

# The Friends of the Cardall Collection

# NEWSLETTER

## No 18: Spring / Summer 2016



### Chairman's Update

Following the opening of the Library, the Management Committee has been anxiously awaiting news about the availability of the community spaces in Tithe Place. Unfortunately we have neither seen nor heard anything from Stratford District Council that helps us with our forward planning.

Many people continue to ask when we might be moving into the new facility but there is no news to report, and not even any news that we are keeping secret! We had expected to know what the costs and other parameters would be in the early part of 2015 but as yet the only thing we have been told is that the preparation of each lease is likely to cost up to £1,500 in legal costs, and that's before any rent and service charges have been decided.

Apart from the uncertainty and its impact on our morale, the delays have caused us to incur additional costs. We have had to extend the lease on our existing premises twice and have incurred £240 in legal fees. We now have a lease which enables us to stay in Vivian House until the end of 2016.

We were invited to attend the official opening of Tithe Lodge on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and for this we provided a temporary display about Southam's history. We were allowed to use the room in the atrium opposite the Library, and it was encouraging to see the number of new people venturing in to see what we had on show. During the 4 hours we were open we probably had about 30 people pop in and we even sold 4 of our new books ('Southam Through the Centuries' by Brian Townsend).

However perhaps the best result from the day was the opportunity to network with some of the people managing the lease production process. We made sure our frustrations were understood and to give them their due, the managers did listen carefully to what we had to say, made some interesting comments, and promised to make their own enquiries as to what were the causes of the

delays. So we are keeping our fingers crossed to see what happens.

When we do eventually hear the conditions and costs involved in any move to Tithe Place we will need to consider them carefully.



The room in the atrium does not have sufficient space for all our needs and so we will still require other accommodation for storage etc. This of course will have cost implications and unfortunately we do not have a benevolent billionaire standing in the background, unlike some other lucky local heritage groups!

### Join the 200 Club

**Now is the very best time!**

Our 200 Club has become one of our major sources of fund-raising, and this year's tickets have just gone on sale at £5 each.

Starting in June, the tickets last a whole year, so if you join now, you have the chance to be entered into 12 monthly draws. The prize money is £10 per month, but in May and November the prize money is substantially more, depending on how many tickets we have sold.

If you know someone who you think would like to do a little bit towards preserving Southam's Heritage, but is not particularly interested in volunteering or becoming a members, why not

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*Southam Heritage Collection (incorporating the Cardall Collection) comprises artefacts, documents, photographs and memorabilia associated with Southam and its surrounding villages. The County Museum Service inspectors agree that it is an important record of the life and times of our historic market town. The Collection urgently needs a permanent home in Southam where it can be displayed, used and appreciated by the general public, local history societies, schools, reminiscence groups and researchers.*

ask them if they would be willing to buy a 200 Club ticket, or even two?

To join the 200 Club, you need to contact Jenny Frith (the 200 Club organiser) on 01926 814643, and she will provide all the information needed to take part in this exciting monthly draw.

## **Cementing Relations in Southam**

(by Helen Morris & Linda Doyle)

On Bank Holiday Monday May 30<sup>th</sup> (Southam Carnival Day) our new exhibition about the history of the cement industry in the Southam area will open at Vivian House.

'*Cementing Relations in Southam*' will include many aspects of the subject starting back in Jurassic times when the mixture of limestone and blue clay beneath the fields and hills of the area was laid down by the waters of prehistoric seas. Evidence exists that the seas were alive with many types of fish, including enormous ichthyosaurs.



You can find out about the early entrepreneurs who started the local lime and cement industries, taking advantage of the geology of the area which is one of the most suitable sites for limestone extraction in the country.



Research has been done into the family histories of the people most involved with the quarries and works at Long Itchington, Harbury, Stockton and Bishops Itchington. The personalities range from local farmers and landowners to men from further afield who developed the industry and moneyed investors who had a hand in the finance of these activities.

You can discover what life was like for the local people who worked in the quarries and how much influence the industry had on our town and villages from records written in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. You can see how the relatively new interest in health and safety gradually improved conditions and marvel at the courage and strength of the workers of times gone by. There are many stories of accidents and dangers.

Perhaps you will discover that your own family name is on the 1891 census and there may well be records of where they lived too.

People have very kindly offered us their memories of the more recent industrial activity and we have some fascinating audio and video contributions available for visitors to enjoy.

Also on show will be artefacts, photographs, maps that have been lent to us and some references to railway and canal transport. On special days during the exhibition period which finishes on September 30<sup>th</sup>, we will be exhibiting an exciting collection of models made and kindly shown by Glen McBirnie who has also offered some of his books for sale featuring road vehicles used by the industry.



We are very grateful to Cemex and Rugby Group Benevolent Fund for supporting this exhibition and especially their historian, John Frearson. John will be giving a talk at Tithe Place on June 28<sup>th</sup> (7.30pm) and we will have on sale his newly published books "Kaye's Lime and Cement Works, Long Itchington, Southam" and "Charles Nelson and Co., Lime and Cement Works, Stockton".

We are sure there will be something of interest for everyone who visits us.

## **Some Volunteer Feedback**

When we moved the Collection to Vivian House basement just over two years ago, one of our immediate objectives was to use this town centre location to make the Collection more accessible to the public. We started to organise a series of themed exhibitions, and to open on a couple of mornings a week. To help with the research, 'steward' the exhibitions and 'meet and greet' our

visitors, we needed to recruit some willing volunteers, and were very lucky to have two local ladies, Chris Holding and Chris Jerome join the team. Both have been closely involved in the work we have been doing on the Centenary of World War 1, and during our most recent exhibition, Chris Holding has been helping to create the sense of life on the Home Front.

Chris tells us: *"I have thoroughly enjoyed being a Steward for the last 12 months at Vivian House and I have met some fascinating people from Southam and surrounding areas.*

*It has been a very worthwhile experience and some of the stories related to me by our visitors have been very interesting and gives us an insight into Southam life in the earlier years. We were very grateful to a lot of people donating various items for these exhibitions and hope that they will continue.*

*If anyone else is interested in volunteering at these Exhibitions please come and pay us a visit to see what we actually do. Many thanks to Linda, Val, Chris J and Bernard for a very enjoyable time."*

Here we see Chris playing her part in the 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' exhibition that ran from January to the end of April this year.



Meanwhile Chris Jerome, has been immersing herself in the work of creating a WWI Centenary archive for Southam. Here she tells us more about this work, and how you can get involved:

*"We are creating a Centenary Archive for Southam, not only the stories of the fallen soldiers of the town that are depicted on the War Memorial in the churchyard, but also any recollections of your forbears during and after WW1.*

*The archive will contain information in three folders of not only the stories of our soldiers, but also photographs and other memorabilia.*

*We plan to use these as a focal point of our exhibition in 2018 to mark the centenary of the*

*end of the First World War. So if you have anything hidden away, however small, we would love to create a story around your ancestors. Please get in touch with us by email or call into Vivian House on a Tuesday morning 10am – 12pm."*



*Dedication of Southam's War memorial*

If you would like to find out more about volunteering with Southam Heritage Collection, do please contact us, or call into Vivian House any Tuesday or Saturday morning between 10am and 12 noon.

## Website Developments

Hopefully you will have book-marked our web site [www.southamheritage.org](http://www.southamheritage.org) and are checking it regularly for updates. You may have noticed that we have recently added a new section called "Southam History" to the main menu.



This new section is intended to provide a series of short illustrated articles about specific aspects of Southam's History.

We have also included in the section audio recordings from interviews we have participated in on local radio. We hope this section of the website will grow quite rapidly so please take a look and re-visit regularly to see what has been added.

If you have a story that you think might be suitable for the website's Southam History page, please forward it to us – ideally with a few relevant photographs. We won't promise to use all articles we receive, but you never know, you could soon find your article published on the web.

## Documenting the Collection

We have now catalogued over 5,500 items and we have a digital image of perhaps ¼ of them. We are trying to extend this digital record by scanning

and photographing documents and objects whenever possible. This takes time and skill, and requires familiarity with scanning, digital photography and editing of tif, jpeg and pdf files, which not everyone is comfortable with.

We have some items in the Collection that present particular challenges. These are very old written documents like property deeds and apprenticeship agreements. Typically these documents were written on parchment or vellum and may have been folded up tightly for several hundred years. This means they are difficult to handle, not necessarily because they are delicate but because they have very strong folds in them and are quite large (perhaps a metre square). In



recent months we have been given or loaned a number of these documents, most of which relate to old properties in Southam, so the need to be able to record them digitally has become more urgent - they certainly won't fit on our A3 scanner!

We sought advice from the Warwickshire Records Office and as a result we set about laying out the documents on the floor weighed down with 2lb weights from the Collection and a number of flat irons (!). We then set up our photographic lighting and a digital camera with a good lens. Much to our delight we were able to take some fantastic photographs of the entire documents from a distance of about 5 feet. This means that not only do we have a digital copy, which minimises the need for physical handling, but we can navigate around the documents on a computer screen and magnify specific words or phrases to help interpret what they are actually saying.

We have now used this method for the deeds relating to Gill Hopkins' house in Abbey Lane and we hope to do the same for a large pile of deeds relating to the Black Dog Inn which we have been given recently. If you have deeds relating to your old property which you would be happy to loan to us for a short period we would be delighted to capture them digitally for the Collection.

## French Street Market

On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April we opened the museum to coincide with the French Street Market in

Southam town centre. As a result we had our busiest day ever, with more than 50 people visiting the exhibition in Vivian House.

It was wonderful to see Southam town centre so busy at this special event, and we were pleased that so many of the visitors to the market took the trouble to visit us as well. We are advised by Southam First that in view of its popularity the French Market is set to become an annual event for the town, so if you missed it this year, be sure to watch out for the date of next year's event.

## Shakespeare Celebrations

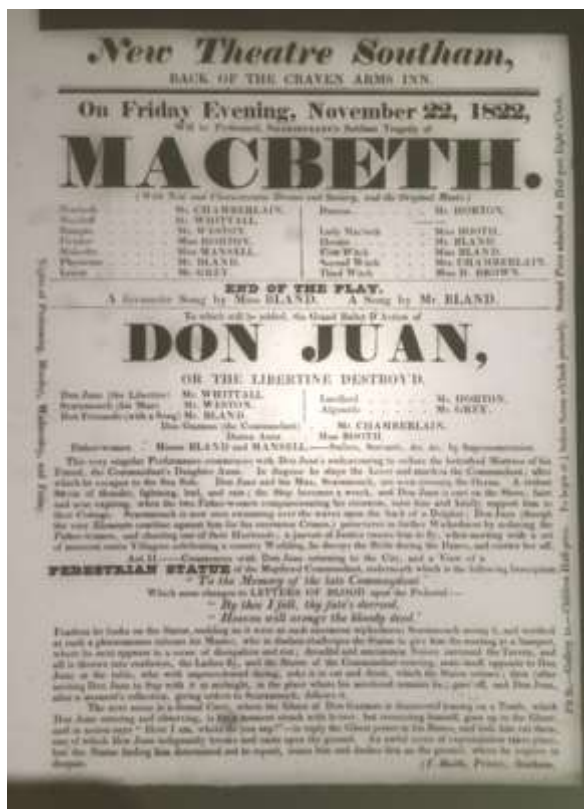
By Val Brodie

There was some excitement around SHC when we were asked to contribute to the BBC's *Shakespeare on Tour* project part of the commemoration of 400 years since the bard's death. Numerous local radio stations across the country honed in on historical, Shakespeare-related stories and BBC Coventry and Warwickshire, whose area encompasses Stratford, Shakespeare's home town, gave it a big shot all one week in March. This not only gave SHC a local 'voice' on the airwaves and coverage on the excellent BBC *Shakespeare on Tour* website, but when the programme reporter asked us to comment on an 1822 playbill from Southam Theatre of a performance of *Macbeth*, we knew we had to learn fast; this was a window into Southam's past that we knew absolutely nothing about!

The playbill, (see next page,) states 'New Theatre' and gives directions 'Back of the Craven Arms Inn'. The Craven Arms was an important coaching inn which could stable 80 horses. After speculation by some folk that this 1822 'New Theatre' was the now disused Court House, Bernard and Linda, through detailed research, managed to dispel that idea when they established that in 1822 the Court House had not yet been built! So we are left to speculate that, as was traditional at coaching inns during the 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 'theatre' was some converted out building, brew house, barn or gathering room.

Our research in conjunction with the British Library produced a number of other 1822 Southam posters and it became apparent that the theatre company had been resident in Southam from late November 1822 to New Years Day. The company consisted of thirteen players led by the actor-manager Mr Chamberlain and this versatile ensemble performed farce, melodrama, serious drama, Shakespeare, plus comic songs, dances and sketches. Further research in Warwick Record Office and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives showed that earlier in the year Mr Chamberlain's company had played a summer season in Warwick where their posters appealed

to the 'Nobility, Gentry and Public at large' for patronage; we can deduce from this that Mr Chamberlain's players were a reasonably top notch provincial troupe.



The playbill reflects the fashion of the times, very similar to those produced in London in the 1810s-20s. The evening began with *Macbeth* (which would have been cut in length), next came two solo songs and the evening concluded with *Don Juan* a ripping story of the infamous libertine and his dramatic downfall. I have estimated from the playbills that in six weeks the company performed about thirty plays plus numerous songs – they must have been very good at memorising text!

These performances took place in the evening so we might speculate that they were for people from the immediate locality and those staying at the inn. It was a time before the coming of the railways so horse and carriage was the mode of transport. How far people travelled on cold, dark evenings is something to speculate upon - from Stoneythorpe or Shuckborough for the upper classes maybe, or in from the villages for the farming and land-owning members of society? Tickets could be bought in town. It was two shillings for the 'pit', and one shilling for the 'gallery', with children half price: quite an expense at a time when a farm labourer or workman might earn twenty shillings per week.

Theatre historians have chartered in detail theatre history in London at this time as there is much evidence available from the newspapers, but little is known about the provinces especially early 19c rural areas. This is the beginning of a new area of theatrical and social investigation for SHC. Using

details from the playbill, Linda has worked out at which house, and with which family, the actors had their theatrical 'digs' – for those households it would be added income. We can only speculate on the excitement the coming of the players had upon this small, but at that time vibrant, coaching town. And taking part in the BBC Shakespeare Celebrations was for us, 200 years on, very exciting!

## Cardall's Corner

We hope you enjoy reading the monthly 'Cardall's Corner' articles that are published for us (free of charge) in the Southam edition of the District Advertiser. We receive a lot of positive feedback about these articles, which provide interesting snippets of history about Southam and area.

The articles are written by various contributors and are now available to read again on our website [www.southamheritage.org](http://www.southamheritage.org). We are always happy to receive material from new authors, so if you have a short story to tell about an aspect of our local history, please do get in touch. The articles need to be about 500 words long, and we require a good quality photograph to accompany them.

## Dates for Your Diary

**Spring Bank Holiday Monday 30<sup>th</sup> May Carnival Day:** don't miss the opening of our new exhibition 'Cementing Relations in Southam'. The exhibition will be open on Tuesday and Saturday mornings from 10am to 12 noon and run until the Autumn.

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June Members Only 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Social:** hosted by Jackie Graham and the Cardall family at Beech Loft (Rene Cardall's former home), members will shortly be receiving their personal invitation to this garden party.

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm at Tithe Place:** "The History of the Lime and Cement Industry of Southam" an illustrated talk by John Frearson, local historian and archivist for Cemex. Entry by donation on the evening. (Public event.)

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July 10.30am at Tithe Place:** "The Shaping of Southam" an illustrated talk by Bernard Cadogan, local historian and chairman of Southam Heritage Collection. Entry by donation on the morning. Coffee & refreshments available from the Tithe Place Café. (Public event.)

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September Annual General Meeting and social:** 7.30pm in the Congregational Church lounge, Wood Street. Public meeting – everyone welcome!

# Southam Heritage Collection

Vivian House, 21 Market Hill, Southam, CV47 0HE

[www.southamheritage.org](http://www.southamheritage.org) email: [southamheritage@hotmail.com](mailto:southamheritage@hotmail.com)



## **General Information & Contacts:**

The Collection belongs to the people of Southam. It is managed by Trustees and a Committee of the Friends of the Cardall Collection. Membership of the Friends is open to anyone with an interest in the history of Southam and the surrounding area. If you would like to find out how you can support our work, please telephone either the Chairman, Bernard on 01926 613503 or Secretary Linda on 01926 814214. Alternatively, you can email us on:

[southamheritage@hotmail.com](mailto:southamheritage@hotmail.com) or message us via our Facebook page "Southam Heritage Collection". (If you are a Facebook user, please 'Like' and Share our page to help spread the word about Southam and its heritage.)

## **Opening Times at the Basement, Vivian House, Market Hill:**

We are open on Tuesday mornings between 10am and 12 noon. When our exhibitions are on, we also open on Saturday mornings. We can open at other times by arrangement. Please note access to the Vivian House basement is via stairs, so may be difficult for those with mobility problems. If you would like to arrange a private visit, please contact Bernard on 01926 613503.

## **Volunteering, Membership, Donations:**

If you would like to join the Friends please contact us and we will send you an application form. The form includes a Gift Aid Declaration that taxpayers are asked to sign to enable us to reclaim the tax you have paid on your subscription or donation. Membership is renewable on 1st October each year. Donations are welcome at any time! Cheques should be made payable to 'Friends of the Cardall Collection'. You can also donate online at [mydonate.bt.com](http://mydonate.bt.com)

## **Southam "Walk and Talk":**

A short guided tour of Southam on level footpaths to see some of its most interesting buildings, and hear something about their history, followed by an opportunity for tea and chat at a town centre venue. Available for groups of up to a maximum of 20 people, the Walk and Talk lasts about 2 hours and costs £5 per person. Contact: Linda on 01926 814214.

## **Presentations, Talks, Exhibitions:**

We can attend one of your group meetings or visit your premises and give a presentation and talk about aspects of Southam's history tailored to your interests. Contact Bernard on 01926 613503 or Linda on 01926 814214 to discuss your requirements. (A fee will be charged by agreement.) If you have any artefacts, documents or photographs that you would be prepared to loan for one of our forthcoming exhibitions (see Newsletter for details), we would love to hear from you.

## **Events & Festivals:**

If you would like us to have a stall at your event or festival please contact Jenny on 01926 814643

## **200 Club:**

Tickets cost just £5 per annum, and your number is entered into a monthly draw. The prize is £10 each month, increasing substantially in November and May depending on the number of tickets sold. All proceeds go towards supporting the work of the Friends. Enquiries to Jenny on 01926 814643

## **Copies of Photographs:**

We have a growing archive of photographs of Old Southam and surrounding area. Copies are available to purchase. All enquiries to Bernard on 01926 613503