

**A pocket watch commemorating the brave deed of a Diss man has been found in Australia.**

David Brace got in touch with Diss Town Council to say that some years ago he bought a fob watch at a local fair in Melbourne.

It was Fine Silver but with no maker's mark. The inscription inside said: "Presented to Harry Perry for his brave conduct in saving two men from drowning in the Mere at Diss, 1870".

The Council passed the inquiry on to Museum Manager Basil Abbott who began to research the incident.

With the help of Betty Morley from the Family History Society and Norwich researcher Helen Kennett the story began to emerge.

Perry was a 19 year old man who rescued brothers William (24) and Edward Filby (19) who had gone through the ice of the frozen Mere while skating. Their rescuer placed a ladder over the ice and pulled the men out.

Harry was a house-painter whose family came from Shelfanger Road. The Filby brothers lived in Church Street, one being a brazier with his father, the other a soldier on leave.

How the watch ended up in Australia is a mystery. The other mystery is who presented the watch? It was not the Royal Humane Society.

Helen Kennett said, "It is likely that a subscription fund was set up to buy it and have it engraved and presented to him by people in the town. However maybe the Filby family bought the watch and presented it to him. Whatever the circumstances he fully deserved it."

The silver watch is now part of Diss Museum's collection, donated by David Brace so that it could come back home.

"I hope the good folk of Diss and Norfolk enjoy it, representing an historical event 145 years ago," he said.

