

WALBERSWICK LOCAL HISTORY GROUP – 25TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

A huge team effort saw the Village Hall and Annexe turned into an exhibition centre for three days at the end of May. In addition, the Heritage Hut opened its doors for several showings of the irreplaceable Scroll and the stage of the Village Hall was turned over to The Southwold Railway Trust.

2016 was an important milestone for the **Walberswick Local History Group (WLHG)** as it marked the 25th Anniversary of its formation. To celebrate this occasion, the WLHG organised an exhibition of its archives and other memorabilia, including videos, photographs and pictures. This took place on **Saturday, Sunday and Monday 28th, 29th and 30th May 2016** in the Village Hall, the Annex and the Heritage Hut from 10 – 4 pm daily. It was successful beyond even the expectations of the organising committee.

The History Group is Walberswick's largest club with over 100 paid-up members. The Group exists to research local history and to provide information to interested enquirers. The Group evolved from informal meetings of interested parties who thought the Village ought to have such a group. Under the powerful combined forces of Don Thompson and Pat Wythe the WLHG was born. The original pioneers Don and Pat are gone now but the committee still includes Don's wife, Maureen, and Philip Kett, a one-man archive of Walberswick gone-by. The activities of the Group are possibly more relevant today than when it was formed as the old families are disappearing fast. However, judging by the attendance and discussions, there are still many people interested in Walberswick history.

WLHG archivist Pat Lancaster is seen here by the sign outside the Village Hall. The exhibition took place over a bank-holiday weekend and the sign no doubt was instrumental in getting people into the exhibition. Pat was fully employed inside the hall for the majority of the exhibition answering queries using the resources in the archive and receiving new artefacts supplied by visitors. Following the Group's recent "scanning" initiative, many of the documents in the archive are available to view in "Excerpts from Archives".



The "lull before the storm" allowed the committee and helpers to gather for a photograph. From left to right are committee members Harry Edwards, John English, Alan Walpole, Maureen Thompson, Richard Steward, Pat Kett, Philip Kett, Pat Lancaster and Jayne Tibbles. The Committee would like to thank all those who helped over the three days. The picture here includes "guardian of the Scroll" Richard Scott and Sue English. Not shown, as they were in the Heritage Hut, are Kay and Bill Ungless. Also absent are our friends from the Southwold Railway Trust, including Toby Robinson, who set up an exhibition on the stage on the Sunday.



The exhibition in the main Village Hall

Members of the committee were on-hand to talk to visitors about exhibits and to answer general enquiries (using the extensive archive). Getting the archives into the hall before the exhibition proved to be an unexpected challenge. Pat and her helpers assembled at 7:30am for the transfer. They then had some “fun” reassembling the filing cabinets but they managed it in the end with some colourful language and after consulting the internet!

Highlights included:

- Fascinating collections of photographs of people and places going back over a hundred years.
- An extensive postcard collection
- Works of art including
 - “The Haite pictures” – these were created in 1895 and are both beautiful works of art and pictorial records of Walberswick in the late 19th century. Two of the collection of 13 drawings can be seen on the wall in the photograph to the right.
 - Copies of Jessie Browton’s work (owned by Southwold museum but not on display). These, like the Haite pictures record Walberswick “before the flood” but in the 20th century. A number of the collection of 39 paintings can be seen on the display panels in the photograph to the right.
 - Privately-owned paintings – we thank all those who lent their precious paintings - too many to mention individually.



The Annex contained a multi-screen “cinema”

While the main hall concentrated on traditional media (prints, photographs, paintings) the Annex used the latest technology. To the delight of residents old and new, videos of a number of village events could be viewed and discussed with Harry Edwards and Richard Steward. The content ranged from the serious (floods etc.) to the irreverent (mention of the “Half Monty” will suffice). Luke Jeans supplied some of the content and we appreciate his help here. Some of the content had been transferred from film to “video” and then to DVD showing how the archive needs constant review. The archive also holds audio recordings of residents.

The Heritage Hut was used to exhibit the Scroll

We were pleased to be able to use the Heritage Hut to exhibit the Walberswick Scroll and discuss the “Jennings” houses (thanks Bill and Kay Ungless). The Walberswick Scroll was painted in 1931 by John Doman Turner and is owned by the Walberswick Parish Council. It is a Walberswick treasure and, in the opinion of some, a national treasure. The exhibition highlighted the need to protect and preserve this record of between-the-wars Walberswick. Resident artist, Richard Scott, has spent many years exhibiting the Scroll and now has an apprentice, John English, to help him. We were pleased to be joined by Doman Turner enthusiasts and experts, James W Robertson and Stephen Robertson. Please visit their web site, <http://www.johndomanturner.com>, for a history of the artist and pictures taken at the exhibition by the East Anglian Daily Times. You can see the mention the exhibition received in the EADT

http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/rarely_displayed_123ft_walberswick_scroll_painting_goes_on_show_for_history_group_s_anniversary_1_4558448

The Heritage Hut is itself a piece of Walberswick History. It has a varied history of use. It can be seen in the Scroll in 1931 when it housed the Working Men's Club. It was last used continuously as the home of the Walberswick Visitor Centre. Manned by a large body of volunteers under the leadership of Maureen Thompson, it ceased to exist for reasons not relevant to explain here. It was a fitting and attractive venue to exhibit the Scroll.



History is important to us all though it often takes advancing years to realise this. George Orwell, who once walked on Walberswick beach, had serious things to say on the subject. Hopefully the WLHG is helping to research and preserve a little piece of the history of this beautiful part of the country. We do believe that our purpose of making the Village aware of the extent of our archives was achieved. We would all like to thank everyone who gave their own artefacts and paintings on loan to the exhibition which made it very personal. The archives are being preserved and protected for generations to come.

Hopefully we won't wait another 25 years before putting on another. When the WLHG will repeat an exhibition of this magnitude and who will do is future history.

Many thanks to all who attended the 2016 exhibition and who helped to make it such a success.

John English