

The Newsletter of the

Wivenhoe History Group



Newsletter No. 12 - February 2015

Dear All

This New Year has started with a lot of quiet activity taking place. We have a **new logo**, and one that we think represents Wivenhoe much more. It shows St Mary's Church with its distinctive cupola, and is the building in which we have now held three public lectures, and then in the foreground a traditional sailing smack highlighting the river without which Wivenhoe would not be the place it is today. Fortunately there are still a few of these fine vessels around where once there were many.

In January, the **Wivenhoe History Archive Project** started with a team of 9 people having two day's of training sessions with Jack Latimer of Community Sites whose software we are using to create our new community archive. All very exciting. It is now a case of which this space; we are now working to build lots of new pages in anticipation we can launch this web site in a couple of months' time. This will just be the start of course. We are now meeting every Friday morning at my house to add pages, photographs, oral recordings and anything that tells of Wivenhoe's rich history. The archive will focus heavily on WW1 as some of the £9,000 grant we received from the Heritage Lottery Fund has gone towards completing our fund-raising to pay for this software so that we have somewhere to lodge and show what has been achieved from our WW1 project.

The **WW1 Project** has been making progress on several fronts – bit like the War itself. Wivenhoe's Junior schools were very keen to be involved during the September term whilst there was lots of publicity nationally to make the centenary of the outbreak of hostilities in August 2014. However things move on and we are now having to find different ways to engage with them. Gill Strudwick is leading the team and doing a good job of it too. They are planning to have special displays at John Stewart's Wivenhoe Memories exhibition in the Wm Loveless Hall which will run for the three days over Easter – 4th – 6th April from 10am – 6pm each day.

We have so far enjoyed **one meeting this year** with guest speaker Dr Herbert Eiden, who gave us a fascinating talk about the Victoria County of Essex (see the report on it by Christopher Thompson). We have already had one outing which was to the **Essex Regiment Museum** for some WW1 research, although it proved to be a very enjoyable visit and a place worth visiting if ever you are in Chelmsford. More trips are planned for later this year. Details are given later in this newsletter.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the **next meeting on Wednesday 11th March at 7.30pm** in the Scout & Guide Hall at which **Bernie Hetherington** will be our guest speaker to talk about the significance of Captain Nottage to Wivenhoe's last 100 years. It will also be our AGM and we will have a few small items to vote on. As ever non-members will be very welcome at the meeting.

Peter Hill, Chairman



Dr Herbert Eiden on The Victoria County History of Essex

Our group had the chance to hear Herbert Eiden, who lives in Wivenhoe, talk about the history and work of the **VCH** as it is universally known last Wednesday. He explained how, from its late-Victorian and private origins, it had become the main guide to local history across England during the twentieth century.

He was also able to cover how its format had changed during the period since then and the way in which it covered the history of parishes and places like Wivenhoe.

Sadly, financial pressures had curtailed its work and it was now being conducted on the basis of voluntary donations and the work of local groups in places like Newport and Great and Little Holland.

Historians did have a lot to gain from detailed local knowledge given by the inhabitants of such places but he could not hold out too much hope of the county being fully covered in the near future. Fortunately Wivenhoe has already been covered by the VCH. All in all, a very interesting afternoon.



Christopher Thompson

Future Trips

Our group has a number of interesting trips outside Wivenhoe planned for the next few months. These are:

To the Imperial War Museum on Saturday 7th March. Anyone interested in going should contact Ian Valentine.

To Tilbury Fort, West Tilbury (where Queen Elizabeth's great speech in 1588, the year of the Armada was given), **Coalhouse Fort at East Tilbury** where General Gordon was commander in the 1860s) and **Saffron Gardens at Horndon-on-the Hill** (where Queen Elizabeth stayed) **on Sunday 14th June**.

To Languard Fort near Felixtowe on Sunday 9th August to see the development of its fortifications from the early modern period to recent times.

Make a note in your 2015 diaries now.

Our Second Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 11th March 2015 at 7.30pm

This is due to take place in the Scout and Guide Hall at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 11th March. Peter Hill, our Chairman, will be able to up-date us all about the progress recently made in creating our new website and the work of the team in providing its content. Eight or nine volunteers are already helping.

We are looking for a volunteer to form a new Oral History group to collect recordings from local residents about the history of our community. We have had expressions of interest from members in conducting recordings. Will someone step forward and lead this very important initiative, following on the work done by Professor Paul Thompson and the team in 2007.

And we shall definitely need helpers for the organisation of future events upon which we shall depend for our income now that the Heritage Lottery Fund grant has reached us and is being used for our website.

Please contact Peter Hill or Ian Valentine if you can help in these areas.

Future Meeting – Wednesday 13th May, 2015 2.30pm – 4.30pm

I have invited Betty Govan, Iris Diggins, Joyce Blackwood, Phyllis Sawyer and Marina Nice to come and talk informally about their memories of Wivenhoe when it was a much smaller place than it is now. They were all born in Wivenhoe and have clear memories of growing up here. I'm sure it will be very interesting to hear them reminisce with us.

We will record their memories on tape and on video so that future generations of Wivenhovians can enjoy them.

If any member has any ideas for a talk at a future meeting, please let Peter Hill know.

Essex Record Office

There is some disturbing recent news from County Hall in Chelmsford. The hours for which the Essex Record Office will be open from April are being seriously cut.

The ERO will no longer be open at all on Mondays and only on two Saturdays each month. Fewer people are apparently visiting its research rooms in Wharf Road while more people are using on-line facilities. This is bad news. We hope it is not the thin end of the wedge leading eventually to the ERO's closure. There were rumours several years ago that closure was being considered by the County Council to save money. If any politician or bureaucrat is thinking along these lines, they should forget it: the ERO is the one part of the County Council that is known worldwide. Cutting the time for which it is open or closing it would be self-defeating.

Christopher Thompson

**December 2015 – Jimmy Lawrence, Guest at the History Group’s December meeting –
Wednesday 3rd December 2014 – with Jimmy Lawrence**

This was always going to be a very social evening with wine and mince pies together with well-known Brightlingsea figure, Jimmy Lawrence. Jimmy grew up with the river and on it as a bargeman and a skipper, sailing up and down the Colne River and in the waters off this coast. The first barge he sailed in was the 100 ton barge, the George Smeed, built in 1884. He has a whole sea-chest full of amusing stories that he interspersed with witty songs for us that evening with a distinct emphasis on Wivenhoe.



Jimmy is a very warm and colourful character, with a deep, resonating local accent that you rarely hear these days. He has a lovely singing voice too, which goes very well when playing his ‘squeeze box’ and he regaled us with a couple of amusing ditties during his presentation.

As with other meetings, we were very pleased to have a number of visitors with us that evening.

Peter Hill

Wivenhoe History Group Web Site – www.wivenhoehistory.org.uk

This web site is a temporary one whilst we are building our Wivenhoe History archive which we hope to launch in April. This URL will become the URL of the new archive for everything we can find out about Wivenhoe and record for all time. It is an archive that will continually grow as time marches on and as people begin to add their own pictures and memories to really make this a community archive.

Our thanks are due to the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as former Town Mayors Cllr Penny Kraft and Andrea Luxford-Vaughan, Borough Cllrs Cyril Liddy, Mark Cory, Jon Manning and the late Steve Ford, plus a substantial contribution from the trustees of the Wivenhoe Preservation Trust, Peter Hill and Len Horner.

The Wivenhoe Community Archive is supported by:



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WIVENHOE MEMORIES EXHIBITION

We hope you will all come down to the next Wivenhoe Memories exhibition in the Wm Loveless Hall. As ever, John Stewart will put a huge amount of time and effort into showing his fantastic collection of Wivenhoe photographs and memorabilia. This year it will feature the research of the WW1 Project team which has been completed to date. See poster on the next page:

WIVENHOE MEMORIES



AN EXHIBITION OF OVER 100 YEARS OF LOCAL HISTORY, PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS.

FEATURING WORLD WAR 1

This event combines the historical Wivenhoe photograph archive with a special WW1 exhibition featuring contributions from local primary schools.

April 4th 5th & 6th, 10am – 6pm

WILLIAM LOVELESS HALL

On Saturday - Some surprising WW1 objects will be on display.

(REFRESHMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE)

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