

Chairman's Report 2021

In my last report I commented on how very strange it was writing it under lockdown due to the Covid-19 virus. Who would have thought that a year on, we would still be in the same situation albeit things are a little more relaxed now. I sincerely hope that we will soon be able to get back to some normality.

Returning to the Old Independent Church Hall may be some way off at the moment. Once we are allowed to hold meetings indoors and the necessary safety measures are thought through we hope to be able to consider re-instating the monthly meetings. In the meantime I should thank Rosemary Fletcher who organises our speakers. I know how frustrating it has been for her to have to cancel all our 2020 speakers and re-book for 2021 only to have go through the same process of cancelling once again!

The Committee have once again cancelled our Annual General Meeting which would normally take place in May. Circumstances as they are at the moment will prevent it from happening and I have been assured by the Suffolk Family History Society (SFHS) that we are not legally obliged to hold the meeting. Having said that I am extremely conscious of the importance of having an AGM. All those who attend our meetings and take part in our activities should have the opportunity to voice their opinions if they wish. With this in mind we have a Zoom meeting in May when we will hear about the life story of William Wakeling Boreham. Prior to the presentation I will open the meeting to everyone so that you have the chance to comment on the way the 'Group' is progressing.

I am pleased to say that at the present time all the Committee are prepared to serve once again for 2020/21. We have been meeting 'remotely' throughout the last year and I thank them all once again for their dedication on behalf of our group. There is no limit to the size of our Committee so if you would like to stand please let me know. The only stipulation is that you must be a member of the Suffolk Family History Society to hold office.

Although we have not been able to meet up in person we have endeavored to continue with our monthly meetings albeit virtually on the Zoom platform. I am extremely grateful to the SFHS for financing the monthly subscription to enable us to do so. In November 2020 Mike Wabe entertained us with '**Christmas and Ghost Stories**'. This was followed in December with the '**Annual Christmas Fun Quiz**'. After the Christmas break, we resumed in February with an in-house presentation '**Nursery Rhymes - They are not all what they seem!**'. In March Kate Hurst, from Lancashire presented '**Innkeepers and Gamekeepers: Tracing My Wandering Ancestors**' which had some local connections to Haverhill! April saw our very own team once again presenting '**The Historic Bells of Old London Town**'. I would like to personally thank all those who took part in the presentations, it is not the easiest thing to do, sitting in front of your PC or IPAD speaking to an audience that you know is out there but cannot see!

We will continue with these Zoom presentations for the foreseeable future and I do hope that you will support them. What has been particularly fascinating is the interest shown in the talks. We have had people outside our normal group, from far and wide, join us for these which is really great. Not just locally, and nationally but also globally! Who would have thought that we would have meetings and be joined by people from the USA! The wonders of the internet and social media!

In addition to these meetings and in place of our cancelled 'Open Day' in January we presented '**HOW TO CLIMB YOUR FAMILY TREE**' via the Zoom platform. Primarily for beginners and those starting out on their family history venture this was well received. So much so that a ten-weekly program of video presentations was devised covering a wide range of research subjects. These have proven to be extremely popular, and I thank Charmian Thompson for putting it all together.

It was very disappointing that we were unable to carry out our bookings for Victorian Haverhill workshops but we hope that we will be able to reschedule these when the topic is revisited by schools. It was indeed a shame that the children were unable to learn the 'Weaving' song under the tutelage of our very own Richard Hart and also miss tasting gruel and doing hard labour with their 'Oakum picking'!

Plans for the group to be involved in VE day and VJ day events were also in need of amendment. We assisted the Town Council by providing video presentations used on Social Media. We also managed to host a socially distanced event in the Haverhill Cemetery where participants learnt about the experiences of local Far East POWs.

It was also a privilege to work with the CWGC, co-ordinating a commemoration in Ipswich when 2nd Lt. Basil Groome was remembered on behalf of Ernest Brett (the last surviving local FEPOW from the 2nd Btn Cambs Regiment).

Our group was represented by Jeanette Key who laid a poppy wreath on behalf of the group at the socially distanced Remembrance Event in November.

Tributes to the Foreign airmen buried in Haverhill Cemetery were added to our Roll of Honour. Thanks to Karen Young/Charmian Thompson for the research.

Many of you took part researching for our project '**Who Lived Here**' which focuses on property in the town and a peek at the people who in their own way made a contribution or influenced our lives in Haverhill over the years. The exhibition was cancelled last year for obvious reasons and we will have to wait and see whether we can display the posters this year. If you want a sneak preview visit the SFHS website [Who Lived Here? - SFHS - Suffolk Family History Society \(suffolkfhs.co.uk\)](http://www.suffolkfhs.co.uk) My thanks to everyone who helped with the research, they have all contributed to a really interesting exhibition. We are also very grateful for the generous and continued support of the **Haverhill Town Council** without whose financial help these exhibitions could not take place.

Looking forward I am hoping that as a group we will have a presence at this year's **Armed Forces Day** and the **Haverhill Show** as in previous years. Both events are outdoors. Please come along and support if you can.

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to produce our regular **monthly newsletters** which are now forwarded to well over 110 people. It is also available on facebook and the SFHS website. I am pleased that several members have taken the opportunity to submit fascinating and interesting articles and I once again challenge you all to submit an article, perhaps a personal account, a story about an artefact, an amusing anecdote or life under lockdown! The length of the article can be as short as a paragraph or as long as several A4 sheets. Why not get writing?

Our **facebook group** continues to grow; we now have over 870 members from across the globe.

Just to finish my report I hope that we will soon be able to start organizing our events, trips, walks etc. once again. It has been too long since we have been able to do so and I for one have missed the company and social side of our group.

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