



This character is Fodimus Maximus or Fodi for short. When it was suggested that “The Friends of Diss Museum” might sound a bit stuffy, we had to think of something. We are proud to be “the Friends” and proud to represent both the Diss Antiquarian Society, creators of the Museum, and the Diss and District Society but we realised we might need a bit of help.

The story goes that Fodi’s ancestors came over to Britain with the Romans who considered them to be a gastronomic delicacy. Over the years Fodi’s family, as families do, exaggerated the importance of their forebears to the extent that Fodi believes himself to be, if not a Centurion, at least a Standard Bearer.

David Young gave the story and a rough sketch to our local cartoonist, Mike Webb, who created this image.

Fodi has been appealing to visitors to the Shambles to dig deep in their pockets when they make donations into his new donation box. He is on the “Free Entry Ticket” reminding visitors that, although entry is free, we would like them to pay to get out! He also appears on tickets for “The Stroll”. David van der Hulks gave this a great start and it will continue. If you haven’t tried “The Stroll”, phone 642168 or email fodimus@gmail.com during the season to arrange your tour of our fabulous town. FoDM members get a 40% discount.

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This has been a good season in the Shambles with footfall and donations “holding their own” in these tricky times, some new stewards being recruited and Tuesday afternoon being added to our opening shifts. Our exhibitions were of the very highest standard and the Community Cabinet has proved to be an on-going attraction. This picture shows the display of cameras owned by Robert Court, proprietor of Photo Elite in Market Hill, Diss.

Third-Friday lectures have been well attended with catering, thanks to Jenny and Alan Wade, and David van der Hulks’ raffles well supported – in particular, “Another Thing About Diss” and “The Staymaker” when Basil Abbott added his skills to those of the usual team. Mike Clarke has booked all of the 2017 (starting March 17th Ray King Diss Fire Service & April 21st Del Firman Collecting, Hobby or Obsession) programme except the continuing “specials” in July and August. Our Charity Sales made a small contribution but the outing in August made a small loss and will not be repeated in 2017.



The strengthening of the Board of Trustees has deprived the FoDM committee of Miranda Moore and Suzanne Kayne who are now their Chair and Secretary. But we gained Sally Payne and David van der Hulks now, sadly, forced to resign. Brian Horner’s announcement that he must quit the job leaves us looking for a new Treasurer. If one cannot be found, a change in the structure of the Association will have to be put to the AGM. On the positive side, Mike Clarke has accepted the nomination as Chairman, David Young can continue as Secretary, and we have three prospective new committee members.

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“Christmas Lights” opening on 26th November was a great success and leads us neatly to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The Newsletter for the Friends of Diss Museum
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FODIMUS

Latin: we cultivate
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Don’t forget the YuleTide Quiz - 16th December 7.30 St Mary’s Hall

Stewards’ briefing 10th March 2.00 - Museum Opening Ceremony 11th March 11.00

The picture below says quite a lot about Diss Museum. The smiling face is that of Paul Hammond. He was a Diss businessman; Do you remember DWC in Rose Lane? He was having a clear-out at his home in Friday Bridge and came across this cartoon. In 2003 Diss was labelled “The meanest town in the land” in the national press and TV. The story started when vandals tore down the Christmas lights. Word soon got out that only £5 had been raised in a collection to replace them. Tony Hall’s Eastern Daily Press cartoon shows a diver producing something from the Mere. The caption suggests that it is either an antique candlestick or Diss 2003 Christmas lights!



Paul thought the cartoon should have a permanent home where it could be enjoyed by the townsfolk. He consulted the Museum website, telephoned the Friends and arranged to bring the cartoon to Diss and start the process of accepting it into our collection. This photo appeared in the Eastern Daily Press with a charming story.

When complete, the process will have involved much behind-the-scenes work that the public never sees: The building of the Museum, its collection, its reputation, its publicity through the website, its accessibility through the Friends,

WRITER'S CORNER

This piece is based upon the Power Point presentation that Tim Holt-Wilson, the first Curator of Diss Museum, presented to the Trustees AGM on 11th July 2016. Many thanks, Tim, for allowing us to use it. I apologise for any transcriptional errors. DY

Diss Museum 1992-1999

Background: The Museum Trust was established in 1959 with a bequest of £1000 from George Moss. The Diss Antiquarian Society was founded in 1960 and No.5, Market Place was bought in 1962. Leading figures at the time were Richard Hogg (chair) Wilfo Flatman and Cyril Piper. Objects flooded in, 1165 in total but hardly any documentation.

An early champion of the Museum, Irene Jacobi, persuaded the Town Council (DTC) to create a DTC sub-committee to take on management and trusteeship and DTC appealed for volunteers. In the autumn of a very busy 1960, the Town Clerk, Kristina Clarke, started to develop a "Friends" group with the object of finding a Curator, administrator and documenter. Twenty-one people prepared to roll-up their sleeves were signed up at a public meeting with three applicants for the post of curator.

Much encouraged, in 1992 DTC voted a grant of £12,480. Leading names at this time were: Jill Caldwell, Ian Caldwell, Cyril Grace, Irene Jacobi, Jimmy Scroggins and Glyn Walden. In February 1992 Tim Holt-Wilson (THW) was appointed Curator at a salary of £3000 pa for a 10 hour week with a 3-month probationary period. This later rose to £6411 for 20 hours per week and a travel allowance of £300.

The museum was run by a Management Committee (drawn from the Trustees) with the Curator reporting to the Committee. £8000 was available and, working with the Friends of Diss Museum, in 1992/3 they set about a task-list to: Promote and develop the Friends group itself; Stage an interim exhibition in the Old Stables; Clear the Shambles and make an inventory (donated items had been almost literally "heaped" in there) using storage at DTC offices, rent-free for a year; Refurbish the Shambles for opening in May 1993.

The Friends committee was led by Clifford Bird and included: R&M Boutet; R Bugey; V Chapin; R&M Dalliston; R Eyles; C Francis; N Howling; T Mawby; A&J Molnos, R Palmer; M Pursehouse; P Simms; B&J Sullivan. The work-in-progress list for that year is impressive: Four display cases were refurbished; A shop counter was purchased; An old stove was acquired from Hall Hills; A summer exhibition was planned; John Taylor Builders renovated and converted the Shambles; Eye Press provided a burglar alarm system; Special window cases were designed.

The demolition of the Brush Factory led to many acquisitions which were included in the opening exhibition along with: Coins from the Burgate Hoard; Archaeological and Geological items; Diss Lace; Phoebe & Abilgail; "Diss Volunteers"; The Roydon Riots; Childhood; Francis Cupiss Ltd.

1993 certainly was an astonishing year! The list goes on: Tracey Mawby established The Shop; Alison Molnos produced the first Newsletter; M Pursehouse and R Palmer constituted the Stewards Team and provisional MGC Registration was achieved for Collection Management. Exhibitions for the season included: Diss Hospitals; Corsets and Camisoles; Market Forces; establishing the current pattern of fresh exhibitions displayed each season.

In 1994 the Museum achieved the Gulbenkian Award for "Greatest Improvement Achieved with Limited Resources". The familiar Doll's House was sent back from America by Evelyn Mabry (nee Bennett), the TC allocated funds to purchase No.4 (achieved by Irene Jacobi in 1995), and FoDM membership reached 140. The main exhibition for 1995 was entitled simply "1945" and looked back fifty years to the transition from war to peace.

With the extra space available in No.4, 1995/6 saw the extension of the museum "up the hill" including the, now familiar flat-top cabinet and tri-faceted case designed by THW and built by G Trudgill; Window cases; Lighting system; Shop cabinet; Loft storage space; Interactive Corner with microfiche viewer and many more items.

The exhibitions for the 1996/7 season were: Diss Shops; The Roydon Fen Mystery; Get Weaving; Prehistoric Animals and, still one of the Museum's finest achievements, the Carousel depicting "A Mere 10,000 Years". Working on a concept from THW, the frame was designed by Chris Hall and built for £685 of which £342 was a SMS grant. Text and images were created by THW, Tracey Mawby and Alison Molnos with graphics designed by Alan Jones. The printing cost £658 of which £300 was a NMS grant.

A financial spanner was thrown in the works when an over-zealous auditor ruled that DTC did not have statutory power to fund a museum, but Irene Jacobi arranged for power to be delegated from South Norfolk District Council.

The collection escalated to 2,600 properly curated objects with 40% of the old collection catalogued and 1500 new acquisitions since 1992. As the first general leaflet was created and the "1918" exhibition was staged, 1997/98 became another eventful season for very different reasons. Irene Jacobi died, at the end of June THW resigned and Denise Beale took over as Curator. In spite of opposition from The Friends, DTC created the post of "Community Projects Officer" to promote the town's facilities, including the Museum. It was a disaster. As THW told the Diss Express: "The root of the problem is that the Trustees are also Town Councillors, so there is no-one independent to speak up for the Museum".

In 1999 an independent Trust was formed and DTC increased the grant from £4,800 to £6,800, continuing to supply office and ancillary services. Concluding an eventful period, funded by another grant, the familiar "Telling Our Own Story" leaflet was created and the Museums and Galleries Commission awarded Diss Museum its full Certificate of Registration.

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The most important job of this newsletter is to thank the Stewards who ensure that the town and its visitors have been able to visit and see for themselves the superb display that has been prepared for this season. A total of 40 people worked anything from 1 to 30 two-hour shifts. Miranda Moore is relinquishing her co-ordination role having taken the chairmanship of the Trustees. Our thanks and very best wishes go with her.

From the piece above you will see that Rosemary Palmer has been an ever-present co-ordinator and I am pleased to say that Rosemary is still game to continue next season together with David Young, a comparative "new-boy" with only six years experience.