

FULBOURN VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

"To save Fulbourn's past for the future"

INITIAL "DISTANT VENUE" SUMMER VISIT A SUCCESS

N
E
W
S
L
E
T
T
E
R
No
16

Following earlier enquiries over FVHS summer visits, it was understood that there was general consensus for more distant summer visits to replace those previous events which had been easily accessible local points of interest.

The advantages were perceived as offering not only wider scope but also a full day out and giving the possibility of coach travel. As it turned out the first such venue, Gressenhall - for which a report follows, produced insufficient numbers to make a coach viable so members cars were utilised at least one of which explored some of the less known and used roads of Norfolk en route! However, the visiting group had an exceptional pleasant day of great interest and in this context those who took part rated this a great success.



YOUR SECRETARY SHOWING UNEXPECTED SKILLS

RECRUITMENT DRIVE

Some of you may have noticed that Fulbourn has been targeted to produce new members for your Society. A larger membership strengthens our hand and enables us to produce more and better facilities to benefit everyone as well as broadening our range of in-house skills and abilities to spread the load of administration etc. So, why not help us in this initiative by encouraging, friends, relatives or neighbours to join us and have a good time - go on, don't be selfish!

BIRTHDAY SUBSCRIPTIONS

It is to be hoped that all members will by now have renewed their subs for this year 2004/5 which is incidentally our 5th anniversary year. Inevitably there will be some who intended to but never finally got round to it - if this covers you then please, please see to it now! To remind you subs are joint membership £12.00, individuals £7.00 and juniors (under 16) £3.00. Where else can you get such good value these days?

OUR WINTER MEETINGS START THURSDAY 21st OCTOBER



Your officers and committee have been working away during the summer to produce a varied and interesting programme of winter meetings, details of which all paid up members should be receiving shortly.

Our initial meeting of the winter is certain to be a very popular and entertaining one and will be at the Six Bells function room (7.45 for 8.00 pm) as usual. This talk will be given by Maureen James and is titled "A History of Witchcraft." Our advice is as always, get there early for a good seat and expect perhaps more than usual number of broomsticks in the car park and the possible presence of black cats and if you do not have a 'familiar' to bring along... why not try your neighbour!

Autumn
2004

EAST OF ENGLAND SENSE OF PLACE

The East of England Sense of Place consortium, consisting of five local authority partners (Cambridgeshire CC/Essex CC/Norfolk CC/ Peterborough City Council and Suffolk CC) have developed a set of digitisation projects, creating an internet bank of learning resources offering access to the culture, heritage and diversity of our region. Members with access to the internet can access the website at <http://www.senseofplaceeast.org.uk/>

Each partner provides an exciting insight into the collections within their individual organisations, contributing to a Sense of Place for the region:

FenPast (www.fenpast.info/) explores ten thousand years of the Cambridgeshire fens

EESOPE (www.eesop-e.co.uk) discovers the historical jewels of Essex

E-Map Explorer (www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk) accesses a bank of Norfolk's treasures maps and photos *Peterborough-A Sense of Place*

(www.senseofplacepeterborough.org) helps understand the changing lifestyles through time *Sense of Place - Suffolk*

(www.senseofplacesuffolk.co.uk) enjoy the journey through the county's heritage

SUMMER VISIT TO GRESSENHALL

Report by Glynis Arber

On Saturday 31st July, 15 members of Fulbourn Village History Society travelled 50 miles to reach our summer visit destination - the rural museum described by publicity material as "Roots of Norfolk at Gressenhall". It did, however, offer much, much more than the agricultural reference that the title suggested!

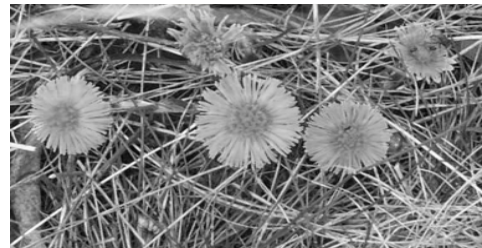
First stop was at the "Mardlers Rest Café" (What is a Mardler, and why did he/she/it need a rest?) where a reviving cup of coffee and delicious home-made cake was available. We were then shown around the premises and given a background history to the work house which operated from 1777 until the 1940's. Known originally as a House of Industry, the change from a paternalistic system, with an emphasis on self-sufficiency to one where families and the sexes were separated and a more rigid discipline imposed, was evocatively described.

Accommodating a maximum of 1000 men, women and children (the poor and destitute of local parishes) the large building had its own laundry, workshops and of course, kitchen. These now held fascinating exhibits including steam engines, agricultural implements, a costume collection of ordinary working folks clothes and a wonderful Collections gallery displaying everything from medieval bricks to kitchen gadgets of the 1960's.

Out buildings in the extensive grounds included a traditional cottage, and village shop, post office and blacksmith. There

members. Providing education and religious instruction to the inmates of the workhouse was an essential task for the trustees and the onsite chapel had a raked floor to ensure those at the back had no excuse to miss any of the sermon.

The nearby home farm provided food for the workhouse and is now part of the museum, so we were able to admire the rare breed farm animals native to the region such as the Suffolk punch horses, Red Poll cattle, Large Black pigs and traditional geese, turkeys and chickens. In all, our visit to Gressenhall was both fascinating and informative with something for everyone - and even the weather was kind!



FULBOURN FLORA by Peter Reeves

Wild plants used by our Forebears

No. 2 - Coltsfoot

Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) - also known as foalsfoot, clayweed and coughweed - is one of our earliest-appearing wild flowers in early spring (March/April). It is unusual in that it comes into flower before its leaves are evident. The leaves which follow initial flowering are very similar in shape (roughly heart-shaped with serrated edges) to those of the butterbur although considerably smaller. Coltsfoot, a plant not enjoying competition and usually found where populations of other plants are sparse, can often be overlooked as its flowers are yellow and from a distance appear to be diminutive dandelions, which flower during the same period. However, close inspection will reveal the true identity since not only is there a significant size difference but whereas the dandelion has a smooth hollow flowering stem, the coltsfoot's is very slim and covered in what appears to be large loose scales. The height of the plant generally ranges between 15 - 30 cms. Known strongholds of the plant in our vicinity are central and western areas of the Magog Down and verges of the exit slip road from the A11 to the A1301, although there will be many others.

The leaves, once dried, are - or have been until very recently - used as a herbal smoking mixture. In apparent contradiction, extract from this plant is also used as a remedy for coughs and respiratory difficulties as is witnessed by one of its local names. In fact the modern compound Antussin1 used extensively for cough treatment bears a striking similarity to coltsfoot's botanical name and strongly suggests a link. The leaves, used fresh, have a history of being used for flavouring soups, stuffings etc. An extract from the plant is also used in the confectionery known as coltsfoot rock1. This has a decidedly medicinal flavour and I am not sure if it was ever popular here (maybe someone can advise me on this) but certainly was favoured in the northern counties such as Yorkshire and Lancashire and I know was still freely available there only a few years ago.

That doyen of the historical plant/people relationship, Nicholas Culpepper, confirms the use of this plant for chest and throat problems with the leaves, juice or syrup from them useful for coughs or breathing difficulties. He also suggests it is useful against St Anthony's Fire - although there may not be too much of this today - as well as discomfort due to haemorrhoids and "Burning heat of the privy parts". It is interesting to note that he also confirms the use of the dried leaves "taken as tobacco" in the early 17th century, a practice which still persists.

[Should anyone wish to attempt to cultivate coltsfoot or any other wild flower in this series, seed or blends thereof can be obtained from John Chambers Wild Flower Seeds (01933 652462)]

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Now Digger Turns up a Roman Pot (from *CEN* dd December 1965)

Mr John Missen, a mechanical digger driver for Chesterton Rural Council, has a habit of unearthing rare finds while at work.

Mr Missen has made three discoveries in the space of as many months. His latest is of a Roman pot, in an excellent state of preservation, which he found while working on a sewerage system being built in Townley's Wood, Fulbourn.

The pot, which is pierced by three holes round its side, dates from about 100 AD. It used to be an ordinary household utensil. Mr Missen is now on the look-out for more finds at Fulbourn.

Fulbourn Cellar Unearthed (from *CEN* dd November 1967)

An 18th century cellar has been unearthed by workmen excavating the foundations for a new supermarket in High Street, Fulbourn.

The cellar, which is about 15 yards long by 3 yards wide was previously covered by a butcher's shop, now demolished to make way for the supermarket.

The butcher's shop was formerly as inn known as the Coach and Horses and there are signs that beer was brewed on the premises. The cellar, built of yellow hand-made Cambridge gault bricks, would have been used to store beer.

Mr R C Lambeth, the rural industries organiser for Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely, said that the cellar was blocked up about 100 years ago because it was found that it flooded easily, as do all cellars in Fulbourn.

The cellar will be excavated further by the contractors to see if there is anything of more importance on the site but eventually it will be filled in as part of the footings for the new supermarket.

Memories of a Ding-dong Battle (from *CEN* December 1979)

Ancient memory was stirred in the parish of Fulbourn last week when the church bells were dismantled from the belfry and packed off to a foundry in Whitechapel for general maintenance and re-tuning

The subject of church bells is a sensitive one in Fulbourn, a tradition that dates back to 1776 when the village witnessed ugly exchanges over the question of bells.

What happened was this: until 1776 there were two churches in Fulbourn, All Saints and St Vigor's, standing barely six feet apart. On Trinity Sunday of that year the tower of All Saints

apart. On Trinity Sunday of that year the tower of All Saints collapsed and its five bells were broken as they crashed to the ground.

The churchwardens decided to sell the bells in order to pay for repairs to the tower, but they didn't reckon on the congregation who, suspecting that the authorities would pocket the cash, mounted 24-hour pickets to watch over the bells and prevent their removal.

A ballad written at the time by one William Rolfe defines the villagers' suspicions: "There are some farmers in Fulbourn town, They have lately sold what was not their own; They have sold the bells, likewise the Church, and cheat the poor of twice as much".

Feelings ran high in the village until an Act of Parliament, no less, permitted the ruined All Saints to be demolished and the bells from both churches to be recast into a ring of six in the tower of St Vigor's.

There was much rejoicing and the Six Bells pub, which still serves the needs of thirsty parishioners, changed its name from the Plough and Crown to commemorate the great event.

The occasion also marked the beginning of a long tradition of skilful bellringing in Fulbourn, a tradition that still persists, so it is small wonder that when the time came for the bells to be overhauled, there was little problem in raising £18,000 in a matter of eight months to get the job done.

The target of £23,000 is expected to be achieved by next April, only 12 months after the appeal was launched.

In allowing their churchwardens to remove the bells from the church - for any reason - today's parishioners of Fulbourn are evidently more trusting that their forebears. But heaven help those churchwardens if they've sold Fulbourn's bells.

Thank you to Pat White for sending in the above interesting snippets gleaned from the Society's archives.

WORLD WAR II STORIES ABOUT FULBOURN

Through the eyes of the village nurse, Mair Jones (continued from Issue 15)

During the war petrol used to be quite gritty sometimes. I used to have trouble starting the car but I became quite a crack hand at this. I got a pair of tweezers and cotton wool, got the dirt and slime out and off I went on my travels but I just could not get the car going more than about 5 miles an hour. I got out by the Post Office, lifted the bonnet and lo and behold the smell of petrol was awful and it was flowing out on to the road. I got back to Mill View and, of course, got Arthur to have a look - cars in those days had a float in the carburettor. He looked at the carburettor - I had left the float out and it was by the side of the drive: big laughs!

I had been relieving in the district of Sawston before coming to Fulbourn and I was staying with an airman and his wife for two weeks. This was a very nice billet (they were from Devon). Through them I got to know a number of people working on Duxford Aerodrome and when they had a broadcast of "Music While You Work", which was broadcast about twice a week, I was asked to sign. I felt quite honoured. I should mention here that I played the

piano a great deal in Mill View's front room; when we heard something new on the radio (no TV then) Arthur and I used to play the piece straight away - Arthur on drums - we enjoyed it so much.

May used to entertain her two friends most Saturdays and I think they all used to work some time or other at Chivers Jam Factory. May gave them a sumptuous tea and they all had a great time.

May's mother, living in Cambridge, used to visit sometimes; she was a very gentle, quiet lady. I remember May's brother visiting there too and young cousin Elsie.

I had been on my rounds one day and came home to Mill View, went up to my room and gave such a scream - there was a mouse looking at me from the chest of drawers. This is worse: they used to keep the Christmas parcels I had received by post and put them all in a pillow case to put on my bed (in the night, I suppose, just like my own Dad used to do when I was a child). I was very excited, went to open it and lo and behold a mouse jumped out - it was a toy mouse but, my goodness, there were some screams!!

I had to go to a court case one day, much to my embarrassment, to give evidence about being called out to some bleeding (from the head) patient, two sisters had had a set-to and one hit the other with a tin milk can. No glass or plastic bottles then, and everyone had to pick up their milk.

Another incident was when I had to drive to Fen Ditton past Marshalls Aerodrome in the fog. I had a nasty accident which saw the end of my Austin 7 - I had a crash with an RAF transport car driven by a squadron leader. I suffered two broken ribs but the squadron leader visited me in a few days with some magazines. I was in bed with shock - he didn't half tell me off and said he had seen me drive dangerously before and was very hoity-toity. Well, would you believe it, in less than a week he was shot down over Africa and killed. Now if he had broken his ribs he might have been alive today.
to be continued in Issue 17.

AN ESCORT OF P-38's

The skies over Fulbourn, in common with most of East Anglia during the early 1940's would contain many aircraft. Some unwelcome with the insignia of the Luftwaffe and others more reassuring such as those of the RAF and USAF who had numerous active bases throughout the area. The civilian population of which I was then a junior member had great interest in whether the aircraft in sight were friend or foe and some became adept at recognising the various aircraft. There was one plane though that everybody would instantly recognise, the uniquely distinctive Lockheed Lightning interceptor with its twin boom fuselage, looking like a flying hollow square. The US official designation of this model was P-38. This was Lockheed's first introduction to the military aviation sector and in submitting designs were given specifications by the US government with regard to climb rate, operating ceiling, speed and landing/take off requirements. Those with previous construction experience would have recognised these specifications as impossible - Lockheed had none so got down and designed the impossible with the P-38 (Lightning) the result. The unique twin boom fuselage the

answer to the fact that no available engine then would give the power necessary to meet specifications, so Lockheed decided to use two - and the double fuselage seemed the logical way to accommodate them! Having the designs approved the resultant fighter plane was extremely popular with pilots as it then had great advantages over contemporary enemy designs and its performance and handling in combat much appreciated.

Nobody had greater appreciation of these characters than the crews of the East Anglian based bomber planes the P-38's were escorting on their extremely hazardous duties where living to enjoy another meal often would depend on sufficient fighter cover to engage and ward off enemy interceptors. Against the background of this situation I would like to share with you a simple and anonymous poem I recently came across, heard initially over a radio transmission from a US Bomber in 1944 over Italy, which brought a lump to my throat and unlike many modern poems, is clear and so very understandable.

Oh Hedy Lamarr is a beautiful gal,
and Madeleine Carroll is too.
But you'll find if you query, a different theory
amongst any bomber crew.
For the loveliest thing of which one could sing
(this side of the Pearly Gates)
Is no blonde or brunette of the Hollywood set
But an escort of P-38's.

Yes, on the days which have passed, when the tables were
massed
with glasses of scotch and champagne
It's quite true that the sight was a thing to delight
Us, intent upon feeling no pain
But no longer the same, nowadays in this game
When we head north from the Messina Straights
Take the sparkling wine, every time just make mine
An escort of P-38's.

Byron, Shelley and Keats run a dozen dead heats
Describing the view from the hills,
Of the valleys in May when the winds gently sway
In the air it's a different story;
We sweat out our track, through the fighter and flak
We're willing to split up the glory.
Well, they wouldn't reject us, so heaven protect us
and, until all this shooting abates,
Give us courage to fight 'em - one other small item -
An escort of P-38's



UPDATE OF FVHS OFFICERS

Two changes to advise you of in this area. Richard Townley has agreed to become Honorary President of the Society and Norman Osborne has decided to step down from the position of Vice chairman.