



The Mildenhall Post

Mildenhall Museum Society Newsletter



September 2020

Kay.finnis@yahoo.co.uk

News from the Trustees

We had only been open for three weeks when we had to close, however things did not grind to a halt. The Treasurer has kept the finances going and managed to get a grant from westsuffolk.gov [aka the Council] to offset any losses we might incur. The Secretary has been responding to e-mail enquiries and helped me with some work I have been doing. I had taken some files home to sort out and decided to create a file about Admiral Pelham Aldrich. I spent some time "googling" and Joe discovered some information in the Times Newspaper Archive. We already had references to his career in Simpson's Journals. The file is now in the Community Space joining those on the Manorial Families and 1934 sale of the Manor House.

I had found some reminiscences about early school years in the 20's and 30's that had been given to us some years ago and thought that as folk had time on their hands I could ask them to recall their own memories. I trawled through my e-mail contacts and asked all those who were local to write them down and let me have them. To date I have had four and I know two more are in the pipeline. If you can add to these, we would be pleased to add them to the file. Two of us started coming in on a Tuesday for a couple of hours to continue the work we had been doing before lockdown. A socially distanced session was a very pleasant change and gradually a few more joined us and has enabled some of the backlog to be cleared.

Thanks to John Child we have been loaned an InfoActive Photo viewer. He has downloaded our digitised photo collection for visitors to peruse in the community space. If a copy is required one can be ordered and this will create another revenue stream.

Stephanie Palmer

Mildenhall Museum Society

Well its certainly been a year with a difference. As you will be well aware, the Society Meetings were cut short before they started this year which was such a shame as there were some really interesting speakers lined up, ready to educate, intrigue and fascinate us.

We do not know exactly when we will be able to start the programme again as information and rules about numbers grouped together alter nearly as quickly as they are announced. One thing you can be sure of is that when we do return to normality you will be doubly welcome.

Remember though, the Museum is open to visitors, albeit with some rules in place, and we look forward to seeing you whenever you are able to drop in during opening times.

Lloyd Hughes

**IF YOU RECEIVED YOUR NEWSLETTER
BY POST OR HAND DELIVERED, IN
FUTURE YOU CAN RECEIVE BY EMAIL
PLEASE LET ME KNOW YOUR EMAIL
ADDRESS - kay.finnis@yahoo.co.uk**

COULD YOU HELP?

The Museum is looking for a computer literate person to scan and document a number of old photographs belonging to the museum so that they can be displayed on the photographic display system in the community space. It would suit someone who is a tidy and methodical worker and who would enjoy the camaraderie of helpers. The work would need to be done in the museum on a Tuesday. All the necessary equipment will be available. Training will be provided.

John Child

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND SOCIAL EVENTS

I took over from Anne Cross as speaker finder at the AGM in January. Anne had already arranged the speakers up to and including the June meeting. I had started to make further arrangements when lockdown kicked in and I had to cancel all speakers. As it seems unlikely that we will be able to meet for some time yet I have nothing else to report unfortunately.

David Palmer

Volunteer required to record memories of Mildenhall

The Trustees are very keen to have memories of Mildenhall recorded, from long-term residents , those who arrived in the 1960s and especially of people who have lived here since birth. One such is Nigel Roman, one of our Trustees, who has an enormous amount of fascinating information re childhood activities, school, sport, shops, organisations, etc.

Please do we have someone who could spend time sitting with Nigel to record as he talks? The Museum will provide the recording apparatus.

Further offers of memories, written or recorded, would be very welcome.

Contact Norma 712162 or leave a message at the museum.

Re-opening of the museum

The Museum re-opened on August 4th with slightly reduced hours i.e. Tues., Wed., Thurs. 2-4 and Fri. 10.30- 4.00 i.e. closing ½ hr. earlier than usual and not opening on Saturdays. Much time and effort was involved in making necessary precautions to make the situation as safe as possible for our volunteers and visitors. The volunteers were pleased to take a step towards normality and the response of visitors, and their number, has been gratifying.

The same opening schedule will continue through September and maybe longer. In a normal year we close at 4 p.m. in November and December:Dec. 18th would in any case be our closing date.

Norma

A Few Thoughts on the Diary of Isaac Archer, 1670 – 82

27 November 1670 “I sent to Isleham for bloodstones”

Bloodstones were used for 5000 years to heal wounds and purify the blood. Bloodstones are dark green chalcedony with nodules of bright-red jasper. They were regarded as having healing properties as late as the 17th century. Indeed, a Google search will reveal that there are still those who believe in their spiritual properties although, thankfully, more scientific means now prevent blood loss.

6 October 1677

A common sentiment of the time. Even today a male heir is usually desired by those with titles and estates to pass on. So not as shocking as it appears on first reading.

10 December 1682

It may seem strange after so many infant deaths that the baby Frances was handed over to a nurse when only three months old. But this was common practise. Jane Austin’s mother 150 years later sent all her babies off to village women to be cared for until they were two or three years old and were then judged civilised enough to rejoin the family.

Anne was lucky to survive so many pregnancies; many did not. She died, aged fifty five, childless and blind but cared for by the devoted Isaac.

Anne Cross

Isaac Coe's Diary in full is available for a fee from the Research Section of the Museum.

During 2019 Pam Craig and David Staines began the process of cataloguing the artefacts in Store 1. It has become apparent that items need to be collated into boxes under one heading to make finding them easier and then updated on the computer as to where they are stored. This is work in progress. It was discovered many items had not been accessioned, do not have a completed Entry Form or if there is an Entry Form the item is not with it. We now have the task of trying to match an item with an Entry Form.

At the beginning of March 2020 Steph Palmer and Monica Clarke attended a very informative meeting at the 100th Bomber Command, Dickleburgh. It focused on the disposal of items and as a result the museum has created two groups. Group 1: Joe Moore, Norma Chapman, David Staines will assess the relevance to the museum of items donated. Group 2: Steph Palmer, Lloyd Hughes, Monica Clarke will assess whether an item will be kept or disposed of. Group 1 have already met several times. A Disposal Folder has been created to keep a paper trail of communication regarding the disposal of any item.

It would be very helpful if all items donated to the museum have a completed Entry Form and are left in the ‘In’ boxes under the counter at the front of the museum. It has been decided that any items for Identification will no longer be accepted.

Recently, Kathryn Thompson has organised the Supplementary Information that was attached to an item, making it easier to access.

Monica Clarke

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES AT THE MUSEUM.

Research Enquiries are perhaps one aspect of life at the Museum which is little known to many members. These often come from someone trying to trace a member of their family in this area, but some enquiries make us realise that perhaps we don't know everything that happened in the Mildenhall area in the past.

As is probably known to many museum folk, we have the "Simpsons Journals" which are a wonderful source of information on almost everything that happened in Mildenhall during the third quarter of the 19th. Century and the first half of the 20th. Century. We also have two or three early bound volumes of Kellys Directory, which can be a goldmine of information regarding local people and traders. In addition, we have research sources built up over the years, including many years of recorded reminiscences. But every so often, something comes up we don't know about, and in attempting to answering the question we increase our own knowledge.

One recent enquiry was from Australia, seeking information on someone's ancestor, who apparently served in the Royal Flying Corps in 1918/19...**based at Mildenhall**. Now we have no knowledge of any airfield here before the early 1930s, and the more we have researched this enquiry the more puzzling it becomes.

Another recent enquiry concerned the possible existence of a Watermill at West Stow, situated where the Isleham Marina is now. We can find no evidence there was ever a Watermill there (although there was a Smock Mill by the river many years ago; this is now a private house.)

Although this next item has been reported elsewhere, I think it worth repeating and updating, in the hope that someone amongst us may have some small clue or scrap of information.

Quite recently, we had an enquiry from someone, asking what information the Museum had on prize-fighting in Mildenhall in the mid-19th. Century. In particular he wanted to know where such matches took place in the Mildenhall area. This was "news" to us, and I have done what research I can to see if I could come up with any information.

It seems the attitude to prize fighting was indeed very mixed, as it was illegal by the 1830s. However, enforcing the law against this practice was not really helped by members of the Royal Family being great fans!

By the time Mildenhall became known as a venue during the 1850s, the sport was still illegal, at least the bare-knuckled version was, and the police were getting ever more efficient in suppressing it, though it was still very popular. Harry Broome became British Heavyweight Champion in 1851 at Mildenhall by beating William Perry (and lost the title five years later in Suffolk somewhere) and Jem Mace, later World Champion, won at Mildenhall in 1855.

There is clearly more research to be done, but it seems that large numbers of followers would be "in the know" and the venue for any match would not be made public by advertisement, rather by "word of mouth". The other attraction would be that large sums of money would be wagered on the two fighters involved

There would probably have been a good deal of effort to avoid the police arriving and breaking up a fight.

As to where the fights took place in Mildenhall, perhaps not surprisingly I have been unable to find any locations. However...the Lakenheath Heritage Group, with whom we keep in touch, have told me they think they know the location of one such prize-fight site in Lakenheath.

If anyone reading this does have any further knowledge on this subject, we would be grateful for any information they might have.

Joe Moore.