

THE DEREHAM ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

AGM 15th February 2018

Chairman's Report for 2017-18

When you elected your committee last February, you essentially elected a new committee. Some of us barely knew each other. We hadn't worked together before, and we certainly did not appreciate the workload we were taking on. I had expected that being your chairman would be easy and straightforward, but not a bit of it. Straight away we were faced with gentle, but firm, pressure from the landlord of the store which houses most of the Society's collections that it was time to move. And we had somehow to re-house the thousands of items into a much smaller room in the town hall, which the Town Council has generously offered.

This meant that the collections, which had been built up over many years, had to be rationalised. Every item had to be examined and evaluated according to our collecting policy and then we had to follow a rationalisation procedure as laid down by the Museums and Galleries Commission. We were also due to have our Accreditation as a museum re-assessed and approved which involved a mountain of paperwork.

At the same time, our programme of member's meetings continued, the Museum was opened regularly during the season, a Newsletter produced and our activities publicised to a wider audience.

So far, we are completely on target to meet our objectives according to a fairly tight timetable. Every item in our collection has been examined and evaluated and put into one of eight categories and made ready either for the move into what will become the new Dereham Archive Centre or held in the store for the time being and then offered to other museums. We are ready for the move and a quote from a very reputable removal firm has been accepted. Our Accreditation is on target for approval, the museum has been opened almost every day as advertised, a fine Newsletter has been produced regularly and our events have all been advertised through our printed programme and on the internet.

Now, how have we managed all this within the year?

The answer is that an absolutely superb band of volunteers has emerged just when we needed them most. It may seem invidious to single out individuals, but I must mention a few. Sue Walker White and Natalie Small took on the monumental task of evaluating our collection. Amanda Lovejoy has done fantastic work in managing our collections' records and Ken Hawkins has been a very effective Volunteer Co-ordinator and Newsletter Editor. Robena Brown has taken care of our copy of the Dereham Fakenham Times which we believe Archant will be willing to digitise, making articles retrievable by subject. It will then be a tremendous research resource. Julian Walker has proved indispensable with his hard

work in preparation for the relocation, and Bob Davies has been a great source of information about the collections' history. These seven deserve our praise and thanks. We are also indebted to Megan Denis, the Curator at Gressenhall, who has acted as our professional mentor and adviser. Later in the year Amanda took on the role as the Society's Secretary from Sue Walker White, and it is also very important that we do acknowledge the major contribution Sue has made to the Society over the years.

At the Museum, Sue also organised a new display on Hobbies, and a special thanks must go to our team of committed volunteers who staffed the museum regularly so that it could be opened again throughout the season from May to September.

We have assembled a splendid programme of illustrated talks for the year ahead, the museum will be opened regularly during the coming season, the Newsletter will continue, and we hope to encourage more people to join as members and to become involved both as volunteers and by attending our meetings.

In the longer term, we would like to see improvements to the museum, and I feel we should be more actively involved in conservation matters in the town. The heritage of Dereham is important to us, and we want to play our part in looking after it.

Peter Wade-Martins.

To finish Natalie has kindly agreed to say something about her work in the Archive and then Ken would like to talk about volunteering for the Society.