

SAFFRON WALDEN HISTORICAL JOURNAL

History News Archive 2001 - 2003

The *Saffron Walden Historical Journal* carries a number of shorter items as 'History News' regarding history-related events in the locality, usually at the end of the journal, but sometimes on other pages. Some of these later expand into longer articles. A selection of these items reproduced below reflects the wide range of history activities in and around Saffron Walden. Some of the original wording has been lightly edited to update it. Only a few of the original illustrations are included, where possible in colour. The date of the issue containing the item is given in brackets.

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POLICE MEMORIAL: A bronze plaque in memory of William Campling, the Saffron Walden Chief Constable murdered in 1849, has been placed in Bridge Street, near to where he was shot. The plaques are regularly provided by the Essex Police Memorial Committee to honour the memory of police officers who have died in the course of their duty. Head Constable William Campling died from gunshot wounds in November 1849, his assailant never convicted. (No 3: Spring 2002)

THE CLOSE: Visitors to the Saffron Walden, Herts & Essex Building Society cannot fail to have noticed a splendid model on display in the foyer. Hand-made by an anonymous craftsman, it took two years to construct and is an exact replica of The Close, the house at the junction of High Street and Castle Street. The individually-cut bricks took five weeks to do. The guttering was formed by moulding six layers of paper round a knitting needle. The moss on the pavement was crafted with painted acrylics. (No 3: Spring 2002)

MASONIC HALL: A new plaque can be found in Church Street on the front wall of the Masonic building which was almost destroyed by fire on

carnival day 10 July 1999, and is now restored and in use once more. (No 3: Spring 2002)

FRIENDS SCHOOL: This year is the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Friends School, which has been located in Saffron Walden since 1879. Currently there is an exhibition on the Quakers and the Friends School, in Saffron Museum, and celebratory events have also included an art show and lecture series. (No 4: Autumn 2002)

ORNAMENTAL FOUNTAIN: Sometime during the night after the Jubilee party in the Market Square, the top of the historic drinking fountain was pulled down – it is believed that a lorry snagged against the bunting attached to the top. Throughout the summer the monument has looked most forlorn, but is now repaired. The fountain dates back to 1862 . when it was displayed at the imperial Exhibition. The architect was John Bentley who designed Westminster Cathedral. He made the fountain to commemorate the marriage of Edward, prince of Wales (later Edward VII) and Princess Alexandra. It was purchased and given to the town in 1863 by George Stacey Gibson. Further restoration work is planned by Saffron Walden Town Council. (No 4: Autumn 2002)

STANSTED AIRPORT: A number of historic sites are under threat of demolition if the current proposals to expand Stansted go ahead... would result in the loss of two Scheduled Ancient Monuments, the medieval moated sites of Waltham Manor and The Grange... endanger the site of the Benedictine priory at Warish Hall... half of Elsenham wood SSSI... Listed Buildings would disappear.... Other archaeological sites... There is also close proximity to Hatfield Forest, an SSSI, National Nature Reserve and historic parkland... (No 4: Autumn 2002)

LITTLEBURY HISTORY GROUP: Following the successful publication of its Millennium Album, Littlebury Millennium Society is starting a village history group with the longer term aim of creating a book of local history for the parish (which includes Littlebury Green, Catmere End and part of Audley End). (No 5: Spring 2003)

ARCHAEOLOGY: The Oxford Archaeology Project was called in recently to investigate the remains of a human skeleton found in the grounds of Audley End House, during maintenance works. The bones may possibly be those of a medieval monk from Walden Abbey. A report is being prepared for English Heritage.... The laying of a new gas main in north-west Essex has produced considerable archaeology, including Bronze Age pottery to the north of Newport, an Iron Age enclosure near Debden, Roman farmsteads near Elmdon ad Wicken Bonhunt and further sites at Woodend Green, Broxted, Hatfield Heath and Little Easton. Most exciting was a Roman burial site to the south of Newport , with 25 inhumations and 14 cremations. (No 5: Spring 2003)

GUN EMPLACEMENTS: During construction work for a new car park at the Uttlesford District Council offices in London Road, an old World War II gun emplacement was uncovered. These spigot mortar points were set in place for civil defence purposes in 1940 – others exist at Debden Road and Little Walden Road. (No 5: Spring 2003)

TOWN ARCHIVES: Saffron Walden's remarkable collection of town archives will shortly be sent on permanent loan to safe storage at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford. For the past few years, members of the Saffron Walden Archive Society have been giving their time to sorting and cleaning the archives, and assisting consultant archivist Dr Kate Thompson with cataloguing them. The Town Council has paid Dr Thompson's fees and the catalogue is now on the ERO's SEAX online database. In September, the Archive Society organized a 'town treasures' exhibition which attracted great interest. The range of material is enormous, from precious medieval charters to items relating to the 1795 food riots; from world war records to a vast range of railways material. There is a complete run of quarter sessions records, a large collection of settlement and apprenticeship documents, the original Guild of Holy Trinity accounts, innumerable school, hospital and borough utility volumes and much else besides. In future researchers will be able to use a digital copy of the records, and hopefully this wider accessibility will encourage more historians to make use of this remarkable resource. (No 6: Autumn 2003)

BRIDGE END GARDEN: Two of Saffron Walden's historical attractions were visited by HRH Prince Edward in May. He first of all toured the 19th century Bridge End Gardens, to see the progress on the two-year restoration project being undertaken by Uttlesford District Council. This includes coppicing trees, repairing statues and renovating ironwork. The

Royal visitor then went on to visit Fry Art Gallery which had a special exhibition commemorating his mother's coronation in 1953. (No 6: Autumn 2003)

AUDLEY END: Visitors to Audley End can now see more of how the other half of the household lived in earlier times, thanks to the restoration of the service rooms. English Heritage have been working on the project for the past three years, with help from the Friends of Audley End. The 18th century kitchen and laundry provide a contrast to the opulence and grandeur of the rooms in the rest of the house normally open to the public. (No 6: Autumn 2003)

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM: New acquisitions at Saffron Walden Museum include some 17th century tradesmens' tokens, a Tudor standing oak cupboard, a long case clock of 1733 made by William Kent, a collection of spinning tops and a 15th century gold ring found by a metal-detectorist. The summer exhibition on timber-framed buildings aroused a lot of interest, and the current exhibition, open until January, looks at shoes through the ages. (No 6: Autumn 2003)
