. Gilbert’s wife, Mary Anne, was a very devout woman and favoured the ‘High Church’ form of Anglicanism as advocated by the Oxford Movement. She found religious and parish matters at Houghton to be dominated by the Non-conformists or Dissenters. In a bitter and personal struggle she tried, but failed, to reduce Potto Brown’s influence. Her husband Gilbert Ansley died in 1860 and her nephew, Gilbert John, one of the orphans came to live at Houghton Hill and run the estates.

The Vicar of All Saints, Rev Yate Fosbrooke died in 1866, and the patrons had to choose his successor. The curate Dr John Hunt was passed over as they looked for someone of greater standing and money and of the High Church tradition. Mary Anne Ansley, though not a patron herself, but acting in the position as her husband's widow, seemingly influenced the other patrons - her nephew Gilbert John and her brother in law Benjamin who lived in London. She got her way and Rev Charles Dashwood Goldie was appointed in 1866. He would radically alter the pattern of worship at All Saints although not without constant opposition and strong protest from some of the congregation.

How much Mary Anne continued to influence her nephew is open to conjecture, but Gilbert John Ansley was seen as the head of the Ansley family. He became very active in All Saints and supported Rev Goldie as his Churchwarden. Two years later in 1868 Gilbert John and his wife Henrietta built their new house, The How, on a splendid site on the Houghton hillside overlooking the valley and river. They chose William White as architect because he was connected through marriage to the Martelli family. His design for The How incorporates polychromatic brickwork and vivid internal decoration. Topping a rambling roofscape of varied gables is a delightful little bell tower with a hipped roof. White was also appointed for work on the vicarage and Oldhurst and Woodhurst churches. When All Saints undertook to build a new National Infants School for St Ives in 1869, William White was again the chosen architect. This building on Ramsey Road would later become today's Parish Hall. Lesley Akeroyd wrote a detailed history of it in the Civic Society Annual Report of 2013. The Parish Hall has been altered and enlarged over the years, but its design is clearly identified as typical of the style of William White – especially the southern elevation and the western elevation fronting the Ramsey Road.

Again, for the Ansleys, there was sadness when Gilbert John Ansley died in 1875. He was only 46. Mary Anne's only son had emigrated to Australia two years earlier when he was 21. By the mid 1870s a long agricultural depression had hit landowners very hard, and accelerated a rural population decline as labourers and their families sought employment in the cities or abroad. The Ansley family fortunes and energy thus declined. However their strong influence on All Saints had been set in motion and would continue with the appointment of successive vicars who would continue the High Church tradition: Revs Henry Luke Paget 1886-87, Edward Tottenham 1887-90, Arthur Stapylton Barnes 1891-94 and Salisbury J M Price 1894-99. Mary Anne Ansley died in 1896 and today the patronage is with the Guild of All Souls.

When Rev Charles Goldie had come to All Saints in 1866 the internal appearance of the church was fairly typical of an Anglican country church. But from 1894-97 it was transformed by the architect Sir Ninian Comper who decorated and refurbished it in the style of the Gothic Revival and the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Comper's work was the gift of three vicars – Arthur Barnes, Salisbury Price and Oscar Wade Wilde.

A rood screen with organ loft above was positioned between the nave and chancel. Statues of the pre-Reformation saints of All Saints were placed on the original 15C stone brackets on the nave pillars. A reredos or altar screen was built. All the work was richly decorated and embellished. So as we look at the church today we see the lasting legacy of the Ansley family influence; not only did they instigate a new form of worship in All Saints with the move to the High Church tradition but also a radical new setting.



***A Commanding View – The Houses and Gardens of Houghton Hill.
By Bridget Flanagan, 2019,
Published by the Great Ouse Valley Trust***

SUMMARY OF TALKS 2019 - 2020

The opening talk of the 2019/2020 season was given by Dr Pat Doody.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE GREAT OUSE VALLEY MEADOWS

On the 18th September 2019 Dr Pat Doody gave us a fascinating talk on The Natural History of the River Great Ouse Meadows.

The meadows in the Great Ouse valley are more correctly known as Flood-plain meadows where the river floods over the valley floor as the seasons and associated rainfall dictate. Water meadows are meadows where inundation with water is controlled by sluices and irrigation ditches.

The River Great Ouse and its surrounding landscapes were largely determined by the underlying geology and the prevailing climates over hundreds of millions of years. Sediments layed down in the warm shallow Jurassic Sea 175-151 million years ago form the predominant bedrock consisting of various mudstones mostly Oxford and Amphill Clay. The last 2.6 million years, known geologically as the Quaternary Period encompassed several Ice Ages so that the climate oscillated between cold periods (Ice Ages) and warm (Interglacial periods). The last glaciation ended about 12,600 years ago and we are presently in the Holocene interglacial which has moderated the rise in sea levels and facilitated the development of salt marsh. This resulted in extensive tidal saltmarsh dominating the coast to our North backed by brackish reed swamp, freshwater sedge fen, willow/alder Carr and wet woodland.

The River Great Ouse flows within a valley it has carved out with the meltwater from the end of the ice ages leaving sand and gravel deposits in its valley forming a series of terraces several metres thick. On top of these river sediments of material eroded in the hinterland have been layed. The river silt continues to accumulate when flood waters cover the low-lying land of the valley floor. Exposed Jurassic Clays from earlier glaciation, form the rising land bordering the valley.

This combination of gravel terraces overlain by river silt allowed open habitat vegetated with grass and other non-woody plants to become one of the more extensive habitats in the valley. Over time these areas became known as meadows. They have probably been in existence for thousands of years, certainly since Neolithic people entered the valley as artefacts from these early people have been found close to the river. It appears although the surrounding landscape was wooded with Scot's Pine and later Lime; the valley floor was more open. Freshwater fen and willow carr predominated as regular flooding took place. Woodland clearance for agriculture would have increased bed levels in the river valley resulting in less frequent flooding which allowed the development of mowing and grazing on these fertile areas.

The cycle of summer haymaking followed by grazing with regrowth in the spring, aided by nutrient rich sediment deposited by floodwater is an ancient pastoral management system. The various stages of the cycle were defined by Lammas (1st August) and Candlemas (1st February). Between the two dates grazing was allowed until the ground became too wet. After Candlemas grazing ceased and the grasses allowed to grow for hay to be cut in summer. Sometimes in lieu of grazing a second cut for hay was taken. Thus forage was provided for the leaner winter months and grazing through the late summer and autumn.

Apart from providing a good hay crop and grazing the system has a very positive impact on the nature of the meadows. Allowing the vegetation to grow up in the spring, taking a summer hay crop and then grazing the regrowth prevented the coarser more vigorous species from becoming dominant creating a diverse flower rich sward that can still be seen today in meadows like Portholme.

Portholme Meadow is reputed to be the largest unenclosed lowland hay meadow in England. Not only is it an SSSI but also a SAC (Special Area of Conservation) designated under the European Habitats Directive and one of only 5 Internationally important meadows of its type. The history of Portholme meadow can be traced back for at least 500 years. Its botanical richness is well recorded

William Camden writing in 1607 refers to the River Ouse in Huntingdonshire as being “bedecketh with flowers” and commented on a view of Portholme from Castle Hill, Huntingdon,

“whereof in the springtime this may be truly said:

The pleasant Spring faire floures doth yeeld, Of divers colours, in this field.”



Portholme Meadow Summer 2012



Flooding on Portholme in November

Even today Portholme is exceedingly rich with many attractive meadow plants. In total there are over two hundred plants recorded including Lady's bedstraw, Marsh ragwort, Meadow crane's-bill, Pepper-saxifrage, Pignut, Sneezewort and Yellow rattle. In the wetter areas Water dock, the handsome Flowering rush, and Cuckooflower can be found.

Houghton Meadows a SSSI Nature Reserve lie just above the floodplain level are a Wildlife Trust (BCN) nature reserve. In spring and early summer there is a rich flora with Green-winged Orchids together with Meadow Buttercup. A rich variety of other broadleaved herbs includes Knapweed, Meadowsweet and Meadow Crane's-bill. The site has some of the more important examples of Medieval Oxen-ploughed ridge and furrow grassland surrounded by ancient hedgerows.



/ Continued on p29



Civic Society of St Ives

Registered under the Charities Act 1960, No.257286

The committee of the Society has reluctantly decided that, until the new law limiting the numbers attending meetings is relaxed, the Society will not hold any further Open Meetings.

The Society works to retain the historic character and heritage of our Town for future generations. Our work continues, the Committee meets remotely each month.

To find more about the Society, to become a member, or to receive our email newsletter, you can make your request through the Contact page of our website: stivescivic.org.uk

David Stewart

Chairman: Civic Society of St Ives



Civic Society of St Ives

Registered under the Charities Act 1960, No.257266



Membership Secretary, Civic Society of St Ives, 88, Warren Road, St Ives, Cambs, PE27 5NN

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Civic Society of St Ives

Registered under the Charities Act 1960, No.257286



www.stivescivic.org.uk

Formed in 1968 the Civic Society of St Ives has cared for the town since. The Society engages with its members and local government to promote high standards of planning and architecture for the future, as well as conserving the best from the past of St Ives and the surrounding area. With your help we can continue to inform its people of local issues regarding environment, transport, flooding and planning; act as consultees for town, district and county council proposals to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic and public interest in our local area.

We would love to welcome you as a member.

Household Subscription: £12.00 per year - Individual Subscription: £7.00 per year

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

Mr/Mrs/Ms		First Names	
Family Name			
Address			
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Please make cheques payable to The Civic Society of St Ives and return it with this form to

The Membership Secretary, Civic Society of St Ives, 88, Warren Road, St Ives, Cambs, PE27 5NN

If preferred a standing order form can be obtained from our website

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The information you have provided will be stored on a computer and used exclusively for managing your membership of the Society it will not be disclosed or released to any other organisation. A copy of our Security & Privacy Policy is on our website. We will send you email and postal mail about our meetings, news about St Ives and other activities of the Civic Society

By completing this form you agree to this.

Photo on previous page shows Houghton Meadows ridge & furrow grassland in Spring.

Berry Fen SSI represents the inland limit of the tidal Fenland Basin some 3,400 years ago. It floods irregularly during winter with significant numbers of wildfowl including Bewick's Swan. The grassland is characterised by grasses such as Marsh Foxtail and Reed Canary-grass. Herbs include the Purple Loosestrife and Meadowsweet Sneezewort Marsh Ragwort and the uncommon Narrow-leaved Water-dropwort.

Unfortunately agriculture has progressed and a large number of meadows along the Great Ouse have been 'improved' by the use of herbicide and artificial fertiliser producing uninspiring flower free grass. But the good news is that meadows can regain some of their former diversity by returning to the hay-making, grazing and regrowth routine of the past.

Despite the loss of herb-rich grasslands as a result of agricultural intensification, gravel extraction, housing and industrial development and loss to a golf course, the River Great Ouse Valley has a wealth of wildlife. The open water and fringing vegetation of disused gravel pits have become amongst some of the richest habitats especially for species associated with these habitats. Surviving grasslands are amongst some of the best in the country, especially Portholme, which has international recognition. Even those meadows that are agriculturally improved have mature, ancient hedgerows lending structure to the landscape.

It is certainly the case that in places such as near Godmanchester it is possible to imagine you are viewing a landscape in the river valley, much older than its surrounds. Improving the richness of the agriculturally 'improved' meadows is being actioned through the Government Stewardship schemes. Surviving herb rich meadows are largely protected from further botanical degradation, either as nature reserves or designated sites. Those supporting partly 'improved' grassland appear also to retain a reasonable flora, for example the two larger meadows south of the river at Hemingford Abbots and Hemingford Grey. However, many continue to be treated with artificial fertilisers and herbicides and remain biologically poor. Despite this they retain their landscape character so long as they continue to be cut for hay with aftermath grazing. The river and older gravel pits support important wildlife, with scrub and woodland development extending the wet woodland habitat at several sites. In the absence of scrub removal lakes used for fishing also support wildlife habitat. Gravel working continues, but as the RSPB/Hanson Ouse Fen site shows, this can result in favourable conditions for wildlife. All in all, the wildlife character of the River great Ouse Valley continues to be a haven for wildlife.



A typical River Great Ouse landscape at Godmanchester.

Stuart Orme, Curator of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon, on 15th November 2019 gave us a fascinating talk entitled

WHAT THEY DIDN'T TEACH YOU IN HISTORY AT SCHOOL (A Historical Miscellany).

He opened by explaining his talk was a sort of horrible histories for adults but with a serious purpose to explore what constitutes history and its relevance to today. He warned us that we should not always believe what we have been told about the past and interest levels rose when he also warned that sex and violence were involved!

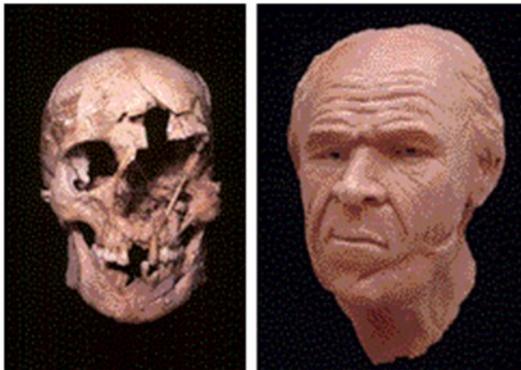


There is a tendency to look back in history and judge it from present day achievements and attitudes but just because people lived long ago and didn't have computers or PlayStations they were not lacking in intelligence.

Trepanning or the drilling of a hole in the skull to expose the brain beneath has been practised for thousands of years including the present day. Some of the earliest Neolithic examples have been unearthed in cave digs in

France dating from around 7000 BC. This early procedure would have been carried out using tools made from flint, a material that is still used today in some surgical instruments. It is also clear that the 'patients' survived the operations from the regrowth around the incisions. What is not totally clear is the reason for trepanning, was it to treat an injury or release an evil spirit? Many cultures practised trepanning - Greek, Roman and Chinese. A Greek physician, Hippocrates, recorded that it was being used to treat bruised or indented heads.

Historical medical practices such as the use of maggots to treat infected wounds and leeches to take out blood have proved to be remarkably effective and both have been reintroduced into modern medical practices. The Battle of Towton, Yorkshire, in 1461 was the bloodiest to be fought in Britain with around 28,000 brutally killed. One skull recovered by an archaeological dig on the battle site is a testimony to medieval medicine.



The casualty in question had suffered a heavy sword-like blow to the face causing severe damage to the jaw and skull. The wound evidenced medical treatment and reconstruction which must have been successful as the extent of regrowth indicates that the wound was inflicted at least ten years prior to the soldier's death at Towton.

Recycling of waste is not a recent innovation. People in the past could find a good use for anything and were far better at recycling than we are. Urine for example has had multiple uses throughout the ages. The Romans used it to clean clothes, whiten teeth, tan leather and dye cloth. It was such a useful commodity that they put a tax on urine sales. The use of urine for cleaning and dyeing persisted right through to the end of the Victorian era; however by this time an even more unsavoury product had been added to the tanner's arsenal, dog mess. Victorian streets were gleaned for this valuable commodity that had become an indispensable part of the tanning process. Soaking in urine made the hides pliable and aided hair removal, soaking in water and dog mess gave the cured hides a quality sheen. Little wonder the tanning

trade was described as odoriferous.

People in the past were not as prudish about most bodily functions as we are today. The phallus formed a major part in early Egyptian culture and religion. It was widely depicted in the murals and artefacts interred with the pharaohs but because norms had changed Victorian and Edwardian archaeologists censored the artefacts and art that was released for public view. The Romans considered a phallus to be lucky and numerous small phallic charms of astonishing variety have been found in areas of Roman occupation.



People in the past believed the world to be flat. In fact most early civilisations understood the earth to be spherical and this view held universally until around the late 18th Century when a myth developed that people in the Middle Ages thought the earth was flat. This was an early example of fake news started as part of a campaign by Protestants against Catholic teaching. An early proponent of this myth was the American writer Washington Irving in his fictionalised biography of Christopher Columbus which maintained that Columbus had to overcome opposition from the church to fund his expedition. Widely accepted as a factual account it suited many factions to pro-

found the notion. Surprisingly the Vikings despite their renowned seafaring exploits were one of the few early societies that believed in a flat earth as part of their Norse religion.

People in the past were not all five feet tall or less nor did they only live to 30. In fact the average height in England of people in the medieval era and between 1400 and 1700 is similar to those of the 20th century. The low door heights in old buildings are more to do with level changes outside the threshold. Also doors reduce the structural integrity of the structure and the cost of long straight timber planks was excessive, hence it made sense to install small doors. The short beds, four poster or otherwise, found in medieval and 17th century homes reflect the fact that it was normal to sleep sitting up in bed to raise the head above the level of fogg in the room so six foot beds were an unnecessary expense.

Clothing was not always dull, functional and boring. The greatest period of change in fashion in history was the 14th Century.



The reason we see 16th/17th century Puritans portrayed in black clothing is not to reflect their sombre puritanical credo but more to do with them dressing in black to declare their wealth to all as at the time black cloth was extremely expensive.



Who has heard of King Louis 1st of England? In May 1216 Louis the eldest son of the King of France arrived in England and, taking advantage of King John's hapless reign in England, pursued his claim to the English throne. John's unpopularity with the Barons led to wholesale support of Louis and on 2nd June 1216 Louis was proclaimed King in St Paul's Cathedral and was recognised as such by most of southern England together with the King of Scotland and the Prince of Wales.

With the death of King John in October 1216 Louis looked set to consolidate his reign but Louis's forces were defeated at the Battle of Lincoln in May 1217, and in September 1217

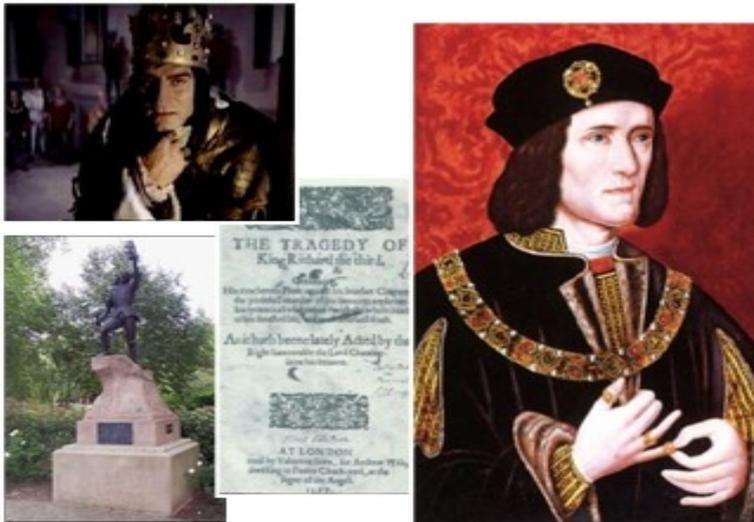
Louis renounced his claim to the throne and withdrew to France leaving England to the nine year old Henry III. Louis was effectively King for the better part of a year but is usually overlooked in the listing of England's monarchs.

When it comes to history the Victorians have been responsible for a few 'embellishments'

- Vikings wearing horned helmets. They didn't.
- Boudicca's chariots had scythe blades fixed to their wheels. They didn't.

Shakespeare too has contributed to the distortion of history

- Macbeth portrayed as a disliked craven regicide whose conscience plagued him. In fact Duncan was killed in battle not his bed, a perfectly honourable way to accede to the throne, and Macbeth proved to be a popular king ruling for seventeen years.
- Richard III portrayed as a deformed murderer. He wasn't. Discovery of his skeleton shows one shoulder would have been slightly higher than the other with no other deformities. Neither was he responsible for most of the murders he is accused of including those of the two princes in the Tower. Shakespeare's portrayal of him has more to do with writing in the reign of Elizabeth I when it was best not to criticise her grandfather Henry Tudor who killed Richard at Bosworth to become king.



Hollywood has produced some remarkably historically accurate films like Battle of Britain in 1969, Master and Commander in 2003 and Kingdom of Heaven in 2005. It has also produced some travesties: Brave Heart, The Private Life of Henry VIII and all versions of Mutiny on the Bounty.

Stuart closed with some disturbing slides of the horrors of the past. The Roman Arena, slavery and the Holocaust asking us not to make judgements about the past but accept and learn from it. He defined History as being about people - not just facts and truth, and by keeping this in mind the horrors of the past can be avoided.

On 20 January 2020 Dr Mike Osborne talked to us about:

THE CIVIL WAR IN THE FENS

King Charles I came to the throne in 1625 and used his power to start wars and consequently he needed money to fund his armies; he also attempted to impose religious uniformity. This led to almost continuous conflict with Parliament and by 1641 Parliament had become exasperated with Charles and they set out their grievances. Whilst relations between them remained tense both sides raised armies. In August 1642 the King raised the Royal Standard in Nottingham and sporadic skirmishes between Charles and the Parliamentarians signalled the commencement of the First Civil War. This ended with the surrender of King Charles in 1646. Civil war erupted again in 1648 until the capture, trial and execution of Charles in January 1649.

Whilst the term 'Civil War' is used, from our perspective today, it is important to understand, especially in East Anglia, that the wars were more a series of skirmishes taking place in different locations, as small numbers of troops were moved around the country to head-off a move by the other side. Once a skirmish was over troops often moved on, leaving defences with only a few soldiers to observe and protect the area.

East Anglia saw comparatively little fighting throughout the war; it remained under Parliament's control throughout with only a few exceptions and there were no decisive battles. Parliament had set up local committees to defend areas, to raise money and armies and some grouped together to form the very successful Eastern Association covering Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire; Huntingdonshire was later included. Lincolnshire was divided and this showed in Crowland where different local allegiances resulted in the old Abbey being fortified and besieged although it changed hands several times. King's Lynn declared for the Royalists and was besieged, but after a show of strength by Parliamentary forces the town changed sides.

Early in the conflict the King appealed to his supporters for funds. Colleges in Cambridge were asked to send their plate to London, but Oliver Cromwell, a Parliamentary intent on stopping the King receiving funds, entered Cambridge with a small troop of men and prevented much of the college plate being taken to the King.

After this initial success Cromwell was charged with raising a small troop of horsemen to secure Cambridgeshire for Parliament. He quickly learnt the importance of exacting discipline in order to win battles and as part of this work he garrisoned troops in the gatehouse of Northborough Manor, just north of Peterborough on the road to Boston; this was well positioned to look up the road towards any invaders from the north. Today the small round holes, ordered by Cromwell to be cut in the wall for rifles, are still visible.

In order to resist skirmishing, many towns and villages were strengthened; Huntingdon Castle was improved and the town fortified. To the west and around to the north the town was protected by a ditch; from Ermine Street to Hartford Road the ring road today follows the line of the ditch, while protection was completed by the Great Ouse and the Mill Stream to the south. An earth-work gun emplacement was built at Hartford; whilst this is now surrounded by houses the site originally had a clear view over the road and the river. Other mounds or bastions have been identified around Huntingdon from old maps.

Compared with the small gun emplacement at Hartford, a much larger bulwark was constructed at Earith and is believed to date from 1643 or 1644. The bulwark is approximately 50 yards square; at each corner a bastion protrudes to allow defenders a line of fire along the embankments, while ditches provided earth for the walls and consequently added to the effective height of the walls. Other sites for bulwarks have been identified in Cambridgeshire, one is at Horsey Hill Fort, between Peterborough and Whittlesey, it is larger but less complete than Earith Bulwark.



Earith Bulwark. Copyright Bill Blake Heritage Documentation.

Rivers were militarily important; slow-flowing rivers provided transport routes and also the opportunity to delay an advancing army and consequently defences were often constructed near them. After the 1645 raid on Huntingdon all the river crossing points between Eynesbury and Earith were strengthened by local Parliamentary forces. Here, in St Ives, one or two arches of the bridge were removed and replaced by a drawbridge as also happened in Huntingdon and St Neots; fording points were also protected. Two raids were launched south from Newark, the first in July 1642 being aimed at Peterborough but ended in defeat at Burghley. The second raided Huntingdon in August 1645; Huntingdon and Godmanchester were held for just two days by the Royalists, who then continued southwestwards, away from East Anglia, much to the re-

lief of the Eastern Association who had gathered their troops to protect Cambridge. By the time of this second raid Parliamentary forces had the upper hand. Charles' surrender was less than a year away.

On Friday 21 February 2020 Georgina Bray talked about her work as Farm Manager at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' Hope Farm, Knapwell, Cambridgeshire

RSPB HOPE FARM

The RSPB purchased the 180 hectare farm in 1999. It was a conventional arable farm and the Society's intention was to continue to grow crops profitably, but at the same time to trial methods to increase the wildlife and biodiversity of the land. Initially, farming practice continued much as before, but the farm was monitored to establish the baseline wildlife numbers.



Whilst Georgina is the Farm Manager, she is not the farmer; he is Martin Lines, a local man with similar aims as the Society. Initially, in a similar way to other arable farms in the area, a three-year rotation of crops was followed. After two full rotations the farm applied for membership of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This provides some payments to allow less intensive farm practices to be followed. Crop rotation is now more diverse; as an example, introducing winter beans has led to an increase in the number of lapwings and yellow wagtails.

Another change has been to take out of production about 10% of the farm land. This was marginal, in that crop yields were low, or were awkward corners of fields that were difficult to manoeuvre large farm machinery into. Instead these are now managed as wildlife-rich areas with field boundaries

managed to encourage wildlife; no longer are hedges cut annually providing wild bird cover. Within the fields small areas are not sown with seed; these benefit skylarks, corn buntings and wagtails who nest there. Turtle dove plots provide thinly sown areas where the birds can forage for seeds.

Wider field margins provide areas of flowers, for instance oxeye daisies for bees and other insects. Another way of helping wildlife is to provide overwintering foods; hedgerows provide seeds, berries and insects and additional winter bird food is provided by the RSPB.

The Society has been measuring loss and recovery of species' territories for many years, so it was second nature for them to do the same as soon as they took over Hope Farm. The measures they have taken, touched on above, have led to some dramatic increases of wildlife; butterfly numbers have increased 409% and in the first eleven years of management the farm's bird index increased three times. These successes in managing the farm for wildlife have been achieved at the same time as continuing to farm and to remain profitable.

The story is not complete yet though as research trials continue. Currently, insects in soils are being studied as well as the importance of the insects as a food source for winter birds.



Georgina Bray's enthusiasm and knowledge of her subject was infectious, several members remarking that they had been uplifted by her; not that we knew it at the time, but a good way to end the 2019-2020 season of talks.

Your society has joined the Great Ouse Valley Trust as a Partner Member. As some of you may not be aware of this relatively new group and its aspirations, we invited the Chair, Graham Campbell, to provide this brief introduction. If, after reading this, you would like to learn more, do visit the website www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk and if you would like to get involved please see the details of the new Supporters Group therein.

THE GREAT OUSE VALLEY TRUST

A Trust for our beautiful river valley

We can't think of St Ives without visualising the Great River Ouse. The river gives the town its heart, its history and its future. The characters of the towns and villages from St Neots in the south to Earith in the north east are defined by the river.

Yet for so long the Great Ouse Valley has not been given the status it richly deserves. It is a beautiful area but surprisingly little-known nationally. Those of us who live in the area know what a wonderful landscape we have all around us but it is still not properly recognised, even within Cambridgeshire.

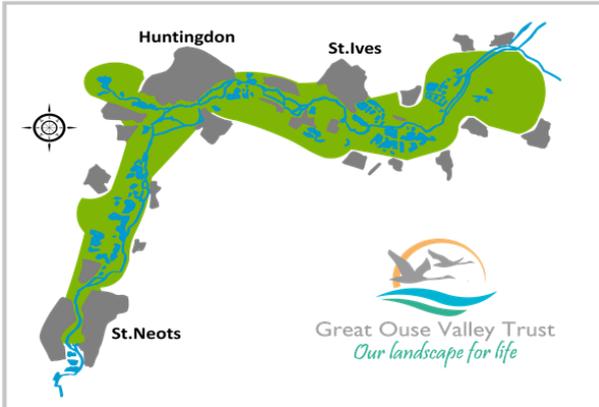


The landscape of the Great Ouse Valley is truly stunning! This is Hemingford Meadow in May – a blaze of buttercup gold.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Some six years ago an effort was made to achieve Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty status for the valley. The application was made to Natural England and was met with enthusiasm. Unfortunately, cutbacks in funding will not allow the Government to consider any new AONBs for several years and everything was put on hold. As a result the Great Ouse Valley Trust was founded in 2018 with a major conference attended by over 70 people, all with a commitment and a love of this precious area.

The Trust is a coalition of all the organisations that value this wonderful landscape as it passes through Huntingdonshire. Our partner members include most of the towns and parishes, national organisations such as the National Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the British Horse Society and local groups like Civic Societies and the recreational users of the river.



The area covered by the Trust stretches from St Neots upstream and downstream to Earith at the Ouse Washes. Map by GOVT.

The Trust has three key aims: to Promote, to Protect and to Enhance the landscape of the Valley.

The Trust continues to lobby Natural England for the area to be granted Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty status and we have given evidence to the Government's report on the future of the natural landscape in the UK. Protection of this landscape will be especially important in the coming years as the surrounding towns expand and inevitably become more urbanised.

The first two years

Since our launch conference back in 2018 we have been working on many different initiatives all aimed at getting proper national recognition for this wonderful area, ensuring it is protected from bad development.

We have published our first book *A Commanding View: The Houses and Gardens of Houghton Hill* by local writer and Trustee Bridget Flanagan (available at the Cromwell and Norris Museums).

Working with Cambridgeshire County Council we are improving the Ouse Valley Way Long Distance Footpath by ensuring good maintenance, providing better way-marking and publishing a new guide with new maps of the whole route. We have also started discussions with a Cambridge tech company to produce an app as a footpath guide.

Currently the Ouse Valley Way passes through the industrial landscape of Meadow Lane which makes it very unpleasant for walkers coming from Holywell and equally difficult for the lorries and heavy plant using the road. The aim is to redirect the path along the river bank towards the Busway to avoid Meadow Lane altogether. Negotiations to achieve this are well underway with the landowners and local councils. Fingers crossed we can see this happen soon.

We hope to carry out a major landscape improvement across the Godmanchester Eastside and Westside Commons. Willows have traditionally been planted on the river bank for hundreds of years and the regular pollarding provided material for fencing and basket making. The First World War brought much of this important rural industry to an end. The scheme, if successful, will see new willows and black poplars planted along the river, oaks planted on the grazing land and hedges restored. This project works well within the Woodlands Trust initiative 'cooling the rivers' in response to climate change.



This is Cook's Stream, Godmanchester, with Black Poplars in the centre and on the left. Floating Pennywort can be seen in the foreground but that is another story. Photograph by GOVT

Our successful campaign against the Third River Crossing

We have recently had a major success with regard to the proposed third river crossing. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was adamant that this was needed somewhere between St Ives and Huntingdon, crossing possibly the finest stretch of landscape in the whole Great Ouse Valley and one of the best in the East of England. After much campaigning, letter writing and attendance at many meetings of the Authority and the County Council by

Trust members, the plan for the third river crossing has recently been abandoned.

However, there is still a lot of work to do to ensure that the Great Ouse Valley receives the recognition it deserves. This will be a busy and exciting year for the Trust as we liaise with Huntingdonshire District Council to develop a landscape strategy for the whole valley. You can see more on our website or follow us on Facebook.

Graham Campbell

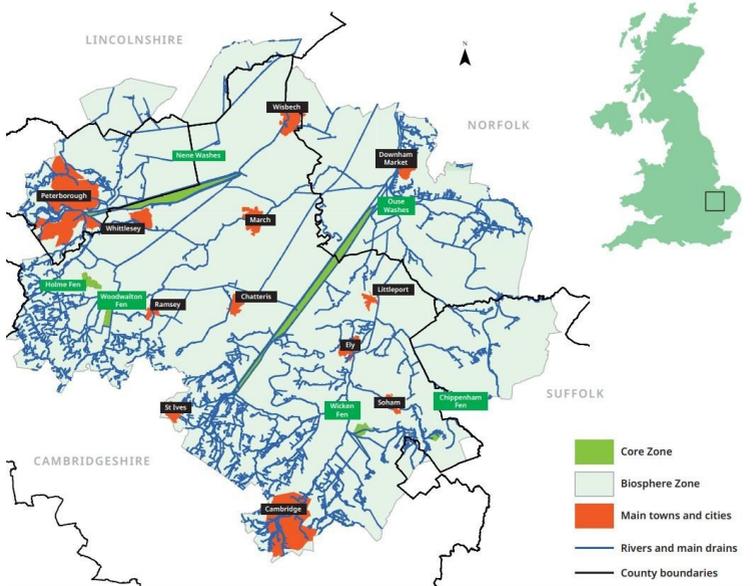
Chair



www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk

A UNESCO FENS BIOSPHERE

Biosphere status is awarded by UNESCO to a unique and valuable landscape. There are 701 Biospheres in the world but only 7 in the UK and none in East Anglia - the proposed Fens Biosphere will be a trailblazer, achieving global recognition for the area. The exact boundaries of the proposed Biosphere have yet to be confirmed but St Ives will be included at the southern tip of the area as it is sited at one end of the environmentally significant Ouse Washes, has the River Great Ouse flowing through it and is a gateway town to the wider Fenland area.



Proposed Biosphere Area

When an area becomes a Biosphere, UNESCO asks that its residents work together to find balanced and innovative solutions to benefit communities economically, environmentally and culturally – an inspirational aim for these unprecedented times. The Fens face an uncertain future – there is a need to deal with the changes associated with climate change such as sea level rise; water scarcity and population growth. Threats to our vulnerable wildlife areas and the increasing need to find sustainable solutions to food production mean a new approach is urgently needed. A Biosphere can help address all these issues.

A multi sector partnership, co-ordinated by Cambridgeshire ACRE and drawn from all sectors of life is working together to achieve UNESCO Biosphere

Status for the Fens. Once the area has been granted status it's stated activities will be managed by a constituted partnership drawn from local organisations and community members.

The benefits of becoming a Fens Biosphere could include:

- A boosted local economy
- Better and more joined up natural areas for wildlife and people
- New solutions trialled to tackle climate change and its impact in the Fens
- Promotion of the unique Fenland identity
- Increased well-being through better access to greenspace
- Inspired and empowered residents

For more about the proposed Fens Biosphere please visit the website: www.fensbiosphere.org.uk or follow us on social media @fensbiosphere.

The Fens Biosphere Partnership is supported by funding from the People's Postcode Lottery Postcode Dream Fund as part of the Water Works project awarded to the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.



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ST IVES IN THE NEWS 100 YEARS AGO

The Hunts Post from 1893-1970s is available to view by appointment at the Norris Museum. Sadly, there is no volume for the 1920s but there are news cuttings volumes for St Ives which fill the gaps for this period. The news for 1920 is dominated by two main themes – the erection and unveiling of the town's War Memorial and the proposed building of the first council houses.

The War Memorial

A cutting from the paper dated 27 December 1919 reports that a public meeting was held in the Corn Exchange to discuss the War Memorial scheme recommended by the Town Council and to raise subscriptions to the value of £1,500.

'The first charge on this fund should be the cost of erection of a memorial cross known as the Cross of Sacrifice designed by Sir A Blomfield' The cost of the memorial will depend upon the height of the cross and the material adopted, but will probably amount from £800 to £900. Secondly, that the whole or a portion of the waste land on The Waits be raised and laid out as an Embankment Garden... the same should be dedicated as a memorial to all the St Ives men who fought in the Great War. From this little town 467 answered their Country's call and of the number 60² had crossed the bourne from which no traveller returned... the mayor then read the proposed inscription for the Cross of Sacrifice ... the cross would perpetuate the names of those who had made the supreme sacrifice... the monument was exactly the same design as that which stood over beloved ones in the grave yards of France.'

The proposed site of the cross was near the White Hart Hotel (now a pub) which some felt was inappropriate and so it was left that the architect Reginald Blomfield would make the final decision. There was further criticism at the meeting of both ideas. One person remarked that the Waits scheme *'would be washed away at the next high flood'* while others objected to the cross, including Mr Fuller, who *'spoke strongly... It was a sign of Popery, ritualism and idolatry. He thought a very suitable memorial would be an obelisk and he would subscribe to that but not one penny to a cross (cheers at the meeting). Mr Culpin thought that it would be a shame to have a cross on the Market Hill near Oliver Crowell's statue, the man who fought against Romanism and ritualism (cheers at the meeting).'* A number of people however spoke in favour of the scheme and when the original motion was put to the meeting and it was carried by a large majority.

20 February 1920: report on a Town Council Meeting at which the site of the cross was confirmed as ³Sir Reginald Blomfield *'had approved the site for the erection of the War Memorial as a divide in the centre of the Market hill, in line with the Cromwell Statue and opposite the White Hart'*.

19 November 1920: The memorial was unveiled by the Mayor, Mr Johnson, on Armistice Day and the paper prints all 74 names of those listed on the memorial. In his speech, the Mayor referred to the inscription, a quote from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address:

"we here highly resolve that these men shall not have died in vain". The Mayor concluded: In your name, and as your representative, I unveil this memorial, which we dedicate to the immortal memory of the men in St Ives who in obeying their country's call, served humanity, and who gave their lives in the sacred cause of truth of justice and of freedom. (Applause)'. "

The hymn "God of our Fathers, Known of Old" was sung, after which the Right Hon. Lord Askwith rose to address the meeting.'



The Mayor laid a large wreath of laurels on the base of the cross and was followed by relatives with their floral tributes. The photograph shown here was probably taken soon after this ceremony. In 2011 the Civic Society raised £3,375 for refurbishment works to the memorial, including the cleaning, re-defining and re-painting the lettering and filling of all cracks to prevent water access.

New Council Houses

The second item of news in the paper for 1920 is the building of the first council houses in the town. The Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919 gave councils powers to plan and build their own housing estates.

The paper for 27 February 1920 headlines *'Houses for St Ives: tenders are invited for the erection of 40 houses – 28 workmen's dwell-*

ings and 12 artisans' houses. Initially 12 would be built. The site was the corner of Ramsey Road and Houghton Road and the mayor was keen for all 40 to be built.'

12 March 1920: report of the St Ives Ratepayers League meeting where the subject of sites was raised *'The question of various sites was fully dis-*

cussed. The Ramsey Road site consisted of nine acres at a cost of £100 per acre being approved for the following reasons: length of frontage; economy in cost (compared with other sites); health (so far as to prevent further congestion in the town); water main to the Grange and gas on to the corner...

the council have acquired the right to build 50 and intend building 12 as soon as possible. Some will be built 12 to an acre, others eight to an acre... the cost of building will be from £800 to £900 per house, according to the class of dwelling. The council will appoint a letting committee who will interview every applicant and the selected tenant will pay a rent in proportion to the income he is earning.'



There is no further mention of the houses until the notice of a fire at two of the properties in 1923 which gives us the illustration reproduced here. The houses were demolished in the 1990s and new properties built in their place

The images are reproduced by kind permission of the Norris Museum.

Lesley Akeroyd

¹The architect was in fact Sir Reginald Blomfield, Sir Arthur Blomfield's nephew.

²There are 74 names from the First World War and 31 for those who died in the Second World War.

³Reginald Bomfield was one of three architects appointed by the War Graves Commission to oversee the design of cemeteries in Britain and France. The 'Cross of Sacrifice' appeared in most commission sites

IRIS MAIN, T.A.N.S. NURSE (1915–1943) by John Archer

Iris Hannah Isabella Main is the only female whose name appears on the war memorial on Market Hill, St Ives.

She was born on 15 November 1915, in Holborn, the daughter of James Stewart Main (1875 – 1959), a grocer, and his wife, Mary (nee Eaton), (1876 – 1951).

In 1926 James and his brother-in-law, Rolle Eaton, bought into the St Ives grocers, Johnson's of Crown Street, (now the Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop) and Iris's family moved into Bridge House overlooking the town bridge and river. Iris attended the private Collegiate School in Church Street, then run by Miss Lusher.

After leaving school Iris trained to be a nurse at Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, being a probationer for (three?) years and then a staff nurse for a further year. She qualified as a State Registered Nurse and then attended the Mother's Hospital in Clapton, London, to qualify as a Certified Midwife. At the beginning of the war she was nursing in Guernsey in the Channel Islands and left only a few days before the German invasion; she delayed coming home until she was actually ordered to leave her patients. (In 1945 her nephew remembered the return of her tent and washing bowl to St Ives from Guernsey)

Iris then joined the Territorial Army Nursing Service (T.A.N.S.) and was in Gravesend during the London Blitz as well as serving during the bombing of Liverpool and Manchester.

Unfortunately, while attending to the care of wounded foreign sailors she picked up a virus and died in Addenbrookes Hospital on 29 August 1943. By request, her funeral at the parish church was not a military one, but the local dignitaries and citizens of St Ives filled the church; she was a much loved St Ives girl and is buried with her parents in Broadleas Cemetery.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Bridge Street in St Ives after the COVID-19 Lockdown, when the council 'widened' the pavements by adding the red barriers to protect the pedestrians from the traffic.

Passers-by could then remain 'socially distant' from each other.



Photograph by David Stewart

Wild flowers shown blooming on the corner of Burstellers, St Ives, in July this year. Area was seeded by HDC. Photographs by courtesy of Nick Gibben.



A painting of Houghton Mill, seen on the front cover, was painted by Edward Walker in 1941. He was one of the artists who travelled the country during the period 1940-1943 given the task of recording the change face of Great Britain.

RECORDING BRITAIN

This work is from the 'Recording Britain' collection of topographical watercolours and drawings made in the early 1940s during the Second World War. In 1940 the Committee for the Employment of Artists in Wartime, part of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, launched a scheme to employ artists to record the home front in Britain, funded by a grant from the Pilgrim Trust. It ran until 1943 and some of the country's finest watercolour painters, such as John Piper, Sir William Russell Flint and Rowland Hilder, were commissioned to make paintings and drawings of buildings, scenes, and places which captured a sense of national identity. Their subjects were typically English: market towns and villages, churches and country estates, rural landscapes and industries, rivers and wild places, monuments and ruins. Northern Ireland was not covered, only four Welsh counties were included, and a separate scheme ran in Scotland.

The scheme was known as 'Recording the changing face of Britain' and was established by Sir Kenneth Clark, then the director of the National Gallery. It ran alongside the official War Artists' Scheme, which he also initiated. Clark was inspired by several motives: at the outbreak of war in 1939, there was a concern to document the British landscape in the face of the imminent threat of bomb damage, invasion, and loss caused by the operations of war. This was allied to an anxiety about changes to the landscape already underway, such as the rapid growth of cities, road building and housing developments, the decline of rural ways of life and industries, and new agricultural practices, which together contributed to the idea of a 'vanishing Britain'. Clark also wanted to help artists, and the traditional forms of British art such as watercolour painting, to survive during the uncertain conditions of wartime. He in turn was inspired by America's Federal Arts Project which was designed to give artists employment during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Over 1500 works were eventually produced by 97 artists, of whom 63 were specially commissioned. At the time the collection had a propaganda role, intended to boost national morale by celebrating Britain's landscapes and heritage. Three exhibitions were held during the war at the National Gallery, and pictures from the collection were sent on touring exhibitions and to galleries all around the country. After the war, the whole collection was given to the V&A by the Pilgrim Trust in 1949, and it was documented in a four volume catalogue published between 1946 and 1949. For many years the majority of the collection was on loan to councils and record offices in each county, until recalled by the V&A around 1990. The pictures now form a memorial to the war effort, and a unique record of their time.

*The front cover photo shows Houghton Mill, a watercolour painted by Edward Walker in 1941.
Courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum*

Edward Walker (1879-1955)

Edward Walker was born in Bradford on 17th January 1879.

He studied at Bradford School of Art, 1895-1900 and the Royal College of Art, 1900-1906. Between 1906 and 1908 he was Head of the Design Department at Sheffield Technical School of Art. From 1908-1911 he was Head of the Art Department at London County Council Paddington Technical Institute. From 1911-1921 he was Director of Art at Cheltenham Ladies College, and in 1921 was appointed as Head of Scarborough School of Art.

During the years after World War Two he produced artwork for posters issued by the LNER.

Houghton Mill is a restored 17th-century water mill on an island in the River Ouse. It is now the only remaining water mill in the old county of Huntingdonshire, and, indeed, the last surviving mill on the Great Ouse. The mill is five storeys high and built of timber framing, clad with weatherboard. Though built in the 17th century, it was enlarged and remodelled in the 19th century.

During the Victorian era, Houghton Mill was a hive of activity. The mill ran ten separate pairs of grinding stones, with the power supplied by three wheels. The wheels were removed in the 1930s, but one was restored in 1999, and this now powers a single set of stones.

Though the current mill dates to the 17th century there was a mill on the site since at least the early 14th century when Houghton was owned by Ramsey Abbey. There was frequent tension between the monks of Ramsey and the villagers of Houghton. In one famous episode that took place in 1500, the abbot dammed the river to power the mill, which flooded the village. The villagers, not unnaturally, were so angry that they rioted and stole the floodgates.

The mill is renowned among landscape artists for its picturesque setting, and painters can frequently be found with their easels set up before the mill. There are frequent milling demonstrations, and visitors can buy fresh ground flour.

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