

SAFFRON WALDEN HISTORICAL JOURNAL

History News Archive 2004 - 2005

The *Saffron Walden Historical Journal* carries a number of shorter items as 'History News' regarding history-related events in the locality, usually at the end of the journal, but sometimes on other pages. Some of these later expand into longer articles. A selection of these items reproduced below reflects the wide range of history activities in and around Saffron Walden. Some of the original wording has been lightly edited to update it. Only a few of the original illustrations are included, where possible in colour. The date of the issue containing the item is given in brackets.

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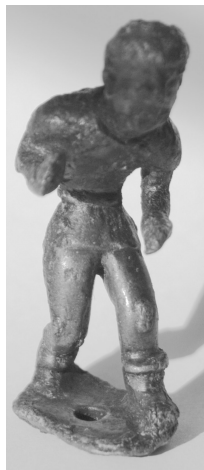
HERITAGE SAMPFORD: The Heritage Sampford project, launched in August 2002, continues to produce remarkable results. With the aid of £40,000 in grants, the whole community have become involved in a comprehensive historical survey of Great and Little Sampford. There are now well over 150 volunteers taking part, including many from surrounding villages. The finds include a prehistoric barbed flint arrowhead found at Dambury's; a collection of Neolithic flints and medieval bricks from the churchyard; a mammoth tooth fossil from Monks Field; and an ever-growing collection of artefacts from the Roman and Iron Age site at Shillingstone. Modern technology such as Global Positioning System are facilitating the fieldwork. The project enjoys the co-operation of many landowners and the advice of some of the leading historians and archaeologists in Essex, including Pat Ryan on bricks, Joyce Compton on ceramics, Hazel Martingell on lithics and John Hunter, the noted landscape historian, who has mapped out the medieval landscape of the Sampfords. This project is proving even more exciting than anyone expected! (No 7: Spring 2004)

UTTLESFORD HERITAGE UNDER THREAT: Little Easton and Molehill Green are just two of the villages which would suffer severely if Stansted Airport is expanded, but the battle to prevent this happening has, if anything, been heightened by the Government's go-ahead to the British Airports Authority. The threat has also awakened a new sense of pride and passion about the beauties of the N.W. Essex, that is Uttlesford, countryside. The impression that this is indeed a very special corner of England is given factual back-up by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings who have compiled a dossier of information, showing that Uttlesford contains: 35 Conservation Areas, 3,500 Listed Buildings, 30% of all the Listed Buildings in Essex, 3,000 sites of known archaeological interest, 73 Scheduled Ancient Monuments If the plan went through it would also pose

an unknown threat to Hatfield Forest, the ancient forest which is UNIQUE in the whole of Europe since it is managed in the same way as in medieval times. Several other ancient woodlands could also be affected, as well as the Ancient Countryside of N.W. Essex. (No 7, Spring 2004)

CLAVERING: A community project to conserve and study the history and archaeology of Clavering Castle has just been launched. The noted landscape historian, Christopher Taylor led a visit to the site in December, and put forward some new ideas about its construction. This was followed by working parties to clear some of the undergrowth obscuring the archaeology. In March, a Clavering landscape history group was set up, with the aim of applying for funding to enable archaeological surveys and other activities to take place in the village. (No 7, Spring 2004)

LITTLEBURY HISTORY: In December the Littlebury Local History Group held an open evening with displays on their village history project. Among those attending was Peter Dawson, formerly gamekeeper at Audley End, who is doing research for the group on Ring Hill and the menagerie which was kept there. He displayed and demonstrated some of his collection of barbarous anti-poaching devices used by estate gamekeepers in the past. (No 7, Spring 2004)



NEW AT THE MUSEUM: Responsible metal detectorists are having a huge impact on the world of archaeology, so much so that Essex has now appointed a Portable Antiquities officer to encourage proper recording of the finds. Three remarkable objects found by metal detectorists have recently come to Saffron Walden Museum. There is the 'Radwinter Warrior', a three-inch high bronze figurine of a Celtic warrior, found at Radwinter and dating from the Roman period between the first and third century AD. Secondly, there is a beautiful, medieval gold ring dug up near Saffron Walden. From the Viking period, there is a silver hammer pendant, symbol of the Viking god Thor, found in the Rodings and dating between the 9th and 11th centuries. All the finds can be seen on display in the archaeology section. (No 7, Spring 2004)

UTTLESFORD HISTORY DATABASE: A large gathering of Local History Recorders from all over Uttlesford attended a meeting held at Saffron

Walden Museum in September, to formally set up the Uttlesford Local History Recorders group. It was agreed to proceed with the production of a database for use by all Recorders in cataloguing their village collections of historical material. The database is now in preparation and will be the subject of a grant application, which will also include a website and computer equipment. The name of the database is *Ruth* which stands for 'Recording Uttlesford History'. (No 7, Spring 2004)

FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS: There has never been a better time to seek funding for more ambitious local history and archaeology projects that would otherwise be difficult to afford. The key elements are community participation and promotion of local heritage. Projects include the Uttlesford Local History Recorders application for a funded project to provide an online database of village historical material, both documents and objects. Heritage Sampford, mentioned in several previous issues of the *Journal*, continues to produce remarkable results. (No 8: Autumn 2004)

HADSTOCK ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT: Hadstock Church had a very successful symposium on the early history of the parish, with a number of distinguished contributors, including Prof Eric Fernie, the archaeologist Warwick Rodwell (who did the 1975 excavation at Hadstock) and David Andrews of Essex County Heritage & Conservation. Recent studies of the church timbers, ironwork and dendrochronology were discussed. They now have powerful backing for a Local Heritage Initiative grant application for further archaeology and publication. (No 8: Autumn 2004)



CLAVERING: PROJECT CASTLE: A grant application to the Local Heritage Initiative is about to be made by the Clavering Landscape History Group, set up to spearhead 'Project Castle', to uncover the history of the mysterious moated site at Clavering Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument beside the parish church. The project has the backing of the Essex County Council Heritage & Conservation Group, and has also had assistance from the Heritage Sampford team. The plans included earthwork and geophysical surveying, presentational tools such as an information board and a CD-ROM, and a medieval re-enactment day in

the castle area on Saturday 16 July 2005. www.clavingonline.org.uk
(No 8: Autumn 2004)

LITTLEBURY: LOCAL HISTORY BOOK: The Littlebury History group aims to publish a book on the village by the end of 2005. The group received a Local Heritage Initiative grant of £15,000, with £12,000 of 'in-kind' matching funding (at £50 per volunteer day), to cover research fees, printing, photography, copyright fees, transport, computer requirements and other items. A feature of this project is that so many local residents are participating, each covering particular aspects. In addition various members of the team are dealing with production, editorial, publicity, grant liaison, bibliography and storage of documents, and further advice has come from many people. www.littleburyhistory.org.uk (No 8: Autumn 2004)

UTTLESFORD RECORDERS: The Uttlesford Local History Recorders were delighted to hear in January that their application for a grant from the Local heritage Initiative was successful. They can now go ahead with their project put together by Michael Southgate and Rosemarie Gant, to construct a database catalogue and obtain computer equipment for use by Recorders. Members of the Recorders last year had a visit to saffron Walden Museum, which give special help to Recorders in their work. Conservator Lynn Morrison showed Recorders the contents of the museum stores, following a conservation workshop. (No 9: Spring 2005)

VISIT TO THERFIELD HEATH: The Neolithic long barrow and other prehistoric earthworks at Therfield Heath were visited by the Clavinging Local Centre class on 'Archaeology and Landscape' during a field trip organised by tutor Paul Palmer. This was the second year the Clavinging Local Centre had organised such a class, and a third one is being planned for autumn 2005, on the subject of Medieval East Anglia (No 9: Spring 2005)



BRONZE ARROWHEAD: This rare arrowhead from the Middle Bronze Age (1275-1140 BC) has been donated to Saffron Walden Museum, after being found by a metal detectorist in north-west Essex. This is the first time such an object has

been found in the county, and its importance was spotted by Caroline McDonald of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, which records such finds. (No 9: Spring 2005)

NEW HISTORY GROUP: About 60 people attended the inaugural meeting in January of the revive Newport Local history Group, enjoying a nostalgic evening of old slides shown by Newport Recorder, Terry Searle. The chairman of the new group is Anthony Tuck, a distinguished medieval historian who has recently move to the village. (No 9: Spring 2005)

FAMILY TREES: Great interest was stirred at the Saffron Walden (ERO) Archive Access in December by an exhibition of the beautiful family trees which have been constructed by some of the family historians who use the centre for research. (No 9: Spring 2005)

MEDIEVAL EVENT: 16 July 2005 - The Project Castle Medieval Event, held to celebrate National Archaeology Day, was a huge success at Clavering, attracting over 1,500 people. Subsidy from the Local Heritage Initiative and by local businesses enabled the organizers, the Clavering Landscape History Group, to provide the whole day free. Added to perfect weather, and a wonderful backdrop on the Castle meadows, it proved a red-letter day. Features included the unveiling of a painting of the castle by Dave Rayner, shooting at the butts by the Feudal Archers, tours of the castle and church, an archaeology roadshow provided by the Saffron Walden Searchers' Club, Morris dancing by the Thaxted Morris Men, and beautiful displays in the Church Flower Festival.. (No 10: Autumn 2005)

NEWPORT BYGONES: The wonderful collection of artefacts and documents built up by the Newport Local History Recorder, Terry Searle, has recently lost its home. The collection, which won an award from Rural Community Council of Essex when opened in 1990, has been housed for some years at the Maltings in Station Road, Newport. However the building is being refurbished and the owners of the building no longer have the space available. The displays, which were assembled with the help of various village grants, mainly consist of 78 exhibits in large picture frames and 23 smaller frames, also two alcoves containing artefacts. All the exhibits have been given by residents mainly from Newport, but also some have been received from around the country. Together they represent half of the Newport Bygones collection, the remainder being

kept at Terry Searle's home - it is hoped that these may be kept at the new Museum resource centre planned in Saffron Walden but this is some years away. Terry is looking for offers of a place where the display part of the collection can be re-housed, otherwise it would have to be taken apart and put back into folders. (No 10: Autumn 2005)



MUSEUM APPEAL LAUNCH: Saffron Walden Museum has launched an appeal to provide a new building and better standards for housing the archaeology, local history and natural history collections in its care.

Cllr Mike Hibbs introducing Carenza Lewis at the launch evening of the new Museum appeal.
Photograph ©Jacqueline Cooper.

It is to be known as the Heritage Quest Centre, but to match the hoped-for grants the museum supporters face a huge challenge to find a further half a million pounds. If the money can be found, the new Centre could be up and running in three years time, offering easy access to all the reserve collections. They also plan an associated outreach programme taking part in community events and offering on-line access to museum collections. The project was launched on 2 August 2005 by Dr Carenza Lewis, an archaeology tutor at the University of Cambridge, and well-known from Channel 4's *Time Team* programme. Large numbers attended the launch event, held at the Abbey Barn in St Mark's College. Carenza delighted many of those present by listening to their experiences of archaeology and offering much advice. In her address she commented that 'Saffron Walden is a fantastic place with everything you could want, a sort of theme park for medieval towns!' Its museum was a great place to which she often brought groups of undergraduate students. The proposed Research & Resource Centre was exactly what was needed in this area. The project launch came shortly after the AGM of the Saffron Walden Museum Society at which the indefatigable curator, Carolyn Wingfield reported that during the past year Museum staff had welcomed 21,186 visitors, including 46 researchers; answered 439 enquiries, undertaken 75 object identifications, updated 8,996 catalogue records, made 292 new acquisitions, organized three special exhibitions, taught 141 school sessions and given 22 days of events and family activities. As Carenza put it, our Museum is undoubtedly 'brilliant' and of national and international importance. (No 10: Autumn 2005)

HADSTOCK GRANT AWARDED: The Hadstock Society has been awarded a large grant from the Local Heritage Initiative to do further investigation into the fabric of the parish church, publish previous work done on this by Warwick Rodwell and carry out archaeological investigation of a field adjacent to the church to look for signs of medieval settlement which could hold the key to understanding the origins of the village. The dig starts in October 2005 with large numbers of volunteers working on a rota, excavating, washing and bagging up finds. (No 10: Autumn 2005)
