

The new season...

... got off to a wonderful start with the ribbon-cutting ceremony performed by the actor Ian Lavender. This event was well attended and Basil Abbott gave a bravura performance as Captain Mainwaring (in bank manager mode) to introduce our famous visitor. Ian's pal Rick Wakeman, last year's ribbon-cutter, could be seen at the back of the crowd.

With the opening of the new Corn Hall only a matter of weeks away the Museum loaned the Burroughes Corn Traders Desk on which the Grammar School clock used to sit in the Shambles. After much discussion, we had only a few days to make other arrangements.

With timber donated by Barry and Sue Davies, a design by David Young and the skills of Premises Manager, Yoshi Shinagawa-Turner, a clock tower appeared in the Shambles.

After removal of a cross-member, only required during the erection process, sufficient space is available to return the Corn Traders Desk to its old place.

Currently that space is occupied by a Barrel Organ which is on loan from The Mechanical Music Museum which, when hand-cranked it gives a rousing rendition of *Rule Britannia*.

This was an "advance party" for the Diss Organ Festival of 14th May which was a great success. Not many towns could have hosted such an event so well.



The Community Cabinet continues to be a very popular feature in the Shambles. The current display features memorabilia from the Coronation of King George VI in 1937, eighty years ago.

If you know of anyone who might wish to display a private collection for six weeks, contact the Collections Managers, by email, at disscollections@gmail.com. Don't forget... we need more stewards!

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FODIMUS

Latin: we cultivate
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Here we are, a quarter of the way through a new season and with the AGM upon us.

As part of the refurbishment of the Heritage Triangle, the Shambles has new *Interpretation Boards*. This is the posh way of saying window boards. They are in the modern style, with lighter print against a darker background. There is no doubt that they look very nice but some may feel that the old ones (which were brilliant) may have been more legible, especially in sunlight. What do you think? You would have thought that these would have been paid for with some of the Lottery money that has been sloshing about. Well, yes, but The Friends still paid half of the bill!

Here are pictures of the Shambles with its new signs. The one on the main gate is the work of Mike Watkins and the one hanging from the old "meat rail" was constructed by David Young. You will notice that the latter says "Open daily from 11-3 all season". This is a result of two statistical efforts. The first was a visitor survey sponsored by SHARE Museums East and showed us that most of our footfall in the Shambles came from the "Saw the building when passing" category. Diss Town Council still plans to eliminate our grant by 2020.

So, to increase our footfall we needed to be open for more hours and to be seen to be open.

The choice of hours came from our own survey of footfall for 2015 which was recorded hourly. So far this season footfall has been equally erratic as ever, However, there has been a 13% increase and the 11-1 shift has been busier than the 1-3. We still need stewards to "sign on" for future shifts in the diary but some are a bit late in coming forward. There is a body of opinion that says we are missing footfall by not opening, as we used to do, at 10 on Friday and Saturday. As ever, it will depend upon steward availability, but we plan to restore this facility.



For the first season in over a decade Rosemary Palmer is no longer a co-ordinator of stewards.

We give her our heartfelt thanks for those years and still listen to what she has to say!

When faced with the new system she said that, with no "middle shift", every steward would have to have a key. This remark led to the solution of an old problem:

Last season saw an increase in "co-ordination errors" which led to stewards being left stranded outside a locked Museum. This season, a "security team" (mainly our Premises Manager, Yoshi Shinagawa-Turner) makes the Shambles "available" during daytime by releasing the alarm and "security" locks. This allows any steward with an "access" key to open and close the Museum at will between certain hours. By prior arrangement or in an emergency, "Nearby key-holders", listed in the Shambles, offer to open or close for stewards without a key.

WRITER'S CORNER

How appropriate that this issue coincides with the AGM at which Basil Abbott is nominated Vice-Chairman of the Friends. Basil has been a committee member since 2005 when he became Manager of Diss Museum. When I asked if he would like to contribute to Writers Corner I was delighted to receive this piece within days. DY

Recently I came across a boyhood football diary from 1962.

Spurs had just won the Double, with Sheffield Wednesday as runners-up. Ipswich had won the Second Division title and were about to win the First.

England had had an eight match unbeaten streak, scoring 44 goals. They were looking confidently forward to the World Cup in Chile, where they were anonymous.

We had football twice a week at school, so many of my entries gave results and whether I had scored or not. The choirboys played our Braintree counterparts, home and away, losing 6-1 and 7-2; but I scored in the away game.

Like many boys I had dreams of being a footballer. When I went to the Grammar School I found that I was never even considered for the teams, so lost interest. As I came 22/26 in the junior cross-country, it was clear that sport was not for me. I came top of the class in the Spring exams, though.

On 27 January my brother and I overheard someone in a shop saying that Ipswich players would be at Scole Inn at lunchtime. I knew that, if I mentioned going for autographs, my brother would be disparaging. So I mounted my bike and pedalled over on my own.

There, outside the Inn, stood the players - Ray Crawford, Ted Phillips, Jimmy Leadbetter, manager Alf Ramsay. I got all the autographs.

Alf, in his fake-posh way, said "You want my awtogwaph, do you?"

When I arrived home, my brother said, "Why didn't you tell me? I'd have come with you."

Not long afterwards, we heard (although this was less likely) that Stanley Matthews might be there. When I suggested going, my brother was disparaging; and we didn't go.

We did go to see Manchester United (including Gregg, Law, Quixall, Charlton) beat Ipswich 5-3 on 3 November.

It was a time of change for the family, as we moved in June from Church Street, where I was born, to Willbye Avenue. The same week my Irish grandmother died. It meant that we didn't go over there on holiday that year.

It was a world of homework, football, Sunday School, choir practice, walks, films at the Picture House. We saw Cliff Richard in *The Young Ones* on 7 April, Helen Shapiro was also a singing star then; and appeared in *It's Trad Dad*, which we saw on 31 August.

Basil Abbott

Chairman's Report

In the last issue of Fodimus, I mentioned that our committee had lost Miranda Moore and Suzanne Kayne to the Trustees and David van der Hulks had resigned due to ill health. Happily David is on the mend and has resumed gentle steward duties. The valuable work he did still continues to benefit Diss Museum. The list of accommodation businesses prepared to stock our brochure for their guests is still in use as is the list of sites for our activity posters. Bob Honnor stepped into David's shoes distributing these and local mailing. Sadly, he too had to give up. Mike Watkins has helped whenever possible and together with Mike Daykin helped Mike Clarke to run the very successful Yuletide quiz.

The work David did in establishing The Stroll around Diss will not be wasted. The "roll-up" system was not popular last year so, this season we are offering the Stroll by appointment. The first of these is due out on 24th May. If anyone would like to join us, telephone 01379 642168.

In May 2016 we gained Sally Payne who has proved to be a very valuable committee member and co-ordinator of stewards. Her modest claim to fame is: "I'm very good at shifting chairs" - which she has done from day one!

Our programme of "Third-Friday" meetings went very well indeed. Expanded to ten with the addition of films for July (*The Last of Old England*) and August (*Something Else About Diss & The Staymaker*), the latter being very popular. Congratulations go to Mike Clarke for so effectively taking over this vital feature of our year from the late Roland Buggy who ran it for so long.

December 2016 saw the closing of the Tourist Information Centre in Diss. Suzanne and I, independently, realised that this could be an opportunity for Diss Museum and suggested the idea of taking some of the stock and perhaps even some of the advisory services. This was, in part, a reason for extending the Shambles' opening times. Miranda met the Town Clerk, Deborah Sarson, to discuss the matter but it was decided there is insufficient space.

However, you may have noticed that our new sign on the front gate says: "Diss Town Guide Sold Here". This is a gentle hint that not only the guide but other souvenirs of Diss are available in our museum shop. Suzanne has increased the stock and sales continue to increase. If we can establish a full stewards team to cover our extended hours there is no reason why we should not work together with staff at the refurbished Corn Hall to assist visitors attracted by the publicity raised for the Diss Heritage Triangle of which the Museum is a central part.

Even since I joined the Friends committee in 2014 I have highlighted the need for a succession plan. Now, I am delighted to say that this is coming to pass a year earlier than I expected with Mike Clarke progressing from Vice-Chair to Chairman. We still had a big problem until Peter Hodgson, already Treasurer for the Trustees, agreed to join us and also become our Treasurer. This just left a Vice-Chairman to be found and I was delighted when Basil accepted that nomination. The Friends are unusually far-sighted in that an *ex officio* committee member is accorded full voting rights by our constitution.

Brian Horner is planning to move away from the area (not soon, we hope) but fortunately will stay as an Ordinary Member, as will Sally Payne. The list of nominations is completed by Jan Smith, a new steward (and steward co-ordinator) who will be an Ordinary Member. Together with Sally and Peter she will bring a fresh view to help the Friends of Diss Museum develop. In such illustrious company I am more than happy to continue serving as a Secretary. D. Y.