

In the current climate of expenditure cuts, fund-raising is more important than ever. The Town Council were persuaded not to cut the Museum grant from £4000 to £3000 this year but their intention is clear. We have revived the Stroll Around Diss, previously run by The Diss Society and we have an experienced guide in David van der Hulks who used to do a similar thing in Sudbury. So far the uptake has been slow but the weather has been cold and we may have started a little early. The Stroll sub-committee has decided to continue as planned and review the situation later in the season.

Today, fund raising is hard. From his own experience, Basil doubts that The Stroll will succeed and has questioned the capacity of The Friends to raise sufficient money to support Diss Museum. He works hard on his own programme of fund-raising projects including a very successful Tristram Cary concert and a donation scheme known as Diss Museum *Angels* which is open to Friends and should not undermine committee efforts. Rosemary was appalled at the thought of trying to make up the £1000 deficit that the proposed Town Council cuts would have left. The Trustees have an ongoing plan that includes various fund-raising projects.

The display in the Shambles is of a very high standard. The Community Cabinet already houses its second display of the season: Robert (Photo-Elite) Court's cameras. The work that Basil and the Collections Managers (Daisy Fearn, Shirley Farrow and their team) put in makes it all the more important for the Shambles to be open for as many hours as possible during the season. We have a superb collection that is managed to a professional standard. The Shambles itself is looked after better than ever by our Premises Manager Yoshi Shinagawa-Turner. Diss is rightly proud of its Museum but we must not take it for granted. Currently we are appealing for new stewards in the Shambles. Those we have are always praised in the Visitors' Book and Exit Surveys, but we do not have enough!

Rosemary and Lynn had already advised that they would not continue into next year but at our last committee meeting on 3rd May 2016 we were faced with the resignation of Suzanne and Miranda. Both are Trustees and have had to take over the duties of Chair and Secretary following resignations from the Board last year. Fortunately we have two nominees to make a viable committee 2016/17.

At this moment it looks as if the 2016 Friends committee will be six-strong, including Basil and the Trustees will be six-strong plus Basil. There has been some debate as to which duties fall to the Friends and which to the Trustees. This needs to be resolved as soon as possible in the new committee year.

The Association of Friends incorporates The Diss Antiquarian Society who were the founders of Diss Museum. It has also been entrusted by The Diss Society with the copyright (both leaflet and DVD) of A Stroll Around Diss. As I understand it, The Friends have also accepted funds from those organisations to finance the continuation of their work where it relates directly to Diss Museum. Unlike the Board of Trustees, it is membership-based and officers are elected at an AGM by votes from nominated members who are proposed according to our Constitution.

The survival of Diss Museum in its current form depends upon improved fund-raising. The new committee will do its best but we need your help: ideas, volunteers and donors.
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FODIMUS

Latin: we cultivate
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This year the new season was opened on 12th March by master of the electronic keyboard, music legend and TV "grumpy old man" **Rick Wakeman**.

How appropriate that in The Shambles, until the 7th May, we featured the life and work of the electronic music pioneer **Tristram Cary** entitled *Under the Radar* designed by Tristram Burfield.

By kind permission of his son, John Cary, we are able to display important equipment from his studio at **Fressingfield** as shown in the picture on the left. Using our new Audio-Visual system, visitors were able to play an excellent DVD by Tristram Burfield featuring Tristram Cary himself outlining the history of electronic music.



This year marks the centenary of **the Wolf Cubs** with a display alongside **The Printed Word** with artefacts from local printer **Francis Cupiss Ltd**

Diss C. of E. Primary School Are showing a selection of their work based on daily life during **World War Two**

In this issue, **Writer's Corner** has a fascinating piece from **Alison Molnos** former holder of every museum office. Also the **Chairman's annual report for the AGM.**

WRITER'S CORNER

Alison Molnos

Confessions of a local history addict

We came to live in Diss in 1989. Then as now the town had much to offer, but with two disappointing exceptions - the little museum was closed and there was no local history group.

Like many people, on moving to a new area I was always keen to discover its history. I cannot remember a time when the past did not seem intriguing.

Carefully brought up children used to go to bed early. Really early. I found this a great trial on light summer evenings. I had never heard of counting sheep, so bizarrely I took to imagining all the ancestors I may have had. I would picture them standing in an orderly line, presumably in date order, dressed in a range of historic costumes, and all smiling at me! For a six-year-old this now seems distinctly odd, but at least it does seem to confirm an early interest in history.

Later, growing up in a Yorkshire valley there was space to roam far and wide. The past had left its mark there. There were ruined weavers' cottages to explore up on the moors, as well as an enchanting abandoned water mill, draped in ferns and vibrant mosses. The steep packhorse track with its narrow stone bridges over rushing becks and the shapes of the old peat workings told their own stories. There were dark places too - the very spot where a mill owner was murdered by Luddites for installing shearing machines in his mill.

School history was quite different. It was about the Spanish Armada or the causes of the Franco-Prussian war and required much note-taking. When applying to university in 1953, I did not dare mention local history as being of interest, it did not feel serious enough. There seemed to be a gulf between "proper" history and local history. Now both local history and the study of documents (primary sources) figure on the National Curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. How I would have loved it!

History seems to have split into countless different branches, each accorded status and illuminated by academic research. There is world history, international history, social history, women's history, labour history, landscape history, family history, local history, oral history, micro history, macro history, history from the bottom up, and counting...

I remember being so excited when document-based history books started to appear in bookshops in the 60s and 70s. It seemed extraordinary then to be able to read about the actual workaday lives of generations of named "ordinary" men and women.

Much has been written about the growth of interest in local history in the 1960s and the possible causes after two decades of turmoil and change. This was apparent not only in Britain but in the United States and most of Western Europe. Diss was no exception. In 1960, after George Moss, a jeweller in Mere Street, left a legacy of £1,000 for a town museum, the Diss Antiquarian Society (now incorporated into the Friends of Diss Museum) was started to get the museum underway. A charitable trust was formed. Items were enthusiastically donated by the public. Eric Pursehouse's articles on Diss history were eagerly awaited by readers of the Diss Express.

Fortunately, the disappointing gap in local history activities on arriving in Diss was soon partially filled. The Town Council became the Museum Trustee and voted an annual grant to the museum, appointing a curator. The Association of the Friends of Diss Museum was formed in support. The lower room in the Shambles (then two separate shops) was free to use as a display area and we opened in 1993. Thanks to much hard work by the successive curators, the manager and numerous volunteers, Diss Museum and the Friends are still prospering. Long may it continue!

Still in search of the local past, I discovered the excellent Norfolk Record Office and embarked on a useful two-year UEA course for local historians, as well as WEA local history courses.

There is however still no Local History Group in Diss...

Chairman's Report for the AGM May 20th 2016

First of all I must record my thanks to Miranda Moore and Mike Clarke. According to our Constitution, if they had not joined forces with me and volunteered to take office, Brian & Lynn Horner and Rosemary Palmer would have been unable to continue. No committee means no Association. Happily Suzanne Kayne's name was put forward at the last AGM which, together with Basil Abbott taking the voting position allocated to "the Curator" gave me seven members who have done a terrific job in supporting an inexperienced Chairman!

A successful year was tinged with sadness at the loss of Roland Bugey. He was a stalwart if ever there was one. It was our first priority to execute the programme that he set out for 2015 and I feel that we did it justice with talks from Mike Wabe, Pip Wright, Roland, Dick Rayner Stuart, Jill Brown, and Mike Bowen (deputising for Ray Hubbard) and our Quiz Night in November. Many thanks are due to Rosemary Palmer for the excellent visit to Otley Hall on June 17th and to Suzanne Kayne and all who helped at the super Bric-a-Brac Sale on July 11th.

Roland handed over to Mike Clarke who has arranged a full programme for 2016 which got off, literally, to a flying start with Basil Abbott's fascinating insight into the R34's crossing the Atlantic in both directions. Transport was, again the subject for our second lecture. This time we were led with expertise through the history of the waterways of Great Britain by Frances Hart. I will be giving the May lecture after the AGM. Mike Wabe visits again in June. On a suggestion from a member we will try third-Friday meetings in July and August this year. We will screen local history DVDs. Pip Wright is back in September, David Weedon in October Dr Adam Longcroft in November and we round-off our season with our Yuletide Quiz.

Out of a membership of over one hundred, at the most forty attend our monthly lectures. Therefore the committee voted to revive the Newsletter as a thrice-yearly publication to include the Chairman's report in the May issue. In their half-colour form, these are one of our main expenses and Brian has suggested that the next committee discuss whether to go for monochrome or possibly use email to reduce cost. Readers' views would be appreciated.

Being fairly new, the Committee looked for guidance from our Constitution. Small changes are needed. The post of *Curator* no longer exists in name, with duties being spread among four nominated *Managers*. In practice the duties of secretary and chairman have been combined from time to time. The AGM will be asked to empower the committee to introduce the terms *management representative* for *curator* and *chairman/secretary*, where appropriate.