

# Southam Heritage Collection

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



## NEWSLETTER

### No 30: Autumn / Winter 2022

#### Chairman's Update

Here we are back in the much cooler and somewhat wetter days of Autumn with Winter fast approaching. We also seem to be facing somewhat testing times nationally although I have to say that fortunately at the Southam Heritage Collection the future does not look that bad.

Financially despite all the challenges of covid we are in reasonable shape, although I don't want to be tempting providence as these days it seems like things can change almost as fast as the weather. Visitor numbers are still slightly down and we are not receiving as many requests for talks as previously, but things are slowly improving. Whether they ever get back to the same levels as pre-covid remains to be seen. Many organisations are finding themselves in similar or worse positions.

One thing that is changing though is that we are losing Pam McConnell our long-standing Treasurer. Pam is standing down from the Treasurer role and also a number of other positions. Richard Clarke has taken over organising the Cardall's Corner articles published in the District Advertiser and our web site each month; Sue Nason, who looks after our 200 Club, has taken on the role of Membership Secretary and Pam is making a list of other work she has been doing so that these items do not go astray.



**However**, the one role which we have not been able to fill yet is that of Treasurer. We do need to fill this role, and to do so urgently. The job is not a particularly demanding one in itself and anyone who is happy with numbers and ideally has had some exposure to Microsoft Excel should be able to carry it out without any problem – you certainly don't need to be a qualified accountant. We can provide training and support to anyone who might be interested, so please can I ask you to think about whether you could try taking on this role or maybe you have a neighbour or friend who would

be interested? Please give it some urgent thought. Finally on this topic let me express my thanks to Pam for all her support and work for the Collection over nearly 17 years. We really are grateful for her significant contribution, and we wish her all the very best and we look forward to continuing to see her as she is remaining a member and volunteer.

As I write we have just opened our third exhibition of the year featuring the 2023 Calendar and we are very much starting to focus on the Christmas season. You will find brief descriptions of various things happening over the next few months in the remainder of this newsletter. The Christmas season is probably our most important fund-raising time of the year and we have not only our 2023 Calendar and also new Christmas Cards and new Books on sale, but also tickets for our Christmas Raffle. Please call in and see if there is something you might like to purchase for a friend or family member.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your support over the past year and I do hope we can rely on that continuing as we move forward into what could be a challenging 2023.

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

#### Winter Exhibition

This year our third exhibition is a little different in that it is a hybrid. Normally around the end of October we change the poster display to focus on the pictures included in the 2023 Calendar but this year we have done something a bit different.

We have kept the 20 posters from the Timeline Exhibition and placed them on one side of the room to form a permanent display, ideal for new residents and visitors to the town. Alongside, we have our annual



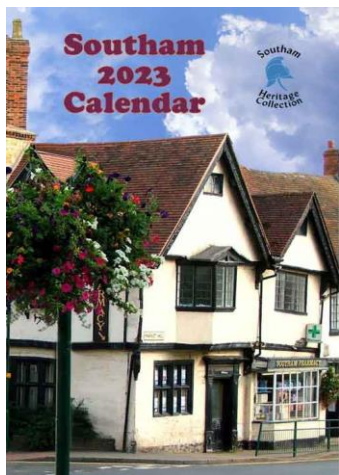
*Southam Heritage Collection (incorporating the Cardall Collection and Alan Griffin photographic archive) comprises artefacts, documents, photographs and memorabilia associated with Southam and its surrounding villages. The County Museum Service inspectors agree that it is an important record of the 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.*

Christmas Exhibition focussing on the 2023 calendar. These interesting posters feature a large photograph of all 12 monthly pictures used from our archives with a further snippet of information, so you get double the benefit from a visit.

Of course, there are also the cabinet displays, the books and cards, raffle tickets and a large number of pre-owned history related books available for a small donation.

## Calendar

The 2023 Calendar is now available – it was actually printed back in August, but we had to wait quite some time to get the wire hinge inserted as the company that used to provide this went out of business due to covid. We have been having some discussions about a change in format for future years and if you have any suggestions or preferences on style, size etc perhaps you could let us know.



Printing the Calendar would not be possible without the fantastic support of local businesses, and I really would like to thank them for their very generous support – the list includes:-

Alsters Kelley, Solicitors  
Below the Line, Graphic Designers  
Bowling Green Inn  
Brindley Twist Tafft & James, Solicitors  
Catteralls Coaches  
DFJ Hewer Builders Ltd  
Grineaux Accountants  
Hawkesford Estate Agents  
Reynolds Insurance Services Ltd  
Southam Carpets  
Southam & District Lions Club  
Southam Financial Planning Ltd  
TM & JM Grey, Builders

Please support them whenever you can.

The Calendar is available from Tithe Place when we are open or the Post Office, or online (including payment via credit/debit card) from our web site.

## Membership Subs Reminder

Our membership year runs from October to September. Many subscriptions have already been renewed including quite a few at the AGM held a

few weeks ago but if you haven't renewed yours, please could you do so as soon as possible.

Ideally, we would prefer memberships subs to be paid by standing order as that reduces the work involved each year, however if you would rather pay by cash, card or cheque then we are very happy to accept this in Tithe Place. Memberships not paid by Dec 31<sup>st</sup> will lapse.

## Christmas Raffle

Our very successful annual Christmas Hamper Raffle is once again set up in our atrium window to view. 1st prize is a Christmas Hamper donated by Tesco, Bicorn Miniatures and SHC members.



2nd prize is a Fruit and Vegetable Hamper donated by Shane from the Thursday Market, with a further 8 more brilliant prizes donated by generous local businesses and volunteers and we thank everyone for unhesitatingly giving us their support.

Tickets are on sale for £1 each (£5 book) from Tithe Place when we are open, or from committee members. The draw will take place in Tithe Place on Friday December 23rd at 11 am, so do come along

## AGM & Committee Changes

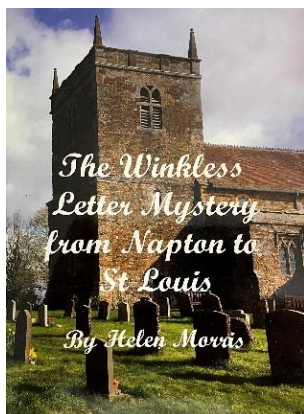
The Annual General Meeting took place on Tuesday Oct 4<sup>th</sup> at the Congregational Church Hall in Wood Street.

We had 14 people attending and 18 apologies. Bernard presented the annual report and Pam gave an overview of the accounts which had been inspected (free of charge) by Grineaux Accountants from Market Hill. Merchandise sales now make up nearly 30% of our income so this area is becoming very important for our continued financial health. As usual our 'rent' to Orbit (via Stratford District Council) is our biggest expense, being around 85% of the total. The Management Committee was re-elected en bloc with the

exception of Pam who was standing down. Following the formal proceedings we had good conversation with members over some refreshments.

Pam McConnell, Committee member of the Friends of the Cardall Collection, first as Secretary then as Treasurer, has stepped down from the Committee after nearly 17 years. Pam will continue offering support as a member and volunteer.

## Winkless Mystery



Helen Morris, one of our Trustees and a long-time member of the Collection was looking through some items when she came across a copy of a neat handwritten letter. The letter was dated 1848 and had been posted in St Louis in the USA! It was addressed to members of the Winkless family in

Napton and was basically a letter home from a man who had emigrated to the US as a member of the Mormon sect. Helen was fascinated by the details in the letter and set about finding out more about the Winkless family.

After several years of hard work Helen decided to put down all she had discovered in a small book which is now available from the Collection. This book tells the story of Thomas Winkless and the troubled times he lived in and how he and his family ended up so far away from home.

Although Helen tried very hard she was unable to discover how the Collection had come by a copy of the letter and whether or not the original still existed. She was therefore thrilled to discover just a few weeks after publication of her book that the original did exist and was in fact in the possession of a lady living in Leamington. Having contacted the lady she has agreed to donate the original copy to the Collection, so we now have the original plus what is effectively the envelope. Based on the stamps on the envelope we see the letter was posted on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1848, travelled 900 miles by horse probably to New York and crossed the Atlantic Ocean probably via a sailing ship to arrive in Liverpool by May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1848, followed by Leamington on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1848 – an incredible journey in such a short space of time.

It appears that the letter had been passed through the female lines for safe keeping, from Jean's great grandmother through the Line, Goodwin and Fitchett families to reach her today.

You can buy a copy of Helen's book at Tithe Place or online via our web site.

## Southam Stories Sculpture

A number of people have been asking what has happened to the wooden Southam Stories Sculpture that stood just outside Tithe Place and had been erected at the Millenium, having discovered that it had suddenly gone missing!

No need to worry. Sadly the Sculpture had become quite badly damaged having been placed under



several trees and on a piece of ground which had a tendency to retain water following rainstorms. This led to rotting of the wood both at the

very top of the Sculpture and in the feet in the ground. The Sculpture was in danger of becoming unsafe.

So one Saturday morning a group of volunteers got together and dismantled the Sculpture and loaded it into a van so that it could be taken back to the workshop where it was originally constructed.

The plan is that any rotting wood will be replaced and the Sculpture will be reinstalled a short distance away but this time on level concrete plinths to avoid it becoming waterlogged again. The work should have been completed by now but unfortunately it has been delayed. However it will be re-instated in the not too distant future and you will once again be able to see this unique monument from the High Street.

## Window Displays

We are very fortunate in having two very large windows (one external and one in the Atrium) available to display information from the Collection or elsewhere. This summer, with the archaeological interest in what has been happening on HS2 and local housing estate land, we have featured displays including from Archaeology Warwickshire, Warwickshire County Council's commercial archaeology team through Hilary Calow. A recent display is still available in our Exhibition Room where you can read about the amazing Roman finds on the Flying Fields estate.

Recently as part of the Southam Book Festival window competition, Linda decorated the High Street window with a Civil War display depicting our "Battle of Southam 1642" book plus our latest book "The Winkless Letter Mystery". Our window

received good reviews, which is our aim as well as supporting anything that goes on in the town centre. We're happy to report that the winner of the competition was the Community Hub and Café window at Galanos House. Our display stall selling publications at the Southam Book Festival itself was really excellent in both sales and conversations. It is well worth your while taking a minute to look in our windows as you go past since we try to make changes every couple of months.



We are always very interested to hear about any documents or items of local history or historically related activities of any local organisations. If you have any information, we would be happy to include it in one of these displays. Please contact Linda at our normal email address to discuss the possibilities.

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## Recent Acquisitions

As a museum we don't have a lot of space so we're careful not to aggressively pursue the acquisition of many new items, particularly large ones. However, that doesn't mean we aren't interested in having the opportunity to see things that people think could be relevant and then deciding whether or not they should be included in our collection. Below are three items that have come to our attention in different ways over recent months.

First there was an anonymous donation of a photograph which was left in a plastic bag outside our Exhibition Room door one morning. The photo apparently dates from 1918 and appears to be the Honours Graduates from St Johns College,



Cambridge. The photo does have the names of the men on it but unfortunately, they are all virtually illegible. We have been trying to identify the men in

the picture and also to understand the connection the picture has with Southam, but so far we are not making much progress despite help from St John's College itself. If you know anything about this photo or who may have donated it please contact us.

The second item was brought into the Exhibition Room one morning but unfortunately, we didn't make a note of who brought it in or ask any questions about it. The item is about 4 inches across and looks like it was a wooden container for a glass or perhaps a bottle but intriguingly on the reverse it says "Whist Drive 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize Nov 1946",



the number 173 and "Birdinbury German P.O.W. Camp" plus the initials which may be "J H R B". We have relatively little in the way of items from WW2 – apart from Rations Books and coupons and nothing relating to Prisoners of War. We really would like to know more about this item, such as who donated it; was it made by a PoW and is there a story attached to it connecting a local person to the PoW Camp at Birdinbury? If you know about this item, please get back in contact with us.

Earlier in this newsletter you will have read about the Winkless letter and how we have now been given the original letter. Below is a photo of the envelope portion of the letter – it is all a single piece of paper. This section shows the postage stamp



from the US and then, towards the top of the picture, the stamps upon arrival in both Liverpool and Leamington. The address is also very brief in comparison with today – simply John Winkless, Napton, near Southam,

England – no mention of a postcode!

And finally...

**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. We are a formally registered charity (England and Wales No. 1173033). 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](http://www.southamheritage.org) email us on: [southamheritage@hotmail.com](mailto: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 [shc200club@hotmail.com](mailto:shc200club@hotmail.com)

## **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.***