

# SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY SUDBURY & DISTRICT GROUP



## Update

February 2019

### TONIGHT'S SPEAKER

We welcome back Jonathan Belsey with his talk entitled Medicine on the Battlefield.

### SUDBURY HERITAGE CENTRE - FRIENDS BULLETIN - February and March 2019

The Heritage Centre now has windows on the Peasants' Revolt that rocked England in 1381. One of the new presentations on the big screen, reveals that a Sudbury cleric was a leader in Suffolk with the vicar of All Saints under his command. The other tells the life story of the all-powerful Simon of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, murdered by Wat Tyler's men. You pick which you want to watch. The author Tonia Lawes has also designed for young visitors a second version of the Simon story with illustrations by Liz Cole.

This new resource follows former Mayor Anthony Platt's gift of a forensic reconstruction of how Archbishop Simon of Sudbury might have looked in his lifetime. It's based on his partly mummified skull kept in St Gregory's Church. We decided then to introduce better coverage in the Heritage Centre of our forebears struggle for justice.

University student Tonia Lawes volunteered and produced the three presentations with some support from local historians. Tonia began volunteering in the Heritage Centre when she was at school in Sudbury and is now studying archaeology and anthropology at University College (London). Many thanks Tonia, you are a star.

### Other additions and more to come

The large clock that once marked business hours at the Corn Exchange (now the town library) is now in place high on a window sill next to the handsome bust of the elderly Queen Victoria that was probably commissioned to mark her Golden Jubilee in 1897. Sudbury clockmakers Hills supplied the clock when the Corn Exchange opened in 1842. The Friars Street firm wound it every Thursday before the start of business. It no longer ticks.

A new Half Term attraction for the young will be the challenge of completing their choice from a selection of quiz sheets, mostly devised by Heritage Centre Trustee Peter Rednall to test observation. Another is based on the Simon of Simon of Sudbury screen presentation for young people. A week ago Peter visited Pot Kiln primary school to show three classes artefacts from our World War 2 collection including the bizarre gas mask issued for babies.

Two other innovations in the pipeline are a new donations box as, visitors seem unable to find the antique green-painted oil can which will be used for another purpose. Most important is a plan for a website redesign, but that will not happen for a while such is the complexity of the task. The present website has grown hugely and needs to be easier to navigate. The new website will have more features including provision for Friends and Hosts news and views.

Hosts sometimes get a mention in the Visitors' Book, fortunately in complimentary terms and sometimes described as 'staff.' This assumption is a credit to our volunteers who never fail to turn up and include a core group that hosts regularly. We are now filling in the calendar for the months ahead and Hosts are urgently needed for March 16<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> onwards. My contact numbers are at the end of this bulletin. Hosts work in pairs from 9.50am -12.30pm on Saturdays. Undoubtedly, opening on Saturday morning has increased our footfall and justified the effort.

Using the visitors' book Hosts Tina Dalziel and Rita Moulsher analysed where our visitors came from last year. As expected, the largest group lived in Suffolk and Essex but many other counties are represented as well as Scotland and Wales which shows the attraction Sudbury has for tourists. More than 50 who signed came from overseas including 17 from the United States and a further 15 from Australia and New Zealand, some no doubt looking for their roots.

Visitors have asked about the fate of the cascade of handmade poppies on the tower of St Peter's that commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the first World War. Fear not for their survival, they have been dried and stored in a disused chapel in the town cemetery. News from the Town Hall is that they are likely to be used again this year. Thanks to an initiative by the Town Hall new LED lighting has improved the viewing of artefacts in our displays. It is more eco friendly too.

### **Can you scan?**

Viewers of the Victorian House of Arts and Crafts on BBC 2 will have seen photographs from our historic photo archive in the opening sequence. It is simple for anyone to download our images and these are perfectly suitable for ordinary use though are not high definition. Commercial users, such as the BBC, pay for us to process and send these. We are very much in need of a volunteer/s to help with scanning new photographs for inclusion in the archive including glass plate negatives. Please make contact for more information.

Sudbury on Show, Town Hall and St Peter's, **2 March** 9.30-3pm. Members of more than 100 clubs, societies and services showing what they have to offer. That includes Trustees and Friends of the Heritage Centre and the Ephemera Archive at our premises in the Town Hall.

Finally, news that some seats are available for the Quay History Lecture on Sunday, **March 10**. It promises to be an entertaining night with Roger Green revealing how a Sudbury vicar's daughter became a leading member of a secretive religious sect with world wide connections. Then Peter Minter will no doubt have us all laughing at his tales of local characters.

Best wishes to all

Val Herbert, co-ordinator Friends of Sudbury Heritage Centre

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### **OUR LIBRARY**

We have a large number of books in our library which we are happy to loan out to members. We have set up a book for you to fill in the details of the book/s you are borrowing; Name; Tel No; Membership Number. Just return them at one of the next meetings you attend.

## **SAD STORY OF AN AMERICAN SAILOR**

An American contact of mine emailed saying that he was looking into the stories of the former boys who had joined the US services and whose names were listed on a WWII Roll of Honour in a local school. One of them proved very difficult to find. Sherwood Swanson was in the US Navy based in Plymouth (England). He had drowned on 11 February 1945. My contact had, apparently, found nothing that would explain the circumstances of his death in US official records. Of course, I had to have a go at this, didn't I?

It took me barely ten minutes! The British Newspaper Archive contained two newspapers that reported the sad story. Sherwood and a colleague and friends including women from the WRNS were having a day's outing at Land's End, climbing over the rocks. The sea was rough and suddenly a big wave came in, washing one of the WRNS out to sea but then the next wave flung her back on land where she took refuge on a ledge. However, Sherwood and another man were washed out to sea, Sherwood's body was never recovered. I found that his name is on the list of the missing at the American Military Cemetery at Madingley near Cambridge.

I sent the links to my American contact who was thrilled with the information. I must admit I was surprised to find anything, let alone named US servicemen in wartime. I found it interesting on two counts: the event itself and the style of reporting.

Despite the sadness of the story, the 'tone' of the report in *The Cornishman* newspaper is a real period piece and very 'flowery' even for the 1940s "...the great seas roared on and the rain scudded over the cream-crested breakers in this wild, almost primeval part of Cornwall where, when the holiday season is over, Nature shows her teeth and claws – the hungry claws of the sea which bite on the age-old cliffs with a roar of 'Danger'."

The opening lines wouldn't pass muster today! "Two American sailors were drowned when they were washed off a cliff at the Land's End on Sunday afternoon. A young, attractive Wren had a miraculous escape..." No mention of young handsome American sailors...! Her name was very respectfully given as 'Miss Seers' – no first name. (No, I am not going to try to trace her!)

How times change!  
*Anne Grimshaw*

## **SNIPPET FROM SUFFOLK FREE PRESS**

Suffolk Free Press June 29th 1910

as the old Tarentella is being completed as flats I thought this might be topical...

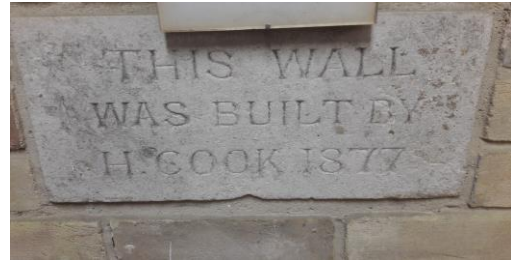
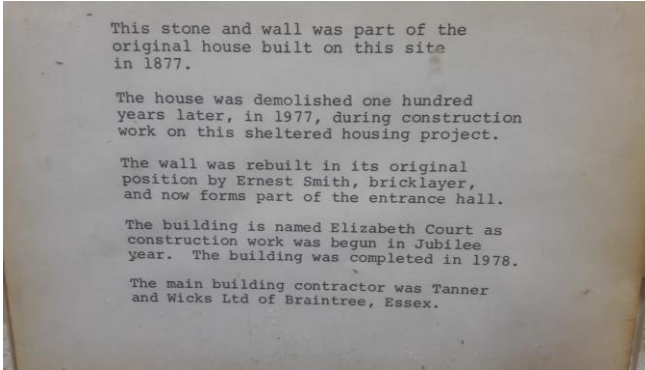
"The sale of Arthur Hall, Sudbury Suffolk - we understand from Messrs Boardman and Oliver that Arthur Hall which was withdrawn from auction at the Rose and Crown hotel on June 9th last has now been sold to Sir George Whitehouse by private treaty."

*Liz Cole*

## CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Ashley Cooper ran this year's Caught on Camera at the Quay Theatre.  
What a great evening!

The picture of Frank Seppings' Butcher's Shop in East Street was talked about and following that David Whymark sent me photos from inside the foyer at Elizabeth Court which was originally the site of the slaughter house.



'This stone and wall was part of the original house built on this site in 1877. The house was demolished one hundred years later, in 1977, during construction work on this sheltered housing project. The wall was rebuilt in its original position by Ernest Smith, bricklayer, and now forms part of the entrance hall. The building is named Elizabeth Court as construction work began in Jubilee year. The building was completed in 1978. The main building contractor was Tanner and Wicks Ltd of Braintree, Essex.' 'This wall was built by H Cook 1877'

## NEXT MEETINGS:

- |        |  |                      |
|--------|--|----------------------|
| 26 Mar | Burston School Strike  | <i>Bryan Thurlow</i> |
| 30 Apr | 'General' Quiz Night – All welcome<br>Teams of 6 usually entrance fee refreshments raffle    |                      |
| 28 May | Broad Stripes & Bright Stars and some<br>Historical Curiosities found by Anne<br>+ Group AGM | <i>Anne Grimshaw</i> |

If a meeting needs to be cancelled at short notice (ie due to bad weather) we will put it on our Group Website page.

## PLEASE TAKE A POSTER TO DISPLAY

### NEED TO GET IN TOUCH?

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