

WELLS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 8
May 1998

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

We have now completed our programme for the 1997/8 season, and I am tempted to comment on the Group's progress and the success or otherwise of the talks. However, I shall restrain myself as that is properly the function of the Chairman's report at the A.G.M. Instead I shall use this corner to exhort you to attend the A.G.M. on Wednesday 13th May. Not, I hasten to add, because of the report, but because this is also an open meeting and a social occasion. It is our first attempt to have an informal meeting where we can talk among ourselves rather than listen to a speaker, where we can have a drink together and look at interesting Wells' memorabilia. Your committee would like it to be a success, but it can't be without **you**. If it is a success it could become a more regular feature. I look forward to seeing you on the 13th, and don't forget to bring along something that the others might be interested to see.

John Christmas

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Phil Champion has asked me to include a request that all outstanding texts in respect of the subjects for the Millennium Project should be completed and returned to him as soon as possible. This is now an urgent requirement if the target programme is to be kept.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the time of writing it is anticipated [and hoped] that this Newsletter will be in your hands by the date of the Annual General Meeting to be held in the Maltings at 7.30 p.m. on 13th May 1998. Hopefully, after a short business session this can develop into a social function as the bar is to be opened. Tables will be available for members to display their memorabilia.

The business session is important and if any member has any gripe or comment, please, please be forthcoming, preferably in the form of a written note to the secretary prior to the meeting.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a copy of the proposed Rules for the Wells Local History Group. [They are ground rules and not a Constitution.] It is hoped that at the A.G.M. they will be adopted. If you want to comment and wish for an amendment, say so.

A copy of the A.G.M. Agenda, as at the time of writing, is also enclosed

SUMMER MEETING AND OUTING

Members will have already been notified regarding a trip to Thetford.

Researching the history of a house: a personal account by a member

When we came to live at Ludham House we felt immediately at home: as if we were meant to live in this calm and welcoming house, built in 1830. Almost from the beginning we began to ask ourselves questions about its history.

Had it once been two

cottages, as more than one person had suggested? There is indeed physical evidence of two buildings: the remains of a second roof in the roof space can be seen and there is a distinct difference in roof line and building harmony on the outside of the house. Who, and what kind of people had lived in it, we wondered? Who had made the garden? And who had made the additions of three pretty bays on the south side of the house? We enjoyed many speculative discussions but, of course, got nowhere.

It was only when I attended a Wells UEA class in 'Researching Local History' that I gained enough confidence to begin looking for answers in earnest. Classwork covered a diversity of research being pursued by individuals and fuelled my own particular enthusiasms. The class made several visits out of Wells, one most interestingly to the Norfolk Record Office in Norwich.

Starting with our House Deeds, I set out to date and name all the owners of the property from the beginning. The Deeds were very confusing to me at first; with odd-looking papers called Indentures, Enfranchisements and Admissions. I had to read and re-read everything very carefully, especially as legal language is so convoluted! Making notes on what I read helped a lot and gradually I was able to make a clear table of ownership. I was also able to add some very early details given to us by two friendly local archivists. From these we discovered some interesting facts: for instance ...

* * * *

Did you know that Mill Road was once called Mill Lane - and before that was called Scottowgate Way?

Of course, with some questions answered, many others arose. But at least I had a skeleton from which to work. I started a ring binder and for each owner have a plastic file pocket containing details of the property as it was described at the point of ownership, together with any personal details I have gathered about the owner. Now I can slip snippets of information into each relevant pocket as I find out more. I shall have one pocket for our own time of ownership, of course. And, amongst other items, I shall put in photographs, copies of letters and extracts from my garden diaries.

I have made various attempts to find out more. I have talked to some older Wells' residents and my husband has spoken to Mrs. Grange who lived here in the 1930s. I have written to and received an interesting visit from a very nice person who, as a young girl, lived with Mrs. Grange. I have also wandered round Polka Road Churchyard and found the graves of quite a few of the past owners. This was exciting [and a bit sad] and gave me [via dates and ages at death] the age at which they had come into the property.

I still have a great deal of research to do before I can 'flesh-out' my 'skeleton'. I really must visit the Norfolk Record Office again. On my first visit I found the name of one of the owners, a Thomas Garwood, in the records of some Parish meetings; it was quite exciting.

But at least I do have some answers to my first questions. The house wasn't, after all, two cottages. It was amalgamated at some point with its

outbuildings, including, almost certainly, a stable, hay loft and wash house. I found this out by tracing the description of the property throughout the Deeds. And, of course, I have the names of all the people who have previously owned the house. I also know that it was Mr. Tom Grange, well-remembered by many older residents of Wells, who added the bays to the house, thereby enlarging and beautifying it beyond measure. He also made the garden [which, incidentally, was a Timber Yard in the 1860s], but, in his time, the lawn was a bowling green; he had it made for his own personal use!

I am sure there are some of you who have gone further than I have in researching your own 'ancient pile'. If so, the History Group would be interested to hear from you. But what of those of you who live in newer houses? Have you thought of starting a research folder on your house? This could be an interesting document to pass on to future owners - with, of course, a copy for the History Group's records.

EDITOR'S SOAPBOX

I am short of material for the Newsletter and my hopes that the membership would provide many anecdotes has not materialised. However, a few weeks ago one of our members, Mike Bushell, was showing some photographs to fellow Discussion Group members and one photo' in particular attracted my attention. The scene was what is now "John Temples Farm" in, possibly, 1935. Three traction engines were depicted at the old water tower site and, on one, was Sonny Howell the

driver. Close by was Roy Nelson Tyrell who became a mosquito pilot. Mike's interest is all things aeronautical and to him the focal point was Sonny.

My interest through my professional work in public health engineering was the steam engine driving the pumps to test the new bores for the Wells U.D.C. water supply. The 'v' notch weir was clearly seen together with other, relevant equipment. That was my focal point.

So every picture tells a story, be it different to each individual. Perhaps more can be known regarding this event from our members.

The number of people attending our monthly meetings indicates that the Group is successful and, may be, the Committee should work harder to provide snippets of local past interest. However, please do not allow the Group to become 'Committee dominated'. It is the members' Group.

TIMES PAST

Incidentally, have members seen the excellent pamphlet sponsored by West Norfolk District Council entitled "Nelson's Norfolk"? I found copies in Hunstanton Library. Nothing related to Wells, but food for thought on our Group's possible future publications.

Editor:

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Attractions at Norwich

CHEAP TICKETS

TO

NORWICH

Saturdays { 11th, 18th, 25th August } 1928
 { 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd September }

Special Late Train

FROM

NORWICH THORPE

TO

WELLS-ON-SEA

					p.m.
Norwich Thorpe ..	...	...	...	dep.	9 10
Wymondham ...	...	...	...	arr.	9 30
Kimberley Park ...	...	...	...	"	9 38
Hardingham ...	...	...	...	"	9 42
Thuxton ...	...	...	...	"	9 49
Yaxham ...	...	...	...	"	9 57
Dereham ..	...	...	...	"	10 5
North Elmham ...	...	...	...	"	10 15
County School ...	...	...	...	"	10 20
Ryburgh ...	...	...	...	"	10 28
Fakenham ...	...	...	...	"	10 34
Walsingham ...	...	...	...	"	10 45
Wighton Halt ...	...	...	...	"	10 50
Wells-on-Sea ...	...	...	...	"	10 57

Return halves of Ordinary or Cheap Tickets will be available by this train.

London, Aug., 1928.



WELLS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

to be held on Wednesday 13th May 1998 at 7.30 p.m.
in the Hall, the Maltings Community Centre, Staithe Street, Wells

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May and 1 October 1997
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Appointment of Examiner
7. Adoption of Rules [paper with this agenda]
8. Appointment of Executive Committee
9. Any Other Business

The rest of the evening will be more relaxed. The bar will be open and you will be able to talk together informally.

Please bring with you some items of Wells' memorabilia to share with other members.

WELLS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

RULES

1. **Name**

'Wells Local History Group' is intended to include the town of Wells-next-the-Sea and nearby villages and hamlets.

2. **Objectives**

The Group is established to:

- i. research and record all aspects of the history of Wells and the surrounding area; increase public awareness of the social, historical and architectural heritage of the area;
3. publish, as and when possible, the results of research carried out by the Group and others;
4. advise and assist in maintaining the safe storage of historical information and artefacts;
5. make surveys, maps and plans and collect information relevant to the aims of the Group;
6. hold meetings, lectures and exhibitions to promote civic and historic interest in Wells and the surrounding area. From time to time a Members' Newsletter will be produced.

3. **Membership and Subscriptions.**

Membership is open to all who are interested in the aims and objectives of the Group.

All Members will be entitled to participate in all Group events and receive a copy of each Newsletter.

Annual subscriptions will be determined by the Committee.

The subscription will become due on the 1st October and cover the period to 30th September of the following year. New members joining during or after May will be credited with their subscriptions as paid to the end of September of the following year. Membership will lapse if the subscription remains unpaid by 31st December.

4. Annual General Meeting

An A.G.M. will be held in May each year.

5. The Committee

An Executive Committee will be elected at each A.G.M. and shall consist of seven 'paid up' members. The Committee will appoint the following officers:

- 1] Chairman,
- 2] Vice Chairman, 3] Secretary, 4] Treasurer, 5,6 & 7] duties as required.

Additional Committee Members may be co-opted. A Committee quorum shall be 5 members. Sub-committees may be formed as and when required. The Executive Committee will meet at least three times during the period May to the end of April.

5. Accounts

The Treasurer will prepare an annual statement of the Group's financial position as at 31st March each year.

6. Winding Up

The Group may be dissolved by a two-thirds majority of members voting at an Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting. Such meetings will determine the disposal of any assets of the Group.

The quorum for an A.G.M. and/or E.G.M. will be 20 paid up members.

7. Changes to the Rules

Variation as deemed necessary by the Executive Committee will not be implemented without the authority of an A.G.M. or E.G.M.. Proposals for change must be notified to the secretary in writing at least 28 days prior to an A.G.M. or E.G.M.