

Friends of Diss Museum

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2023

Grand Opening of the Museum

Once again Basil organised another successful opening event in March.

More than 50 people joined in the parade including Scouts dressed as Indiana Jones, people in David Copperfield outfits and Museum stewards as stars from Casablanca.

There was a medley of film songs before our guest of honour, 97-year-old Denis Clarke, cut the ribbon.

The picture house exhibit marks 50 years since its closure, it was a very important part of the town's history.



Amandines restaurant joined in with the Casablanca theme by serving Moroccan food. In the evening, there was a concert of 'Music from the flicks' by the South Norfolk Youth Symphonic Band in the evening.

Photo courtesy of Diss Express

Ghost Walk around Diss Saturday 19th August from 7.00pm

The centre of Diss has many spooky anecdotes, told to the museum by people who work in the old buildings.

A walking tour, of about 90 minutes duration, will take you by the premises where there have been strange sounds, happenings and sightings.

We will meet at the south end of the Market Place, you will be led up to the churchyard, to meet some of the figures significant in the town's history.

These include: Tudor poet John Skelton; murder victims Matilda Fitz Walter, Mary Frost and Louie Bryant; Ethel le Neve, who was tried as an accessory to murder; and the Manning family.

On into the Heritage Triangle, you will meet poets John Betjeman and Mary Wilson and Rights of Man author Thomas Paine. You can visit the museum too.

This will be an entertaining evening and an amazing local history lesson.

Chairman's Report

The ghostly event will take place on Saturday 19 August from 7.00pm. Tickets are £5, from Sanda's Sandwich shop, opposite the museum.

Ethel le Neve & Dr Crippen

In the 1980s I was editing the Town Guide and did a feature called the *Church Crawl*, going to a service at every church in the town; and was surprised how many churches there were, including little gospel halls tucked away where nobody knew about them. But they are all part of a kind of subterranean life of the town, going on for centuries just under the surface, known only to a few. The Freemasons are the same, going about their rituals since the 18th century. And the museum is part of that life of the town.

Just as we were setting off on the film parade for this year's opening, a man, whom I had known years ago, came up and shook my hand and said that someone had just told him that the museum always did something special for the opening. I thought, "Yes!"- we had created a tradition. Just by being here and being active we were part of the town's history.

I am pleased to remember that I was there on the last night of the Picture House. I took the last photos of the interior of the Grammar School before it was demolished. I was with Robert Manning when he met the Dalai Lama, 200 years after his great-great

uncle did so. Creating the Skelton Festival (2004) and commemorating John Betjeman, Thomas Paine, the Mannings, the World Wars, the R34 airship, the Royal Visit, the Picture House, we become part of local history by doing those things.

Our last two openings have been especially good: the re-creation of the Royal Visit and the Picture House project, not least because so many museum people were involved.

Any museum would give its eye teeth to have the press coverage we got. This time we also involved a business, the Corn Hall, Amandines, the Youth Symphonic Band, the public in the parade.

It is all part of my ethos that the museum is not just a building with things in glass cases, but an organic organisation with many levels to it: - a collection, talks, tours, projects, festivals, publications, school work, radio interviews, writing in the press.

In August there will be a Ghost Walk, which should prove popular and make a bit more money. Next season, being election year, we are planning to feature Local Politics, with a light-hearted parade and the candidates speaking for a very limited time each outside the museum. A wall display on the story of the constituency has already been created.

I am greatly appreciative of



the work of the Friends and Stewards. My early experiences with previous generations of Friends were not always good. Far from being 'active and supportive' they were often downright obstructive and stayed well away from any event that I put on.

Once again, a great thank you to the loyal stewards who regularly turn up Monday to Saturday to welcome visitors to Diss Museum.

Basil Abbott

with John Henniker, newly made Lord Hartismere, at Thornham Hall.

The dukedom had been created in the 18th century, but not used again until Queen Victoria conferred it on her second son, Bertie's younger brother Alfred ('Affie').

Then second in line to the throne, until Bertie had a son, Alfred had become a naval cadet at 14, saw the world and would become Admiral of the Fleet.

On the abdication of King Otto of Greece (1862), Alfred was chosen to succeed him; but this was blocked by the British government, as the Queen objected to it.

In her 1866 Birthday Honours, he

The Other Royal Who Came to Diss in 1866

Diss made much of its one and only royal visit, although the Prince & Princess of Wales were just passing through, in 1866.

Prince Bertie, later Edward VII, and Princess Alexandra were on their way to stay with Sir Edward Kerrison at Oakley Park.

It has been largely unnoticed that another royal, the Duke of Edinburgh, accompanied them and went to stay



While on a visit to Australia, Alfred was nearly assassinated, but recovered from a shot in the back. The man responsible was hanged.

Alfred's mother wanted him to marry Princess Dagmar of Denmark, sister of

Alexandra; but Dagmar married Alexander III and became Empress of Russia.

Alfred would also marry a Russian, the Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna.

He died of throat cancer in 1900, six months before the Queen.

Streets, parks and buildings all over the old empire still bear his name.

August 1921, but sadly it was short lived.



Basil Abbott Closing of the Diss British Legion Branch

The Early Years

The Royal British Legion, originally the British Legion, was formed in 1921. It was created to unite various groups of men who served in the Great War such as the NADSS, the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Solders, which was formed in Blackburn in 1917. The first Diss Branch of the British Legion was formed in 1921.

The National Federation of Discharged Seamen and Demobilized Soldiers formed a branch in Diss soon after the Federation was created.

In 1921 it was decided to become a part of the newly formed British Legion, which was not Allied to any Political Organisation. The Diss British Legion Branch opened on the 22nd

'Sadly it has been announced that the Diss Branch of the British Legion has been wound up. Great Credit has to be given to Mr Murray, the Organising Secretary who has mainly kept the Branch going for a long time.'

The Branch had been responsible for the War Memorial at St Mary's since it was erected, including its maintenance. There appears to be a great lack of interest in the movements on the part of those it was intended to serve. The Contributions had not equaled the expense involved in running the Branch. At the end of the final meeting it was decided the balance of the funds left should be passed to the Diss and District Ambulance fund.

Diss & District Royal British Legion

*Robert J Rogers, Branch Secretary
, Diss and District Royal British Legion.*



From the Diss Express and Norfolk and Suffolk Journal, date November 21st 1924:

'There will be a meeting at St Mary's Church Hall on Saturday November 29th with a view to re-establishing a British Legion Branch in Diss. Mr A W Volier, Eastern Head Organising, will make a speech. Messer C Ward, C Pallett, W Scott and (?) Smith (of Palgrave) were elected as Preliminary Committee.'

In a copy of the Express, December 18th 1924, there was a letter to the editor from Rev R L Whytehead, asking to publicise the Branch and it was signed off as R L Whytehead, Hon Chaplain to the Forces, Chairman of the Diss and District British Legion, the Rectory, Diss.

Fast forward 99 years

The Diss and District Branch Royal British Legion, will next year (2024) celebrate its Century.

*The Coffee Tavern is now the Happy Palace Chinese Restaurant. The Coffee House Movement, was a countrywide Movement and aimed to create a cheap, comfortable and wholesome alternative to the public house, the one in Diss opened in 1879 and was known as the Waveney Temperance Hotel. In 1885 Thomas Hopgood took over the running of the Hotel. In 1912 Charles Denny rented the Tavern from Hopgood.

In 1914 Charles joined the British Exploratory Forces at the start of the Great War as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery Garrison. He suffered a gas Attack at Ypres. He survived the war and when he returned he bought the Coffee Tavern.

Information from the Book `Traders from the Triangle` produced by the Diss Heritage Triangle Trust CIO 2018

Successful publicity?

Diss Museum aims to engage with the whole community, but how do you do that?

One way was to re-open for six days a week instead of three, which happened in March. But the museum is not new, and inevitably there can be a feeling of "been there, seen that, no need to see it again". In fact most exhibits change every year, and the museum's stores contain many more fascinating items which have yet to be seen.

We found that using local social media in addition to newspaper and magazine publicity made a big difference. Our locals were particularly engaged with reminiscences about the old cinema in their on line comments. The internet has also brought more footfall into the museum, so we are widening our approach to publicity. Diss Museum is also the first item on the Waveney Museums Trail which we also publicise.

The Thomas Paine exhibit has raised a lot of interest and has been requested

that it be a permanent feature.

Visitors from Thetford query what claim Diss has on him – he did work for a year in Beehive Yard.

We noticed that some people (including me when I arrived) had no real idea of what to look at and just wander in and out. We have produced free simple leaflets to explain the new exhibits, including a colour version for children which describes objects of special interest to them. There is also a picture quiz for youngsters which is proving particularly popular.

came in over a series of Saturdays, this was a great success.

Any further publicity ideas would be very welcome.



Stars of the Children's Guide

A new feature we trialled this year is



to invite owners of items in the Community Cabinet to come and talk to visitors in the Museum. Our trial run was The Burston Detectorists, Nick Bateman and Joe Edwards-Gill who



Photo courtesy Diss Express

Ann Kent, publicity person

SPOTLIGHT ON: DAVID YOUNG

I was born in Ruislip and attended Merchant Taylors' School, I was not an avid student; my only claim to fame was as a guitarist and trumpeter. American folk music and jazz were my main interest apart from sport - mainly golf, cricket and rugby.

In 1961, I went to work at Vitavox, the loudspeaker and microphone manufacturer which my father founded in 1931. My brother and I enrolled on an Industrial Management course at Harrow Technical College, concluding with a Diploma in Works Management at Hendon Technical College. My speciality was production control and, in 1969 we established one of the first computerised systems using the Nixdorf 8870.

In 1999 by great fortune I met Avril, we moved to Diss and married in 2003. She introduced me to the "contemporary folk" scene and I began writing and performing my own songs.

I became involved in many local activities - including the Museum. I

started as a Steward in 2009. From 2010, I was a Museum Trustee until I realised that trustees were personally responsible for any obligations of the Museum. Fortunately the law has been changed.

In 2014 Miranda and I joined the Friends of Diss Museum (FoDM) committee chaired by Edna Buggey and revised the Handbook for Stewards.

At this time, the FoDM constitution had been misplaced and the right of the "curator" to a permanent, voting place on the committee was not observed.

In 2015, Miranda, Mike Clarke and I were elected to the key roles on the FoDM committee, alongside Brian Horner (treasurer) and Rosemary Palmer. Miranda became Secretary to the Trustees so Mike took over as chairman and I became secretary.

Gradually the committee gained important new members who, alongside Mike and Basil, are still on the current committee.

We held monthly "Third-Friday" meetings with excellent speakers and thanks to David van der Hulks, managed to open the Shambles every day of the season and redevelop the Stroll Around Diss. We established regular committee meetings.

In 2019 health issues caused me to resign from the committee and pass the secretarial duties to Pat Mordey.

Now in 2023, I am happy to say that heart medication and knee replacements have enabled me to resume steward duties and the Stroll.

We are very grateful to David for the hard work he put into restructuring the Museum over the years to make it the success it is today. David also produces DVDs for the

Museum, including 'Something Else About Diss' .



What's New

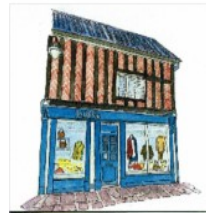
Children's Quiz

During the school holidays we will be promoting the Children's Quiz by giving away a free book to each child who participates in the quiz.

Joan Johns Notelets

We are now selling local artist, Joan Johns, beautiful views of Diss shops.

Pack of 5 Diss Notelets £6



Museum Shop Card Payment

Bear with us, this will be happening as soon as possible now we have Richard Peaty in place as treasurer.

Waveney Trail

We have joined a scheme run by Waveney Heritage Centre. Participants receive a card which gets stamped in each museum; they also have to find an object in the museum

Welcome new stewards:

- Patrick Harrington
- Margaret Funnell
- Pat Illsley
- Ron Wheeler
- Allison Rimell
- Mary Cotton
- Grace Edwards

Retirements

Two of our longest serving Stewards, Alan and Jenny Wade have recently retired. They have now been given Honorary Memberships to mark their long time support of the Friends.

The Stroll

David Young has restarted 'The Stroll Around Diss', if you wish to participate please contact him on 01379 642168 – full details on page 8.

The Donations Box

This was made by young museum supporter, Sophie Garnham. She recently took it back for repairs and improvements and it is now safely back at the reception desk.

Speaker Programme

*Please note – the August meeting will be on the **Second** Friday in August.*

Friday 11th August, 2.00 pm

Meet the Burston Detectorists

Nick Bateman and Joe Edwards-Gill will discuss what lies under our fields, and the pleasures and pitfalls of metal detecting.

Friday 1st September, 2.00pm

Lumberjills – Women in forestry

Nicky Reynolds

Friday 6th October, 2.00pm

A Mere 10,000 Years

Tim Holt Wilson.

Friday 3rd November, 2.00pm

The Quiz

David & Avril

Friday 1st December, 2.00pm

How our farming skills are being lost.

David Mitchell

If you have any suggestions for 2024 programme please contact Mike Clarke on 01379 674597

Join the Friends

Becoming a Friend entitles you to reduced entrance fees, eligibility to vote at the AGM and two Newsletters per year. New for 2023 Friends will get a 10% discount in the Museum shop. For more information about the Museum or to become a Friend please contact

fodimus@gmail.com

Annual Subscriptions

(due 1st April 2023):

Single: £7.00 Family: £10.00

Annual subscription shall become due on the first day of April each year. Members whose subscriptions are not paid by the start of the AGM shall forfeit their right to vote. Members whose subscriptions are twelve months in arrears shall be automatically excluded from membership.

If you would like to join the Friends of Diss Museum Committee, please contact Jan Smith, we would love to hear from you: 07746 586799 or :

fodimus@gmail.com

**Friends of Diss Museum Committee -
FODIMUS**

Chairman:

Basil Abbott 07961 231695

Programme Secretary:

Mike Clarke 01379 674597

Secretary/Membership : Joint

Jan Smith/Suzanne Kayne

Treasurer

Richard Peaty 01379 651879

Steward Co-ordinators:

Jan Smith 07746 586799

Vacant

Shop manager/Books

Derek Steer 07511 403799

Ordinary members

Bob Rogers

Publicity Officer

Ann Kent 01379 651879

Temp Newsletter Editor

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Information Hub

Diss Museum

www.dissmuseum.co.uk

email: dissmuseum@lineone.net

Facebook – Diss Museum page –

Please 'like' and follow

Diss Museum

Joint Collection Managers

Shirley Farrow & Daisy Fearn

disscollections@gmail.com

Norfolk Family History Society

www.norfolkfhs.org.uk

Diss Family History Group

Betty Morley

Email: bettymorley@btinternet.com

Charitable Incorporate Organisation CIO

No. 1168112

Diss Museum, The Shambles, Market

Place, Diss IP22 4AB

2023 Friends of Diss Museum 2023

**THE STROLL
Around Diss**

Introducing you to our lovely market town – not just a guided tour! Learn about some of the old buildings, the town's history, some of its famous people and a lot of interesting things about Diss.



Fodimus Maximus says:
'You'll see The Angels
and a Flying Pig!'

£5 per person

Children, accompanied only

Under 12yrs free

STROLL TIME:- app. 1 1/2 hours

MARCH TO OCTOBER

One person or a Group

Advanced booking only -

A day and time to suit you

Please phone David Young

01379 642168 or email:

fodimus@gmail.com

Start and finish at the Museum

Market Square IP22 4AB

**Remember... we put the ROLL into the STROLL
for those who rely upon wheels to get around!**