

## **Chairwoman's Report and combined Museum Report 2016**

I would like to express my thanks to the Society's committee for all their hard work over the year, and give a special thank you to our Town Council representative Councillor and this year's Dereham Mayor, Phillip Duigan and to our Museum Mentor Megan Dennis for all their help and support.

The Museum has held its own over this year with a total income of £707, a small increase over the previous year by £8. This was quite an achievement as we opened for one day less a week than we did last year. I wish to thank all those who volunteered in the museum last season and volunteers manager Rosemary Fraser. The museum could not survive without you. We are in need of more volunteers to man the museum and a new volunteer manager for the summer season, if anyone would like to help please get in touch with one of the committee.

The main museum exhibition for 2016 commemorated the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of 'Dereham's Forgotten Scientist' Dr William Hyde Wollaston. It was the result of joint research by Phillip Duigan and Sue Walker White over the winter and spring of 2015/16. We also kept the display commemorating the centenary of the Zeppelin Raid on the town in 1915 for a second year.

Last year the renewal of the museum's accreditation from the Arts Council became due in December. The Society's secretary Stef Spooner and Dinah Reed undertook the long and detailed procedure. We have been fortunate to have the support and advice of Simon Davies, Museum Consultant, as well as Megan on the compilation of the documents required. The process is not yet finalised but the bulk of the material has been submitted on line, and the new secretary will continue the work.

The museum will reopen on 6<sup>th</sup> May. The new exhibition for the coming seasons will look at the famous manufacturer 'Hobbies of Dereham'. It will be centred on the recent, very generous, gift to the museum by Mrs Dorothy Cambridge of her husband Alan's beautifully restored collection of Hobbies treadle fretsaws and tools. It will also feature an automaton 'Old Joe', who works a 1/5 model fretsaw, made by Mr Cambridge. More examples of his prize winning scale models of Hobbies machines will also be on display, items and photographs from the museums collections will also be exhibited.

Negotiations are still under way with the Town Council about the move of the collection and paper archive from Rash's Green to a new more central location in the Assembly Rooms. We aim to have this completed as soon as possible. When the arrangements are finalised we will be looking for volunteers to help us with the many and varied tasks required to get the archive installed and up and running again.

We have a very good selection of talks line-up for you this coming year thanks to the work of Steffi Spooner. We would like to thank Mrs Pat Boatwright for organising the evening refreshments throughout last year. Sadly, Pat cannot carry on doing this so could we please ask for volunteers that would be willing to help organise the refreshments for the evenings?

We are sorry that the pressures on the small committee have not allowed us to produce a newsletter this year. We aim to rectify this by working together and seeking input from the membership. If anyone would like to volunteer to help us with this we would be very thankful.

The Society is one of the founding members of 'Visit Dereham' a group of five local organisations that aim to promote Dereham as a centre for visitors to the area. We joint funded our first project, a run of 5000 leaflets with Mid Norfolk Railway and Dereham Windmill, in the spring advertising our three venues the parish church and the Dereham's new status as 'Walkers Are Welcome' town. The group have also launched a 'Visit Dereham' website and want to produce a new 'Heritage Trail' for the town in the future.

Our following on Facebook continues to grow and is proving a very useful way of sharing information about museum events and its collections. It is also a good way of gaining information back from local people and sharing memoires. It has proved particularly useful for identifying old photographs.

Our website [www.derehamhistory.com](http://www.derehamhistory.com) has seen another year of rapid growth from 3300 visits last year to 11600 this year. More information is continuing to be added to the website, with a members' section with an archive of past society newsletters.

The membership of DAS stands at 70.

Our Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/DerehamHistory/> followers have increased to 947.

Twitter <https://twitter.com/BonnersMuseum> followers have also grown to 914.

Sue Walker White  
Chairwoman DAS  
February 2017