

Chairman's Report 2019

This is my fourth report as Chairman of your group; I can't quite believe the year has passed so quickly. As in previous years I hope you agree that our monthly meetings have once again been varied, interesting and in some cases very entertaining. The 2018/19 year started with '**O I C -Organs, Inventions & (non) Conformists.**' A presentation by three of our members after the AGM. In June Dave Steward gave a talk on '**Dad's Army (The TV Program)**' which was part of the Haverhill Festival events. Our September meeting saw Karen Cummings, our local professional Genealogist, give a really interesting presentation on '**Demystifying DNA**' although I confess I am still trying to get my head around that and having taken the test it appears that I have many 3rd-6th cousins I never knew about! This was followed by '**Dick Turpin, the Man and the Myth**' with Stephen Poulter in October and in December we had the annual '**fun quiz**' and social evening. Following the Christmas break our first meeting of the new year in February saw Jeanie Smith and Charmian Thompson both give talks about miners in their families in '**Family History goes Underground**'. Special mention for Charmian who like a real trooper, despite the discomfort caused by her fairly serious knee injury sustained the week before insisted on giving her presentation. In March we were extremely pleased to have Gill Blanchard, a professional genealogist and author of several books, who explained how to go about '**researching buildings**' and their inhabitants. Our last meeting before the AGM in May saw Mike Wabe make his first appearance ever at one of our meetings and what an appearance. Mike dressed in full livery gave an extremely interesting, amusing and entertaining (albeit LOUD at times) presentation on the role of '**Town Criers**'. Mike is a very accomplished speaker and I am sure that everyone left the meeting with a smile on their face. All these meetings were extremely well attended and I thank all those who came along to support them. I am indebted to all those who help out on the evenings to make them so successful whether it is collecting money, organising the raffle, making the teas and coffees or helping put everything out and then away at the end. Thank you all.

I would also like to show my gratitude to all those who helped out at our two **Open Days** held in **September** and **January** this year at the Haverhill library and also those stalwarts who regularly help out at the **weekly help sessions** on a Wednesday afternoon. The feedback I receive from people who have attended the Open Day or weekly sessions just shows **how supportive and friendly the helpers are**. You should all be proud of the encouragement you give to people embarking on their family history trail or needing help.

The past year has once again been incredibly eventful. Once again in June and July we supported several events. Early in June we supported the **Old Independent Church** with their **Open weekend** and towards the end of the month we were in attendance at the **Armed Forces Day** in the town centre with displays and activities for children. On a gloriously sunny June day we also had a trip to **Pakenham Mill** where we were treated to a tour followed by tea and cakes! In July we were asked to help out at the **Steeple Bumpstead Community History Day**. With the continuing hot weather it was a pleasure to be in the cool St. Mary's Church. Our red gazebo had another outing at the **Haverhill Show** on the recreation ground, always a

favourite not just for meeting the public but also for our members getting together to have a chat and putting the world to right. **Our annual village walk** took place at nearby **Steeple Bumpstead** and as usual was extremely well supported. I have driven through the village many times but it never ceases to amaze me how much you can learn about a village by having a guided walk. Thanks to **Charmaine Slade** for organising this for us. After the walk we retired to the Fox and Hounds for some excellent refreshments. On one of the few days we had rain last summer we were deluged on a trip to the **East Anglian Life museum** in August. However it did not dampen the spirits and we enjoyed a personal guided tour of the grounds.

2018 saw the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War so obviously events in November were the highlight of the year. Our **'What did our Ancestors do during the war'** exhibition which was displayed in the Arts Centre throughout November was well received as was the **'Haverhill in the Great War'** exhibition held in the Studio over Armistice weekend. I should also thank our friends from the Haverhill and District Local History Group for allowing us to use their facilities not only for research but also for displaying many artefacts and school work which complimented the exhibitions.

During the exhibition we also had the pleasure of hosting workshops at the Arts Centre for 120 students from **Samuel Ward Academy Trust** and **St Felix Primary School**. Pupils from St. Felix were even taught a marching song by our 'Musical Director' Richard Hart and they apparently sang the song when walking back to school!

Your Secretary, Charmian and I were humbled to receive an award from the Haverhill Town Mayor, Tony Brown, on behalf of the Town Council. This was in recognition and appreciation for the part played in the Haverhill Armistice 100 Commemorations. This was of course, accepted on behalf of our group. Alan Bumpstead and Bryan Mills, members of our group, also received an award on behalf of the Royal British Legion.

With the funding we had received from the East of England Co-op for use with schools we were delighted to provide year 9 students from **Samuel Ward Academy Trust** the opportunity to watch the film **Journey's End** to complement their WW1 history studies. The Arts Centre auditorium was full for both showings. I must thank those who helped with the staffing necessary for walking the students to and from the venue.

Considering the importance of the remembrance celebrations it was particularly poignant that after four years of chasing up the Commonwealth War Graves Commission a headstone was installed on **Stephen Webb's** unmarked grave. It was a honour to stand alongside the Royal British Legion at the Dedication.

Who could forget the memorable and moving evening of music, readings and images at our **'We Will Remember Them'** evening, this time in the Old Independent Church, remembering the end of the war. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped organise and take part in what was a fantastic event. Working with the local community, the **Haverhill Silver Band, Haverhill Singers, the Operatic Society and Samuel Ward School and individuals as well as our own members** was a joy and appreciated by everyone who watched the event not only live in the church but also via the **live video feed transmitted on facebook** which attracted many nice comments, certainly a first for our group! I should mention and thank most sincerely John Burns and the team from the Haverhill Arts Centre who recorded the event and provided lighting, sound etc. All in all it was a very professional performance by everyone.

It goes without saying that I thank everyone, too numerous to mention here, that helped out throughout the year at all our events. I know that we are the envy of all the other branches in the Society for the work we undertake and our involvement within our local community.

I hope that those who receive our regular **monthly newsletters** find them interesting. Several members have submitted fascinating articles which is great. If you have a story you wish to share please do not hesitate to let me know. Our **facebook group** continues to grow; we now have over 400 members across the globe.

Looking forward, I hope that the programme for 2019/20 will be equally varied and enjoyable. If anyone has any suggestions as to what we should cover next year please let me or any Committee member know. Of course our group would not exist if it were not for our hard working committee, all our dedicated volunteers and you the members, whether it be taking part in events/projects, helping at our help sessions or just supporting us by coming to our monthly meetings. I thank you all.

Finally, I am sorry to say that Gloria Callen, Marion Searle, Jeannie Smith and Barry Young have decided to stand down from the Committee and will not be seeking re-election. On behalf of our group I would like to thank them all for their sterling work over the past few years, it is truly appreciated

Brian Thompson