

## General News

At the last minute we decided to have a small stall at the Carnival in the Park on 11th June. The Montgomerie Lodge kindly provided us with a gazebo next to their excellent display. The Shambles was open with a quiz for children but most of them seemed to be looking for the *phantom freemason* in the Park! Next year we will be better prepared for this well worthwhile occasion illustrating, again, what superb facilities we have in Diss.



The view on the left, from our stall catches Basil, suitably attired, who was manning a *History of Diss Carnival* stall for the Diss Town Council.



The December 2016 issue pictured Paul Hammond holding the Tony Hall cartoon he was offering to the Museum. Well, this project has come to fruition. Again, everything happened at the last minute and, given that the subject of the cartoon is the saga of the 2003 Diss Christmas Lights, we arranged a handing-over ceremony for this year's *lights day* on 25th November. The Diss Collections managers, Daisy and Shirley, completed all of the technicalities involved in *change of title* (ownership) but, sadly, Paul had to cry-off at the last minute. However, we visited Paul at Friday Bridge and collected the cartoon in time for it to be displayed in the Shambles from 14th November.



For some time we have been selling CDs and DVDs in the Museum shop. The Diss Rotarians display in the Community Cabinet prompted us to complete two DVD projects. It is quite a coincidence that the originator of the projects, David van der Hulks, is often known as DVD for short! Here he is posing for a press-release after a panic to get the gin off the sideboard!



**Diss Dawn to Dusk** is a DVD version of the VCR historic record that Doug Bartlett and the Diss Rotary Club made to mark the millennium.

**The Stroll 2011** was made by Vincent Hemmings to record the superb architectural heritage of Diss that the Diss and District Society passed to the Friends.

By kind permission of Leslie Ward, until the Museum reopens in March 2018, both of these DVDs will be available at his shop in Church Street, Diss.

The Newsletter for the Friends of Diss Museum  
Editor: David Young, 34, Louie's Lane, Diss, IP22 4LS  
Telephone 01379 642168  
**To join the Friends, email: [fodimus@gmail.com](mailto:fodimus@gmail.com)**

# FODIMUS

Latin: we cultivate  
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**Don't miss our last meeting of 2017, *A Regency Christmas*, on 15th December**

## The Museum and the Town

In May we wrote about the new *interpretation boards* fitted to the windows of the Shambles. You may remember that some were difficult to read in bright sunlight. Well, the panels were finally replaced on the 24th of October just in time for the official opening of the Corn Hall the following day! The delivery included the long-promised panels for the windows facing down the Market Place towards Mere Street. The boards are part of the theme for the whole of the Heritage Triangle and tell the history of that area of the town.

It is possible that not all of the Friends of Diss Museum are convinced about the benefits of the new streetscape and the board-walk across the Mere. However, the Museum is an important part of the Triangle so we attended the official opening of the Corn Hall on 25th October. The speeches were delivered from their newly-acquired traders desk, placed upon the stage, advertising *A. Ford & Son, Sack Merchants*. This means that, despite fears that it might never happen, our *Burroughes* corn traders desk is now back in the Museum collection. The Museum is well represented in the Corn Hall with various items from the collection on display as *Diss Museum On-Tour*. Also, on the first-floor landing, there is an interactive screen showing artist impressions of Diss through the centuries which is worth seeing. There is an interesting *timeline* along the upstairs wall showing contemporaneous events in Diss and British history. All of these efforts and the £3.4 million go towards making the town more attractive to tourists. The exhibition in the Shambles this year has been as good as ever thanks to the efforts of Basil, Daisy, Shirley, Yoshi and all of the willing volunteers behind the scenes.



At the time of the last Newsletter Diss had just hosted a very successful Organ Festival. Not many towns could have hosted this event to successfully. Thousands of visitors strolled from organ to organ down St Nicholas Street through the Market Place past the Mere to the Park.

## Stewards in the Shambles

Our constitution states that the object of the association shall be the education of the public by promotion, support, assistance and improvement of Diss Museum through the activities of a group of Friends. Many of these are stewards in the Shambles and the presence of more tourists in the town gave us more opportunity. Increasing opening time by 56%, to 11 - 3 every day of the season, has given a 33% increase in footfall and a 27% increase in donations in the Shambles. This would not have been possible without Yoshi operating the new security system and a number of new recruits to our excellent stewards, coordinated by Jan, Sally and David.

## WRITER'S CORNER

*Your committee members know what a good job Mike Clarke does as our Chairman and we have all experienced the seamless way in which he took on the management of our lecture programme. Knowing him to be a man of many parts I asked him if he would be kind enough to provide a few words for this issue. Ed.*

### From Bunker To Shambles

Back in 2011, newly resident in Norfolk, I decided to try the golf course at Diss where they were making a trial membership offer. On the first tee I encountered a certain David Young on a similar mission and the rest as they say, is history.

He invited me to join him and I realised very quickly that I was a little out of my league against a very proficient golfer. I need not have worried. David took me in hand and over the weeks we played together I learned a great deal and we became friends. He wondered if I would be interested in becoming a steward at the Diss Museum.

I was interested in becoming involved. I had lived for a short time near Bury St Edmunds in a previous marriage and as a result I have children and their families in the area which had prompted my choice of Norfolk on our decision to return from Spain. I had discovered that my great-great paternal grandparents married and raised a large family in Pulham St Mary, so I am a bit of a Norfolk boy after all.

I had never been involved with museums and was a little dubious about my suitability but, again, I need not have worried. It has been a delight to meet all the people involved in keeping this little gem on the road, both the Trustees and the Friends not to mention our visitors to whom we impart a little of our heritage in return for their cash.

David had not finished with me. The committee was being rebuilt and I was asked if he could submit my name. I nodded my head again, a reflex which has over time launched me into running the talks programme, assuming the vice chair and finally into my lofty eminence as your chairman.

The Museum at the Shambles holds a record of our past and I am so pleased to be a small part of preserving this inheritance for future generations. Long may it survive and educate.

Mike Clarke

## Committee Matters

Brian and Lyn Horner were two important committee members who saw the transition from 2014 to 2015. As you know, Brian was Treasurer and Lyn was Membership Officer, both crucial roles in an association such as ours. We mentioned in the last newsletter that, to be closer to family, they were planning to move away from Diss. That move has now taken place and we wish them every success in Towcester.

Brian stayed on the committee as an ordinary member when Peter took over as Treasurer. Now that he has departed, his place on the committee has been taken by Pat Blanchet. She has come from the noble ranks of our stewards and has already been a great help to Jan with her experience of publicity and fund-raising.

### Third-Friday Lectures

Ray King opened the season in March with his in-depth look at *The History of Diss Fire Service*.

In April we had Del Firman's entertaining thoughts on *Collecting: Hobby or Obsession*.

In May, after the AGM, Basil Abbot amused us with *Being Here And Writing About It*. Few can claim greater knowledge of Diss. I believe Basil's grandfather, in 1912, was the first *water keeper* at the old water tower in Louie's Lane.

In June John Goodhand showed us a view of local history through *Inns And Inn Signs*.

*The Hoxne Skull* has been in the Diss Museum collection for many years so we were all looking forward to the presentation from Sarah Inskip and Mike Hall, both leading authorities in their academic fields. A July full house was enthralled by the history of leprosy and the contribution made by their study of "our" skull.

In contrast, in August, David Young took a light hearted look at *Stories and Songs Around and About Diss*.

There is nobody better informed about the *History of Redgrave Park* than Tim Holt-Wilson. He spent his early life there and shared with a packed house the remarkable history of the Hall and the Park at the September meeting.

An excellent turnout of aircraft enthusiasts listened to Stephen Pope's *History of Aviation in Norfolk* and found out what a role the county played in the early days.

Attendance was low in number but high in enthusiasm for the *Annual Quiz* in November.

As well as entertaining us, all our meetings made a contribution to Museum projects.

Don't miss *A Regency Christmas* recreating the flavour of a bygone age by Frances Hart and Mike Clarke (yes, both of our number) on December 15th.