

wlbg newsletter

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER N° 27 • SEPTEMBER 2004

Note that the first meeting of the new season will be held, as usual in the Maltings Community Centre, at 7.30pm on **Wednesday 6 October**.

Please come in time to pay your subscriptions for the coming year before the lecture. This is to be given by **Trevor Ashwin**, at some time a member of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit and an acknowledged authority on the circles and forts of this area. His talk is to be on **Warham Camp** - many people will long have known it as 'Danish' Camp - he will explain!



Warham Camp from the air.

News from the new Chairman!

At the AGM in May the Vice Chairman, Terry Whiddett, the Secretary, Maureen Whiddett, and the Newsletter Editor, David Perryman did not stand for re-election to the Committee. They all deserve our grateful thanks for their hard work over a number of years. A sincere 'thank you' from everyone. David especially was a founder member and instigator of the Group long before newsletters were distributed, but they have all helped build the group up to what it is now - a major gathering of townspeople from all walks of life.

However, we are pleased to welcome three new Committee members, and at the Committee meetings on 19 May and 1 June the following appointments were made:

Chairman: Cynthia Jackson

Vice-chairman &

Speaker Finder: Mike Welland

Secretary: Keith Leesmith

Treasurer: Bob Huntington

Committee Members:

John Christmas

Michael Dunford

Ann Hissey

Lauretta Rogerson

Keith Leesmith, our new Secretary, has recently moved to Wells from near Fakenham. Members will recall his talks to winter meetings in the past on Boudica and on the Great Hospital in Norwich. He is due to speak at our second meeting of this winter, on 3 November, on **The Great Flood of January 1953**.

Ann Hissey has a special interest in post Second World War history and its impact on Wells, especially the demise of the railway and the development of the Northfield estate.

Lauretta Rogerson with her husband David, a Canon of Newcastle Cathedral, has retired to Wells into her parents' house. Her Wells connections go back some 200 years.

The others you all know well!

Mike Welland has since decided to resign from the Committee, not from the Group. He has found it difficult to hand over the reins and feels that the new Committee needs to be able to move forward without restriction. We thank him for his three years leadership as Chairman, which he has managed so well to combine with a great deal of historical research - so much as to put the rest of us to shame.

Brian Scott, although not a Committee member, has agreed to take over David Perryman's role as Editor and Guy Warren will design, typeset and lay out the Newsletter. The latter task has been carried out for the last five years (fifteen issues) by Jean Terrington. Our many thanks to her. Welcome Brian and Guy! Brian will tell you himself about Newsletter entries please keep them coming in!

Please feel free to contact the Committee with information, requests and ideas.

The schedule of winter meetings this year is a varied and interesting selection, and a very big thank you goes to Mike Welland for his hard work in arranging them for us. We hope you will support and enjoy them.

The full programme is listed on page 4 of this Newsletter. The first two talks have been mentioned above. The third, by Chris Beale, on 1 December is about **Wells Discussion Group**. Chris, at present its Vice Chairman, has been researching and writing its history going back to the early days, its relationship with the BBC and the role of Alderman Peel.

Membership fees remain the same and we will be taking renewals and updating our records at the first meeting, and of course welcoming new members.

At our May meeting Mike Welland updated the members present about progress on 'The Book of Wells'. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the steering group for its hard work and thoroughness. It was owing to this thoroughness that the link with Halsgrove Publishers was found to be problematic on legal and copyright issues. We have now formed a 'Publications sub-committee' that will look into similar private publications with a view to 'going it alone'. The group at present are, John Christmas, Ann Hissey, Brian Scott and Guy Warren. They are also looking at ideas of calendars, postcards and smaller specialist booklets. If you are interested in joining this group please get in touch!

Whilst on the subject of publications – be on the lookout for the **CD Rom of the Wells Community Archive**, priced at £5, available soon from the Library and the booklet of **Hew Purchas' sketches** at £2 from the Group and various local outlets.

Gifts of documents still keep arriving and I am still recording them. I would like to express my thanks for the most recent to – Mrs Rands, Mr Tuck, Mr Salt, Mr Warren, Mr Woods, Mrs Lenfesty, Mr Tipler, Mr Severn and Mrs Bursnell. Thank you.

Following comments from newer members, I propose to revive the idea of **Special Interest Groups** to research and record specific aspects of Wells life and history. At the moment the ideas are sketchy and I would hope that likeminded people would get together to share research. These could include

A Railway and Transport Group
Agricultural and Industrial Group
Fishing and Marine Group
Ecology and Environment Group
Architectural Group
Families and Family History Group
Religious Aspects

And last but not least Alison and John Christmas dearly need extra hands to help with Oral and Comma work that encompasses everything above!

If you are interested, please come to the forthcoming meetings ready to sign up on the display boards and we can go from there.

At one time reports from Groups were heard at the monthly meetings. Instead, perhaps, we could have occasional 'Help and Display' evenings run by and for the members themselves as part of the winter programme.

What do you think about these ideas?

CYNTHIA JACKSON



An aerial view of the railway station taken following the 1953 flood.

COMMA update

During the spring and summer, work has continued on the COMMA project. This is thanks to the help, support and enthusiasm of our contributors who now total about seventy.

As a result of their interest, there are approaching a thousand records in the archive. These are mainly photographs, but also sound recordings and descriptive text.

In addition to the three large presentations we made in the spring,

we have participated in 'Learning Days' at the Alderman Peel High School and the Library. At these events we encourage people to take an interest in the history of Wells and to contribute their pictures and reminiscences.

We are also in contact with other Norfolk COMMA groups, sharing ideas and helping new groups get started.

Future plans include making and selling CDs of the COMMA file. On the CD would be a copy of the COMMA program together with all the records we currently have. The first time that the disc is played, the program is downloaded to your computer and from then on the program can be used to search for records, in exactly the same way as in the library.

The proceeds from the sale of CDs would be used to fund future work on the archive.

Recently we have been asked to demonstrate our set-up in the Library to County Library Officers, who are thinking of using it as a model for the development of COMMA across the county.

Oral History

Recording the voices and experiences of local people continues slowly but steadily. We now have about forty tapes of reminiscences. The master copy of each tape will shortly be passed to the Sound Archive Centre, which is part of the new Norfolk Archive Centre visited by many members earlier in the year. They will store the tapes for us in the ideal conditions which they need, but which we are not able to produce in our filing cabinet!

If you know of anyone to whom we should be talking, please let us know.

JOHN & ALISON CHRISTMAS
01328 710924



The Discussion Group in 1939 just prior to the outbreak of World War II. Second from the right in the front row is Sam Peel.

Walk-Round Guides

Members will recall that we have now produced four of these, one in each of the years 2000-2003, which collectively cover most of the town. A thousand of each of the first two have now been sold and the East and West End guides are selling reasonably well.

Although I have taken the lead in their production, I have had very considerable help from the members of the Group who volunteered at the start, too many to join in the actual writing, but their assistance in choosing and checking the routes and the instructions for following them, and in checking my texts, has been invaluable. Truly a cooperative effort from the up to nine people involved at various times.

Even more vital has been John Christmas' expertise in arranging the texts and illustrations for printing.

There is no doubt that the attractiveness of the finished booklets has depended heavily on the illustrations prepared specially for the purpose by Hew Purchas. This year he has contributed several more, and John and I are combining the whole set, along with short explanatory texts, into a 'Sketch Book' which will we

hope be attractive enough to sell well as a souvenir of Wells, to locals and visitors and possibly to send to friends. Since this has not been concerned with the same issues as the 'Walks' I have not needed to seek further help from the original Group members.

So the time has probably come to repeat our thankyou's to our helpers, to disband the Group and to suggest that they consider joining one of the new Special Interest Groups discussed by the Chairman in her notes above.

BRIAN SCOTT

Editorial Note

This Newsletter has dealt almost exclusively with administrative matters. There is no reason why we should not, as in the past, include items – notes or feature articles – on **history!** Any contributions will be welcomed.

Copy for the December Newsletter must be in my hands by *31 October* and be submitted where possible on a disc with a printout for editing purposes. However, this is not essential and we will be happy to deal with typed or handwritten or even verbal items!

BRIAN SCOTT



wlbg

wells *local history group*

Winter programme 2004-2005

2004

- 6 October **Warham Camp** Trevor Ashwin
- 3 November **Norfolk 31 January 1953 – The Great Flood**
Keith Leesmith
- 1 December **Wells Discussion Group and its origins**
Chris Beale

2005

- 5 January **Wells and its Literary Connections**
Bernard Phillips
- 2 February **More old views of Wells** Eric Reading
- 2 March **History of The Crown Hotel** Mike Welland
- 6 April **The Port of Lynn & North Norfolk Harbours
1500-1900** Paul Richards
- 4 May **History of Norwich Cathedral** Elspeth Allen
- 11 May **Annual General Meeting**

**All meetings take place at
The Maltings Community Centre,
Staithe Street, Wells at 7.30pm**

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