

Waldringfield History Group (WHG)

Annual Report to the Parish Council

I had no difficulty in writing this annual report as the 2019/2020 Waldringfield History Group season has been one to remember!

We are a diverse, talented and interesting group of people with many skills between us and I can tell you that meetings over the last few months have seen new projects and ideas, much discussion, and some heated debate. If you are not a member and have any interest in local history at all, I strongly urge you to become one. Membership includes full access to our website.

What has caused all this excitement? If you haven't already heard the news, Waldringfield History Group is writing a book. And what a book it promises to be; not only the culmination of **twelve years** of research, winter talks, exhibitions, presentations, stories and dialogue but also an astonishing collection of photos, original illustrations, charts, maps and plans.

Our thanks go to Bob Crawley for all his hard work managing our extensive website and helping to store, categorise and update all the material we have. We could not have managed to write our book without his IT skills, persistence and determination.

We would particularly like to thank the Parish Council and other organisations (Waldringfield Sailing Club, Mark and Emma Barton at Waldringfield Boatyard, Steve Lomas at The Maybush, Ann and Rob Stock at Roberto Ices Ltd, and Colin Low at Kingsfleet Wealth) for their generous sponsorship grants and contributions which will enable the book to be a quality product.

Furthermore, we are delighted to announce a new partnership with local publishers Golden Duck (UK) Ltd who are helping us with the final stages of typesetting, copy editing and printing. One of their co-owners, Julia Jones, who is a talented author and also editor of the River Deben Association magazine, has close family connections with our village and also with Waldringfield Sailing Club. We are thrilled to have both Julia and her son Bertie When as part of our project.

The book is now well on the road to completion, and all being well will be launched in the autumn. Details of how to order your book in advance will be made available in the coming months.

However, our 2019/2020 season has not been entirely taken up with the book. We began on the 12th of September last year, with a most enjoyable trip to Harwich via the ferry from Felixstowe. The group was greeted on the 'Ha'penny Pier' by the Harwich Town Crier in full traditional dress. Our knowledgeable guide Andy Schooler, from the Harwich Society, met us in the visitors centre and entertained us with poetry and quotations as we enjoyed an excellent Maritime Heritage Trail of the town, including a glimpse into two of the society's ongoing restoration projects; the home of Christopher Jones, Master of the Mayflower and The Electric Palace Cinema. After an excellent lunch in the 16C Samuel Pepys Inn, named after the eminent diarist, we enjoyed an informative tour of Harwich Redoubt Fort.

On 4th October, members of the group visited the 'Woodbridge Museum' on its new site at the former Whistocks boatyard where we were able to view an exquisite camera built by Waldringfield resident, Thomas Naunton Waller in the 1890s. The group's president Joe Clark, with the expert help of village resident Stan Baston, managed to align some of Waller's glass plates on a light box and photograph them with a digital SLR camera. The photographs subsequently produced were presented to the village in a talk in 2007. It was following this talk, that the current Waldringfield History Group was formed. Our particular thanks go to Joe Clark this season. Joe has made a

supreme effort to attend nearly all our meetings despite on-going health difficulties. His contributions have been very much appreciated.

On 12th November, several members of the group had an interesting tour of Butley Priory near Woodbridge. Originally a 14C monastery, now used as a fairy-tale wedding venue, and previously featured in 'Vogue' magazine, the visit proved to be both entertaining and unexpected in many ways, despite the cold.

On 12th December, Robert Simper, president of the River Deben Association and eminent local historian came to talk to us in the village hall. The talk attracted a large audience who enjoyed an entertaining speech about the eastern side of the River Deben followed by afternoon tea.

Our thanks go to Alyson Videlo, Margaret Lake and our Treasurer Michael Atkinson for their valuable help with advertising, ticket sales and book keeping throughout the season.

In February, the history group hosted its second talk of the season when Bob Merrett, former custodian of the Woodbridge Museum, gave an illustrated, well prepared and well attended account of 'Maritime Woodbridge.'

Two further projects have been carried out by the group this year. We would like to thank Amanda Sims for her hard work and co-ordination of '2020 Vision', our project to lay down a record of life in the village in 2020. Several representatives from the Wildlife group, WALGA, Greener Waldringfield, the Fairway committee, Sailing Club, All Saints Church and others met with Amanda and group members in early February to discuss how they could contribute to this project. Given the recent coronavirus outbreak and government restrictions, 2020 is turning out to be quite a year!

2020 also sees the 75th anniversary of VE Day (8-10 May). Thanks must go to Caroline and John Ogden who have been beavering away researching all the World War 2 veterans from the villages of Waldringfield, Hemley and Newbourne. Caroline has admirably transcribed nearly 400 obituaries as part of this work. Their research will be displayed in the village hall at some point this year when circumstances permit.

We would also like to thank Liz Kennedy, Kit Clark, Jackie Brinsley, Marion and Bim Sharpe and Alison Thomas for their valuable help with catering and event planning this season, Mike Nunn for his sense of humour in meetings and for his contributions to the book, Alyson Videlo for her IT support, contributions to the book and enthusiastic research into the 'Waldringfield Family Trees', Roger Stollery for his support, advice and contributions to the book, Margaret Lake, John Ogden and Michael Atkinson for their diligent proofreading skills and Charles Croydon for keeping us informed about events outside Waldringfield and for his role as Data Controller for the group this year. Margaret continues to attend classes in reading Latin and Medieval English, a skill which is invaluable to the group.

Grateful thanks must also go to Gareth Thomas who intends to step down as chair following publication of our book. Gareth has worked tirelessly as part of the group since its inception, chairing meetings, carrying out research, giving presentations and talks, introducing and thanking speakers, writing for the River Deben Association, contributing to the forthcoming book, proofreading, editing and leading the group conscientiously and with a sense of humour. The group appreciates all his hard work and efforts. Gareth recently told me in a 'State of the Nation' style summary that, 'despite chairing a good few bodies in his time, some at national level, none has proved such a challenge as the Waldringfield History Group book!' I feel sure however, that Gareth in his final few months as chair, with the support of the whole group, can pull off that challenge and

that, in next year's annual report, I will be able to let you all know that our book has finally been published.

If you would like to join our group, you will be warmly welcomed so please contact me if you would like to become a member or contribute to any of our future projects or research.

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Jane Hall – Secretary Waldringfield History Group

April 2020

Postscript – The Chair of the Group has asked that the report includes grateful thanks to the Hon. Secretary, Jane Hall. Without her enthusiasm and unstinting effort and organisation none of this would have happened.