

Friends
of the



Registered Charity
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Newsletter of the Friends of the Suffolk Record Office

September 2011

Chairman's Letter

Thanks to Judith Stephenson, the Friends' Secretary and Newsletter editor, for another FOSRO newsletter. We are so fortunate in the working links we have with the Record Office staff and how this mutually supportive relationship works in practice. As I really begin to get "my feet under the table", so to speak, I realise more and more what a wonderful group of people we have looking after our archive service. It was Bridget Hanley and Emma Sealy, staff at Ipswich, who suggested the Friends had a second-hand book sale at the Gatacre Road site, and who worked hard to collect books from their own home collections as well as encouraging those researchers in the weeks beforehand to bring in their own surplus books. So after the first, a second was suggested and now plans are in hand for one at the Bury Record Office. Thanks too to those friends who helped man the sales tables and handled the cash for us.

Having tentatively enquired whether our local History Research Group might be shown round the Ipswich branch, I was greeted with a welcome and straightforward costings for day or evening tours. There is here a passionate belief in the need to share knowledge with the general public, not a "couldn't care less attitude" that sometimes pervades areas of the public service. We in turn as Friends are passionate too. We just need more passionate people to join up with us! Can you pass on a leaflet to someone who might like to join, or perhaps encourage them to come along to the AGM? [I know, boring but legally required - let's get it over with as quickly as possible this year] and then we can all enjoy the talk. We will however need to find a new treasurer as Julie Craven has to give up for family reasons but we are so grateful for her work over the years. We also won't this year have Roger McMaster from the County Council with us, who has served us so well, as he has taken early retirement and we wish him a long and happy one.

We've been chasing a few good documents recently - some with success and some outside our self-imposed price limits - we do need to steward our funds although I am a great believer in money will flow if the idea or object is really worth it. I'm now writing to those nearby Friends and parish councils about a new acquisition to encourage them to support that particular purchase should they feel able.

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Elsewhere you will read of the latest news on the new Suffolk Heritage organisation. The amount of work that is going into this to secure our future service from cuts is daunting; not helped as the rules and perspective change with time. The Friends Committee are very keen to be involved in the discussions about the new organisation and we are pleased that Vic Gray, a new committee member, has agreed to be our representative on the steering group. More at the AGM. See you there!

Paul Simmons

Suffolk Record Office Update

Starters and Leavers

We've said a number of goodbyes and hellos over the last few months. Angela Plumb, who many will know from the Ipswich Record Office, retired in June. Angela had worked for the Record Office for over 25 years, having started work at County Hall before helping with the move to Gatacre Road in 1990. By the time this newsletter reaches you we will also have said goodbye to Ed Button, who retires after 27 years with Suffolk County Council. Ed moved to Suffolk in 1985 as a Local Studies Librarian, based in Bury. In 2004 Ed moved to the Ipswich branch to work as County Council Archives Officer. We will all miss both Angela and Ed and wish them a happy retirement.

Fortunately we have been able to welcome new members of staff. Caroline Wright started work at the Ipswich branch in June having worked as a Business Support Co-ordinator for the Parent Partnership Service, part of the Children and Young People's section of the County Council. We have also appointed Joyce Stannard as a searchroom assistant at the Ipswich branch. Joyce already works for the library service and is based at the Knowledge Centre in Endeavour House.

Councillor Kathy Gosling has been appointed as the new Portfolio Holder for Sport, Culture, Diversity, Health and Wellbeing.

Public Service Quality Group Questionnaire, 2011

Thank you to all the members of the Friends who completed the PSQG questionnaires in February. We have now had the results back and are working through the comments and suggestions that were made. We are very pleased to announce that 98% of those completing the survey felt that the overall service was good or very good. The quality and appropriateness of staff advice and the helpfulness and friendliness of staff were both scored as good or very good by 99% of people answering the questionnaire. There are areas where we need to improve. Only 76% felt that the website was good or very good. The county council will be launching a new website at the end of the year and we hope to be able to make significant improvements to our webpages.

Comments about the service include:

"The record office has been an invaluable source of information and pleasure, which is found nowhere else."

"An absolute treasure house, essential to our knowledge of our country, county, past and present lives"

We will be continuing to analyse the results and seeing what improvements or changes we can make based on your comments.



Update on Suffolk Heritage Project

Suffolk County Council and the Museum of East Anglian Life (MEAL) are beginning to develop a Suffolk integrated heritage organisation. Terms of Reference have been agreed for a Steering Group to oversee this co-creation, inform the decision makers as to the viability of the enterprise and to provide organisational and political support and direction to the project team.

The Steering Group will operate until any follow on organisation is formed to ensure:-

- an effective communication strategy is implemented involving stakeholders, statutory bodies (e.g. The National Archives) and communities of interest like The Friends.
- engagement of heritage stakeholders in developing the vision.
- the project is delivered to a brisk but manageable timeframe.
- MEAL trustees, county councillors and officers are kept informed.
- an open and transparent process leading to the recruitment to the governing body for the new organisation.
- oversight of the detailed work carried out by the project team.

They will also consider issues such as property and pensions, review outline business plans to ensure they are financially sound; agreeing a position prior to the production of an outline business case in November. This will be submitted to respective Local Authority cabinets and the MEAL Board in November with the objective of establishing a skeleton new organisation by April 2012.

The Steering Group includes representatives from interested parties:-

- Andrew Good - Independent Chair (former Chief Executive of Mid-Suffolk District Council)
- Tony Bone - Trustee and Director of the Museum of East Anglian Life
- David Richardson - Trustee and Director Museum of East Anglian Life
- Cllr Kathy Gosling - Suffolk County Council Portfolio Holder for Sport, Culture, Diversity, Health and Wellbeing
- Guenever Pachent - Service Director for Culture Information Inclusion and Learning, Suffolk County Council
- Bryn Griffiths - Assistant Director, Economy Skills and Environment, Suffolk County Council
- Richard Thurlow - Head of Cultural and Community Services Mid Suffolk District Council
- Victor Gray - Former County Archivist of Essex and Director of the Rothschild Archives

The members of the Project Team are:-

- Tony Butler - Director MEAL
- Kate Chantry - Record Office Manager Suffolk County Council
- Keith Wade - Archaeology Service Manager Suffolk County Council
- John Lanagan - Learning and Enterprise Manager MEAL
- Alison Donald - Suffolk County Council, Project Manager

Prior to formal consultation Suffolk County Council is inviting 75 key record office and archaeology stakeholders to participate in visioning workshops to inform the co-creation process. These will be held in Bury, Ipswich and Lowestoft during September.

Suffolk Manorial Documents Register Project update

The MDR project has been running now for almost a year. The project archivist, Gemma Field, has been working through existing catalogues to update the current MDR files. She has also started to catalogue manorial records held in unlisted collections to ensure that the MDR record is as complete as possible.

As mentioned in the previous report one of the first jobs has been to identify those manors who maintained a manor court. Claire Barker and Peter Hepple have been helping Gemma with this part of the project and we are very grateful for their assistance as it is no easy task given the complex manorial structure in Suffolk. In comparison with other English counties, Suffolk had a significantly high proportion of small lay manors, particularly in the east of the county. The fertile soils and relatively dense population of the area stretching from the Stour to the Waveney facilitated the development of small, multiple manors. In fact, the Domesday survey of 1086 rates the average English manor at around 600 acres, whereas in Suffolk manors consisting of 30 acres or less were not uncommon.



Suffolk is particularly well-endowed with surviving manorial records, but they are currently under-utilised even though they are invaluable for the study of medieval rural society. Manorial court rolls contain a wealth of information regarding copyhold tenants and property transactions which can be used for the study of land ownership and enable family historians to trace tenants via the process of surrender and admission to copyhold land. Also useful in this respect are manorial rentals and surveys which list tenants and their holdings. As well as regulating conditions of tenure, manorial courts also had jurisdiction over petty offences such as trespass, brawling and theft, and can therefore reveal much about local community interactions. Manorial maps, plans, extents and terriers give significant topographical information on the layout and operation of field systems, and manorial accounts provide vital economic data which can shed light on farming practices, field systems and land productivity. Indeed, recent studies of Suffolk manorial accounts have led to a reassessment of the feudal economy in the county as being far more market-focussed than was hitherto realised.



As well as being used to reinterpret historical assumptions on a national level, manorial records can also highlight the impact of national events locally. The progress of the Black Death through Suffolk during 1349 can be charted by studying the deaths of tenants listed in the manorial court rolls, but can be better illuminated through the documentation of other perhaps less obvious events. For example, the exceptionally active land market in the February court at Dunningworth indicates a deliberate redistribution of property in chilling anticipation of the epidemic; the incidences of orphaned children taken into care by relatives and neighbours, such as one year-old Agneta Reynold of Iken, and the looting of abandoned houses recorded in Brandon and Fornham clearly indicate the level of devastation on a local and personal level.

If you would like any further details of the project please contact Gemma Field on 01284 352354, or email gemma.field@suffolk.gov.uk.



Curry and Culture

Suffolk Record Office is delighted to be involved in a new project in partnership with the Bangladeshi Support Centre in Ipswich. The "Curry and Culture" project was awarded funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund's "Your Heritage" scheme to record and promote the longstanding involvement and participation of the Bangladeshi community in the economic and cultural life of Ipswich and Suffolk. It is hoped that this will both mark their contribution and combat ignorance which can lead to racist attitudes. It will also be a way of capturing the lives and times of the first generation of Bangladeshis in this area, many of whom are now elderly.

Two project co-ordinators will be working over the next three years with volunteers, staff from Suffolk Record Office and Ipswich and Colchester Museums Service and St Helen's Primary and Northgate High Schools to research and collect material, produce educational resources and create a travelling exhibition. They have already visited Ipswich Record Office and are very excited at the range of information available there.

Over the past fifty years Suffolk's Bangladeshi population has grown to over 8,000 people many of whom worked in local factories before moving into commercial and catering industries. The project aims to create a permanent record of their contribution and it is vital that this important part of Suffolk's history is captured and preserved for future generations. Record Office staff will offer advice on the specialist storage of photographs, documents and digital material, as well as access to sources and guidance on how to use them to provide the historical background and context for the project research. These sources include newspapers and newscuttings, maps, directories, parish magazines and photographs and will help the researchers build up a picture of life in Suffolk when the migrants arrived.

We also have collections of records relating to Cranes (an Ipswich company where many of the original Bangladeshi migrants worked) and many of the schools in Ipswich that the children attended including St Helen's Primary and Northgate High Schools. Members of the community and volunteers working on the project will be able visit the Record Office (we have a copy of our introductory leaflet in Bengali for those who need it) and a Record Office representative is on the project steering group.

Bridget Hanley
Collections Manager

FOSRO Book Sale

Following the success of the two book sales at the Ipswich branch we plan to hold a book sale at the Bury St Edmunds branch on Saturday 15 October from 10am to 12pm. All proceeds from the sale will go towards the Friends and will be used to purchase documents that may otherwise be lost to the county.

If you have any books that you would like to donate to the sale please bring them along to the Bury office and give them to a member of the searchroom team who will include them in the sale.

If any Friends would like to help with the book sale, either on the day or by helping to price up books beforehand, please contact Judith at the Bury branch on 01284 741204 or by email at Judith.Stephenson@suffolk.gov.uk.



Halesworth: Turn Back the Clock

In November 2010 we worked together with Dr Lucy Martin and history students from the University of East Anglia, and colleagues from Archaeology and Halesworth Museum, in providing a local community history project in Halesworth, called *Turn Back the Clock : High Street History*.

Despite a very snowy Sunday we were amazed by the high turnout of visitors at Halesworth Library, who provided the venue, and delighted that some visitors were so enthralled they stayed for several hours. The event brought together new and long-standing residents and business owners from The Thoroughfare to share photographs and memories. We took some resources from the Record Office including photographs and Gales Almanacs which were very popular. Students from the UEA encouraged visitors to record their memories of shops and businesses in the Thoroughfare, and then visited the Record Office to undertake further research in April.

This was followed up by another event in June 2011, when we were invited to provide support at The Cut in Halesworth. At this location we again provided some resources and the UEA students brought the results of their research in the form of a display, together with a film showing life in the 1950s in the town. The Archaeology team dug test pits around the town whilst Mike Fordham from Halesworth Museum was on hand for advice at the library.

We felt it was a very successful partnership which created a lot of interest in Halesworth local history as well as generating further research for us and an offer from one of the UEA students to index Halesworth Independent Church minutes.

Ruth Silburn
Lowestoft Record Office

St Audry's Graveyard



A chance conversation between two members of staff at Ipswich Record Office resulted in a display about St Audry's cemetery at Ipswich Record Office in January and February of this year. Sue Lodwick and Sally Whiffing photographed the surviving gravestones, and researched six of the people recorded on the earlier stones. The display made use of documents available at the Record Office, via the internet and elsewhere, and caused great interest amongst visitors. The photographs and transcriptions have

now been deposited at IRO, and a copy of the information in the display will also be deposited.

The display moved from the Ipswich Record Office to Woodbridge Library for two months. The plan is for it to be exhibited at Felixstowe Library. Melton Parish Council has also asked to borrow the display, which will then be lent to Felixstowe Museum (Landguard Fort) for their



2012 season. Enquiries still continue to be made about the cemetery display, and there have been several requests for the story to be continued, and similar research to be done on the other seventeen pre-1911 gravestones that were identified.

A further discovery just this week has revealed that the Suffolk Family History Society also carried out a Monumental Inscription Survey in 1991, when a total of 34 gravestones were recorded that dated from before 1911. There was no trace of the missing 11 stones when Sue and Sally visited in 2010. The display was intended to demonstrate how information found on a gravestone can lead to other sources. It was also hoped that it might encourage other people to record monumental inscriptions before they disappear, and deposit copies with Suffolk Record Office.

Sally Whiffing and Sue Lodwick
Searchroom Assistants

Documents purchased

In May the Committee decided to bid for three volumes for the manor of Callis Metholds and Wimbolds in Glemsford. These covered the period 1725 to 1760 (duplicates) and 1847 to 1919. The guide price was £400-£600. Based on experience from previous auctions the committee felt that a maximum bid of £900 should be placed. On this occasion the Friends were lucky and managed to obtain the volumes for £480. They are now housed at the Bury branch with the reference HD3178/B15136.

In June the committee decided to bid for three lots associated with the printing firm of Clowes and Sons in Beccles. The three lots included a deed box containing 19th and 20th century apprenticeship indentures, photographs of events at the Caxton Club and a large quantity of negatives of the Caxton Works exterior and interior as well as number of street views of Beccles. The guide price for the three lots was £200-£330. The committee's bid of £240 was successful. The lots have been given the reference 2083 and are located at the Lowestoft branch.



The Lowestoft team were delighted with the result and have said "We would also like to express our appreciation to FOSRO for making some funding available to purchase the items from the William Clowes Printing Museum at auction. This was a huge boost to staff who have encouraged donations and membership to FOSRO to see the money being used to purchase archives in this area."



Suffolk Record Office Contact Details

For any queries or comments about the Friends please contact the secretary or treasurer.

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Website address: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro>

New accessions

Some of the highlights from the new accessions this year include:

- Gainsborough Community Library Pictorial Archive, printed photo book designed and compiled by Brian Reeve, a member of the Gainsborough Community Library User Forum. The book contains a compilation of photographs of the Gainsborough area. SROI/K874:16283
- Photographic prints of Lowestoft Harbour and shipping, Oulton Broad, Police personnel, first aid exercise, etc. SROL/2058:2060
- Buxhall civil parish have deposited an Allotment register from Buxhall Parish Council, which details all allotment holders and rents paid covering the period, 1901-2009. SROI/EG75:16255
- A catalogue from 1869 with wonderful illustrations of the latest corsetry fashions available from the store Footman, Pretty & Nicolson of Ipswich. It shows crinolines, corsets, an intriguing garment called a 'royal batswing', and over and under skirts. SROI/HD2859:16248
- The results of the Denston fete photography competition, 'Life in Suffolk in 2011'. The photographs are an excellent snapshot of Suffolk life and include images of current agricultural techniques, the snow and winter weather conditions as well as recent community events. SROB/K1189:15141
- Newsletters and surveys from the Suffolk Organic Gardeners Club, otherwise known as SOG. SROB/GC715:15122
- 3000 slides of historically significant traditional and church buildings in Suffolk, some of which have now been destroyed or materially altered. The photographs were taken by Sylvia Colman whilst working for English Heritage and as adviser to the County Planning Officer between 1966 and 1993. SROB/K1185:15118