

Southam Heritage Collection

Tithe Place, High St, Southam 01926 613503 Registered Charity No 1173033



NEWSLETTER

No 28: Winter 2021

Chairman's Update

Although we've been open for some time now, both as a shop and a Museum, things are not yet back to 'normal'. Our second exhibition of 2021 is on display, and the first 2022 exhibition opens on 22nd January. We have a full set of volunteers keen to engage with visitors and are now opening 4 mornings per week having added Thursday to the list. However, changes in people's behaviour and the restrictions imposed by the pandemic are having a lasting effect. It will be some time before our visitor numbers are back to pre-Covid levels.

Many businesses and charities are experiencing the same problems. In Tithe Place the Library is not back to its previous level of activities and we have had shutdowns of the Café imposed by Orbit, which affects footfall. A drop in visitor numbers means a drop in revenue which can be a serious problem, but all is not lost.

We have invested in new technology so we can now accept payments by card (see article below) and we have recently opened an online shop, so you can now purchase our books, calendars & cards etc via a link on our website.

In the Autumn we continued with our usual activities, including our AGM at the Congregational Church on October 12th and a fund-raising coffee morning in Harbury on a snowy November 27th. We also took part in the Book Festival and Christmas Lights Switch On events, and have regularly refreshed our window displays – take a look next time you're passing.

Two new volunteers have joined us, Mick Smart and Roland Rafell. Mick is helping two mornings each week creating electronic records of all our Collection items. Over 80% of the original Collection now has a digital record, but much remains to be done. Roland is enthusiastically engaging with visitors in the Exhibition Room.

We have had the odd problem of course, including yet another water leak from the plumbing in the room above, this time into the Exhibition Room. It is only a few months since we received a payment

of £500 as compensation from Orbit for the damage to boxes and Collection items in the Project Room from a water leak. Fortunately, this time the damage was only to a ceiling tile. Copious amounts of water dropped into the middle of the Exhibition room, but thankfully it missed our stock of books, cards and exhibition items. The mess was very speedily dealt with and the leak fixed by the on-site Orbit support team.



Finally, I must mention that our 2022 Calendar was again funded by generous sponsorship from local businesses. It is selling well, and is available at Southam Post Office when we are closed. We are running our normal Christmas Raffle which will be drawn on Thursday 23rd December, and all prizes have again been generously donated.

We wish all our members a very Happy Christmas, and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

New Technology

Selling merchandise (books, cards, calendars, etc) has become an important source of income for us. However, fewer and fewer people are making purchases with cash these days, as contactless card payments increase in popularity. We lost a few



sales in the Exhibition Room because people had no cash on them. So following some research, we decided to purchase a credit/debit card reader. This now allows us to take payments by card and also from smart phone wallets such as Apple

Southam Heritage Collection (incorporating the Cardall Collection and Alan Griffin photographic archive) 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 is housed at Tithe Place in the centre of Southam, where it can be displayed, used and appreciated by the general public, local history societies, schools, reminiscence groups and researchers.

Pay and Google Pay. The device can use both Wi-Fi and cellular technology so can be used at external events as well as at Tithe Place. There is a fairly minor 1.6% transaction charge on each purchase.

The Exhibition Room volunteers are finding the device easy to use and we have already accepted a fair number of payments using it. There is no longer any excuse for people not being able to buy something because they don't have cash.

Having the technology to accept card payments has also enabled us to set up an online 'shop'. People browsing our website can now pay for their purchases by card online, and we then arrange to deliver or post to them. We anticipate this type of sale transaction will continue to grow in 2022. You have to keep up with the times, even if you're dealing with the past!

Membership

From its 'peak' year of 2014/15 when we had 73 members, membership of Southam Heritage Collection as a group remains steady at around 50. Sadly we have lost several loyal supporters over the years, but many of you have been with us since inception, and we are very grateful for your continuing support.

This year we took the decision to simplify subscription payments, and it now costs £10 per person per annum regardless of age or relationship status. Membership subscriptions become due on 1st October each year, and those who attend the AGM in mid-October normally take the opportunity to pay their subs at that time. However, some members do decide not to renew, and some simply forget, so membership lapses if, following two reminders, subs remain unpaid by 31st December.

To save on administration, we urge those members who intend to support us for several years, to set up a Standing Order to pay their membership subs on 1st October each year.

If you are not a member, and would like to support us by joining, then do please get in touch (see back page for contact details). Membership entitles you to vote on proposals at our AGM, receive regular updates on the group's activities, and attend members-only social events.

Latest Exhibitions

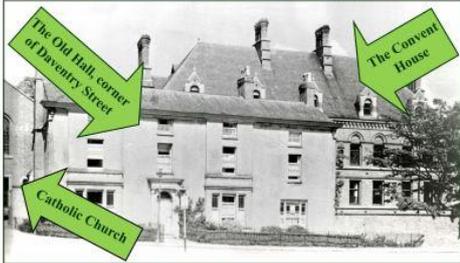
Our end of year heritage exhibition features twelve fascinating old photographs of historic Southam as used in our 2022 calendar. The exhibition depicts, for example, when the Welsh Road windmill was first built, what happened to Southam Workhouse and how Warwick Road and Market Hill looked in the early 20th century.

The Exhibition Room in Tithe Place is open on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday morning from 10 am to 12 noon right up until Christmas Eve, for any last minute present-buying from our range of books and cards.

The 2022 Spring Exhibition is titled "The Sister's School" and opens officially on Saturday January 22nd, see the sample poster below.

The Sister's School

Towards the end of the 19th century, Southam, once a prosperous market town, was starting to decline. The principal reason being the Victorian railways bypassed Southam in favour of Leamington Spa and Rugby. The plight of poor and orphaned children in the town greatly troubled Father Grosvenor from the Roman Catholic Priory at Princethorpe.



In January 1876, six German Sisters arrived from the Poor Child Jesus established in Germany by Mother Clare Fey, to live in The Hall and began setting up an orphanage. In September 1876, five more Sisters arrived to undertake embroidery as a source of revenue to support the children and convent.

Following the reprinting of Mary Rock's book about St Mary's Roman Catholic School and Convent in Daventry Street, this first exhibition of the new year will bring to life the story of 'The Convent' and Southam's third school, funded by religious embroidery and donations. The exhibition will culminate in a children's colouring competition at Easter.

Anyone with memories to share about Southam Convent and St Mary's School is very welcome to contribute the information to our archives.

Fundraising Activities

We try to take part in as many town events as possible, and on Saturday 18th December we have a stall at the new Southam Indoor Market at The Grange Hall, selling our merchandise and raising our profile.

We also had a stall at the Book Festival in The Graham Adams Centre in October and had a very successful day selling cards, calendars and books. Here we used our new credit/debit card reader for the first time off site.

On 27th November we ran the Saturday Coffee Morning at the Tom Hauley Room behind Harbury Church. This was quite well attended, despite the

snowy weather, and our loyal volunteers baked cakes, ran a raffle, and served teas and coffees to the Harbury Coffee Morning regulars. We raised £106 from this event – this was very welcome, but was much reduced from previous years.

On 28th November we were open during the Southam Christmas Lights Switch On event, and made quite a few sales in the Exhibition Room.

All these activities not only raise money to pay our overheads at Tithe Place, but also maintain our presence in the public eye, both in and around Southam.

Our Christmas Raffle has been well supported, and the winner tickets will be drawn by Southam's Mayor, Graham Foster, on Thursday 23rd December. Tickets at £1 each will be available until the day of the draw. Prizes have all been provided by local businesses and individuals:

1st prize: Christmas Hamper. The Original Factory Shop in Southam and Aldi have sponsored the £45 hamper this year.

2nd prize: Meat and Ice Cream from Napton Water Buffalo.

3rd prize: Parsley Box chicken home meal for two.

4th prize: Afternoon tea at Carl's Kitchen, the Bistro in Tithe Place.

5th prize: Gift Box of 3 special ciders from Napton Cidery.

Plus five other lovely prizes.

Southam Airfield

In our previous newsletter we mentioned having contact with a relative of the post war owner of Southam Airfield, Percy Waller. That owner transformed the airfield (now the Flying Fields housing estate,) into a farm and lived there for the rest of his life with his Dutch wife (see photo).



Bernard was able to go down to Bath to pick up the items that we had been offered, and also to look through 4 years of his wartime diaries, photos and other items. We now have in the Collection a large

box of deeds for the Airfield going as far back as 1740 - a mixture of parchment and typewritten documents – some quite difficult to read.

The documents are waiting for someone with the time and skills to read and catalogue them.

We were not able to acquire the wartime diaries as these had deep sentimental value for the owners. However we have been offered the opportunity to create electronic copies of them. For that we need to devise a way of doing it quickly (within a day or two) down in Bath, and there would be a need to purchase suitable scanning equipment, for which funding would be required.

The diaries are intriguing, and to give an example there was one entry where Squadron Leader Waller describes how he was banking his aircraft and suddenly realised he was slipping out of the airplane because his harness was not secured! He quickly managed to right the aircraft and secure his harness, but the experience left him somewhat shaken!

Some Recent Acquisitions

St James Church office has been undergoing a “de-clutter” and as a result they have donated a number of items to the Collection which have shone some interesting light on the history of the town. (More items have gone to the Diocesan and Warwick Records Offices.)

The items we have received are many and varied including some that relate to the history of the Convent – not something one would expect to find in a Church of England office. There is also a map of every grave in St James Churchyard prepared in 1917 by Frank Herbert. It shows the grave locations and orientation and includes many that were removed when the churchyard wall was reduced in height.

There is also a complete list of readable gravestone inscriptions done in 1981. There are two copies of a Poor Law poster dating back to the time of George III, and some beautiful pencil drawings of St James Church including the one shown here.

Although it is difficult to see in this copy, the life size picture shows sheep wandering in the graveyard and what appears to be quite a wide roadway at the eastern end of the church where the back of the houses on Market Hill are now located.



A total of 60 items have been received so far and we understand there could be more donations from the Church office in the coming months.

Southam Timeline Project

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, the Timeline Project aims to document and display the most significant dates and eras of Southam's history.

We have made some progress with the Timeline book and now have several chapters written – thanks to the sterling efforts and enthusiasm of volunteer Richard Clarke. We have also decided on most of the significant dates and eras for the wall display, and will be aiming to get the posters prepared and printed next Spring.

There is still a lot of work to do, but the Timeline Project is on course to become the definitive guide to Southam's history.

Money Matters

The Financial Year end was on 31st August 2021 and the accounts were once again prepared pro bono (no charge) by Grineaux Accountants on Market Hill, for which we are very grateful.

The accounts for the past two financial years have been affected by the Covid pandemic that reduced our activities to some extent. However our balance sheet remains healthy. Most of the negative financial effects of the pandemic were mitigated by Stratford District Council agreeing to waive our rent during lockdown.

In a normal year (whatever that is!) we need to raise approximately £8,000 per annum to keep doing what we do. That covers rent and exhibition expenses, and the cost of printing new books etc. However, we have now built up a good reserve fund to sustain the Collection, from the cumulative efforts of our volunteers over the past few years.

Partnership Working

Three of our Committee members (Linda, Pam and Rowan) are also members of a long-standing volunteer group called Southam Civic Ideas Forum (SCIF). This group takes on practical projects for the benefit of the townsfolk, and we work closely with them.

Current SCIF projects include revising and reprinting the popular Town Trail and Holy Well Walk leaflets, (which involved some additional historical research), organising the installation of the new Visitor Information Point in Tithe Place, (the leaflet stand is now stocked and kept tidy by

Southam Heritage volunteers,) and the renovation and relocation of the Southam Stories Sculpture.

The Southam Stories Sculpture is the large oak structure on the front lawn of Tithe Place, facing High Street. It suffered some damage during the construction of Tithe Lodge, and the 'feet' of the sculpture have started to rot. Southam Town Council has kindly agreed to fund its renovation. It is also planned to move it to the Park Lane lawn of the Tithe Place grounds, so that it is not so hidden from view underneath the mature trees.

At the same time, the information plaques on the sculpture which are badly 'weathered' are to be updated and replaced with new versions. These will include some information about the history of the town provided by Southam Heritage Collection.

SCIF is always on the lookout for new volunteers (as are we!) so if you like getting involved in practical work around the town, do get in touch.

Window Displays

We have two very accessible public windows, one facing the High Street and one in the Tithe Place atrium. It is our great pleasure to use these to join in with events going on around the town. This year, although the scarecrow trail (with the theme 'Freedom') was cancelled, we still provided a 'scarecrow' in our High Street window.



Our display featured the early 20th Century suffragette movement. This turned out to be very timely, because it went up on the day the Taliban took back Afghanistan and women's freedom was suppressed once again.

Our Book Festival window display featured Southam's well known and much loved children's author, Bee Blackwell, who apart from writing books, also created the Southam Mice and sold them at events for charity.

If anyone would like to design a window display with a heritage theme, or has an idea for one, please let Linda know.

'Lockdown Lyrics' Living History

One of our latest books is an historical record, through poetry, of how eight Southam poets lived with twelve months of Covid-19 Lockdown between April 2020 and March 2021.

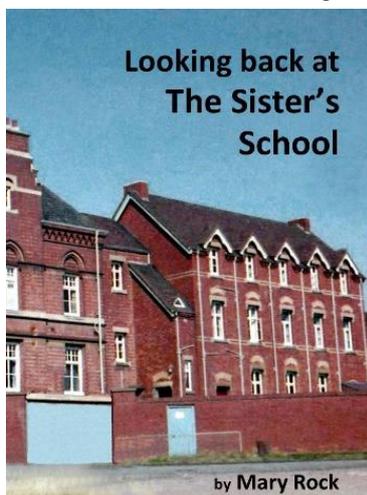
It follows how each month they continued to write supporting each other by email and Zoom, until they realised they were all looking through similar eyes on a similar world.

This is living history at its best and the book of those poems will prove to be an interesting historical document recording the effects of the pandemic on the psyche of the average person: their anxieties, hopes, introspection, etc. A thought-provoking book to sit on your coffee table for Christmas visitors to browse through! Available from us at £5 per copy, its printing was sponsored by local Southam businesses, which enables all sale proceeds to go to charity.

The Sister's School: Southam Convent

Mary Rock wrote the story of the Sister's School associated with the Convent back in 1998. She had been the school secretary for St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Daventry Road for many years. A great grandmother, she was born in Stratford-on-Avon in 1933 and was still living in Southam when she died in June 2019, aged 86.

Together with Irene Cardall, she wrote many of the earlier Cardall's Corner history articles for the Southam Advertiser, which are now archived in the Collection. Also with Irene, she was one of the original



committee members of the Southam History Group in the late 20th century, when they first held their monthly meetings at the newly built St Mary's School.

Having sold all the earlier editions of her book, we obtained permission from Mary's family to organise a reprint. This book is now available to buy, updated with a bright new cover and including some additional information about the Sisters who taught at St Mary's School in the early 1900s.

Southam College History Lesson

On November 5th Linda went to Southam College to present a Year 8 history lesson about the English Civil War and Southam's part in it.

Her granddaughter had mentioned the Battle of Southam to her teacher, and the book her grandmother had written about the battle. A letter of invitation from the School duly arrived at the Heritage Collection, and was speedily accepted.

Linda gave a brief introduction about the Civil Wars, providing a study sheet for the students, followed by maps of Southam showing why, where and how the battle of Southam occurred. Finally the students were given a lobster pot helmet, buff coat and armour to try on, much to everyone's interest and amusement. This was a time for photographs and merriment, and perhaps it will help the students remember their history lesson.



Photo of Battle of Southam re-enactment 2013

Southam Heritage Collection has spent many years trying to engage with Southam College's history teachers and students, so it was a very welcome opportunity, and a real boost to hear the afternoon lesson being described as the 'best history lesson ever'. The teacher asked if this could be done again next year, so we will wait to hear what next year brings.

Happy & Healthy New Year to all our readers!



General Information:

Southam Heritage Collection belongs to the people of Southam. It incorporates the Cardall Collection, the Alan Griffin photographic archive and other items donated by local people. It is managed by Trustees and a Committee. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the history of Southam and the surrounding area. If you would like to discuss how you can support our work, please telephone either the Chairman, Bernard on 01926 613503 or Secretary Linda on 01926 814214 or call in to see us when we are open. Alternatively, you can visit our website www.southamheritage.org email us on: southamheritage@hotmail.com or message us via our Facebook page. (If you are a Facebook user, please 'Like' and follow our page and share our posts to help spread the word.)

Exhibition Opening Times at Tithe Place, High Street, Southam:

Our exhibition room is in the main atrium of Tithe Place, High Street opposite the Library entrance. We are open on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings from 10am to 12 noon. We also have two large exterior windows with heritage displays that are regularly updated.

Volunteering, Membership, Donations:

If you would like to become a member of the group please contact us and we will send you an application form. Once a member, you could then let us know if you are able to volunteer any time or skills, but please note, volunteering is not compulsory. The application form includes a Gift Aid Declaration that will enable us to reclaim the tax 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 'Southam Heritage Collection' or paid direct to our Lloyds Account Sort Code: 30 99 13 Account No: 31344868. Please also nominate SHC as your chosen charity when buying online through Smile Amazon, and we will receive a small donation from Amazon (at no cost to you) every time you shop.

Southam "Walk and Talk":

We can organise 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. Normally available for groups of up to a maximum of 20 people, the Walk and Talk lasts in total 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 donation will be requested, by agreement.)

If you have any artefacts, documents or photographs that you would be prepared to loan for one of our forthcoming exhibitions we would love to hear from you.

200 Club:

Our 200 Club lottery runs from June to May each year. Tickets cost just £5 per annum and you can join at any time. Your numbers are entered into a monthly draw. The cash prize is £10 each month, increasing substantially in November and May depending on the number of tickets sold. All proceeds go to help with our running costs. Enquiries to our Treasurer, Pam on 01926 814923

Cards, Books, Photographs and Prints:

We have a growing archive of photographs of Old Southam and surrounding area, and copies are available to purchase. We also sell various other items to raise funds, including greetings cards, calendars, a range of local history and second hand books and other merchandise. You can now purchase some of these items online via our website, and we do take credit / debit cards as well as cash in our Exhibition Room.

Thank you for reading this Newsletter.

Please feel free to pass it on to your friends, relatives and colleagues.