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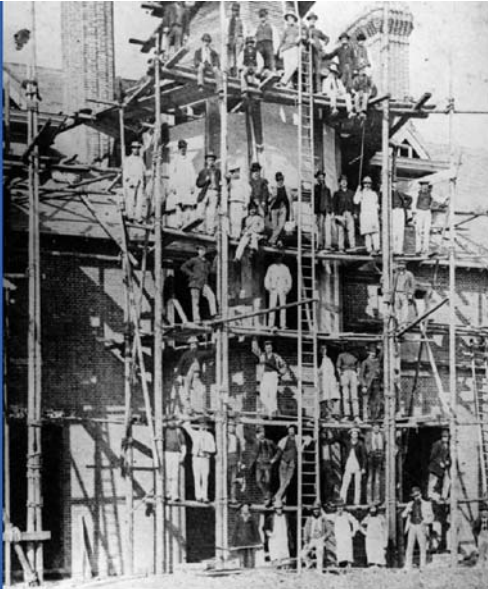
Newsletter of the Friends of the Suffolk Record Office

September 2010

 Suffolk
County Council

Suffolk
Record Office
holds
9 miles
of archives
- they're the
building blocks
for your
community history

www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro



Display panel from the 2010 Suffolk Show

Suffolk Record Office Update

Suffolk Record Office has had another very busy six months since the last newsletter, with a number of outreach events and some interesting new accessions.

Outreach

Since January the record office has run 20 workshops, 31 talks and 42 evening visits, fairs and Top Time talks, with an overall total of 2865 people attending events.

The topics of the talks and courses varied widely, including:

- At the Sign of the Pestle and Mortar* by Dr Pat Murrell
- Irish Family History - An Introduction* by Anthony M Breen
- Maps and Mapmaking* by Clive Paine
- 50 Years of Railways around East Anglia* by John Day
- Conquest of Smallpox in England* by Dr Peter Razzell
- Suffolk Manorial Families* by Clive Paine
- Local History and Literature* by Clive Paine

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We have continued to run our 'Hands on History' sessions, showing people how to get started with family and property history. In response to customer demand we have introduced a number of new sessions on wills, poor law records and newspapers. We are piloting these at the Lowestoft branch during the September to December season, with the intention of introducing them at Bury and Ipswich in 2011.

The programme for the September to December season has been distributed and we look forward to seeing you all at our events. Highlights this season include:

Secrets of the Suffolk Domesday Book by Clive Paine

Georgian Gems Theatre Day

High Street History events—to tie in with the new BBC series of programmes

Suffolk Yeomanry in the First World War by Dr Margaret Thomas

Our 5 and 10 week courses include:

Medieval Latin Palaeography with Dr John Ridgard and Kate Jewell - beginners, intermediates and advanced

Riot and Arson with Clive Paine

Family and Society in the 18th Century Novel with Ulrike Horstmann-Guthrie

Suffolk Parks and Gardens with Dr Margaret Thomas

Full details of times, costs and venues are available on the record office website - www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro

New accessions

Although we have received a number of new accessions since the last FOSRO AGM, one of the most significant has been the deposit of digital copies of recordings from the East of England Co-operative Society. The original Co-op oral history recordings were made in the early 1990s by a group of volunteers at the Co-op Education Centre in Ipswich. The dedicated team underwent special training to conduct the interviews with Co-op employees and supporters, as well as carefully cataloguing the tapes for future reference. The cassette tapes used to record the interviews had begun to deteriorate, and to preserve them for the future, the Society funded their digitisation. More than 92 hours of audio have been digitised, and a set of CDs and accompanying notes have been handed over to the record office to enable anyone to access them.

As well as recounting the history of the Co-op Society, the archive is a valuable social history resource with stories of day to day life, living conditions and World War I and II. Bridget Hanley, Collections Manager, said "This collaboration has enabled us to preserve these memories and offer communities building blocks of local history for formal education, family history or to give a more rounded picture of the place they live or work. They contain the direct voice and images of the past and are primary evidence of what local people thought and



experienced. They are invaluable in enabling Suffolk communities to understand and embrace their history and in doing so help them to act as strong, self confident communities.”

The digital recordings also complement recordings held in the record office’s oral history collections, which have recently been digitised as part of the Heritage Lottery funded ‘Suffolk Voices Restored Project’. Councillor Rosemary Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Sport, Culture, Diversity, Health and Wellbeing at Suffolk County Council, said “Oral history really does have a unique value. It not only preserves long forgotten words and local dialects, but also the memories of the lives and customs of individuals and communities which help to build up a rounded picture of everyday Suffolk. Suffolk County Council’s Record Office is extremely grateful to the East of England Co-operative Society for rejuvenating these unique time capsules for the benefit of current and future generations across the county.” For more information about this collection please contact Louise Clarke, the Ipswich Archivist.

Treasurer’s Message

This is a brief summary of the financial position, based on the draft unaudited accounts, for those members who will not be able to attend the AGM. At present we have 195 members, but our income from subscriptions has fallen to £1809 this year. This is because more than 50 members have not yet paid their subscription this year and a further 20 have not paid in full. Donations and Gift Aid contributed another £1884 and bank interest just £25, so that total income for the year was £3,718.

This year we have purchased a Coldham Hall Estate rent book and some records from the Tollemache Ipswich Brewery, at a cost of £555. We have also been able to contribute £500 each to two important projects - Suffolk Voices Restored oral history conservation and the Suffolk Manorial Records Register. Administrative expenses were £560 in total, so that we have a balance at the bank of £8,973.

We remain very grateful for all the support and donations received. However, it is important that our core income from subscriptions is maintained. Members who have not paid the minimum subscription (£12 for individual/family, £20 for corporate membership) in full by 31 December 2010 will be removed from the membership list. Cheques should be made payable to the *Friends of the Suffolk Record Office* and sent to either the Secretary or the Treasurer (address details on page 8). Anyone who wishes to receive the full financial report following the AGM in September should contact the Treasurer. Email communication will be preferred for cost reasons (email: julie.craven@btopenworld.com), but my postal address can be found on page 8.

Julie Craven
Honorary Treasurer



The Suffolk Record Office Cataloguing Backlog Project wins a National Award

You may remember reading about the Suffolk Record Office Cataloguing Backlog Project in a previous issue of the FOSRO Newsletter. The project officially came to an end on 31st March - although volunteers are continuing to work on some of the collections that were begun during the project - and we were delighted to discover, during National Volunteers' Week, that we had won the first ever Archives & Records Association (ARA) National Archive Volunteering Project of the Year Award. This recognises excellence and innovation in how the archive sector works with volunteers and celebrates the contribution of volunteers within record offices and the important role they play in their local community.

The project involved 70 volunteers across all three branches of the record office contributing 4236 hours during 2009/10 to help catalogue 33 diverse collections including:

- a photographic archive containing images of most parishes in Suffolk created by Captain Dunlop RN who was the last Standing Officer of HMS Ganges and the Henry Miller, Surveyor and Engineer to East Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Navigation etc collection of maps, survey and engineering plans and drawings at Ipswich
- the Ranald Clouston collection on bells and bell-ringing in Suffolk at Bury St Edmunds
- the Board of Trade and Successors Marine Maps relating to places along the coastline of Suffolk and its hinterland at both Ipswich and Lowestoft.

As a result of this project the backlog of uncatalogued material was reduced by 51m3 and staff and customers are benefiting from 71,000 new records on the catalogue database.

The project has been a success on many levels, beyond merely clearing part of the backlog, for example volunteers improved their knowledge of the history of Suffolk and developed their cataloguing, indexing, conservation, research and IT skills in a flexible informal environment helping some find jobs or gain a place on a course. Others enjoyed meeting people with similar interests and knowing they were making a difference. "As a recent graduate in an unstable economic time, finding employment is taking a considerable time. I therefore decided to do something useful and interesting – history is my passion".

The SRO project was selected as the winner from 14 applications submitted from across the UK, by a panel of judges. Geoff Pick, Chair of judging panel said:

"The judges were impressed by the clear aims of the project and evidence of its impact for the service, the volunteers and the wider community. It clearly demonstrates how a local authority archive service, with support within the council, can develop strong links with volunteering organisations and local community groups, to offer wider volunteering opportunities. We would like to congratulate the record office as the success of the project is an example to the whole UK archive sector".



A group of volunteers travelled up to the House of Lords on 14th July to attend a reception at which the winners and runners up were commended for all their work.

“It was very uplifting to have the quality of our volunteer teamwork recognised in a formal way - and where better than overlooking the Thames on the terrace of the House of Lords”.

Project Volunteer



Project volunteers and staff at the House of Lords

A couple who have now moved away said: “We so much enjoyed our time volunteering at SRO, it was a great surprise and pleasure to be asked to the House of Lords. It was fascinating to be able to talk to people from all over the country and find out what they were engaged in; throughout the atmosphere was relaxed and friendly, the views from the terrace were interesting, the rain held off all evening... all in all a memorable experience.”

This project has helped us to develop and fine tune our volunteering plans. Staff recognise that volunteers’ knowledge, skills, commitment and enthusiasm are a very important asset in tackling the cataloguing backlog. As one member of staff commented: “I think we learnt a lot about working with volunteers and what is required to optimise their input for us as well as what we can do to help them to get the most from their experience.”

Bridget Hanley
Collections Manager

Find out more at:

http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice/Community%20Engagement/Suffolk_record_office



Kate Chantry, Record Office Manager, Wendy Herber, Manager of Volunteer Ipswich, Bridget Hanley, Collections Manager with Laura Cooper and Angela Woolnough, two of the Ipswich project volunteers



NADFAS Project at Ipswich Record Office

In 2000 a group from the Ipswich Decorative and Fine Art Society approached the staff at Suffolk County Council's Ipswich Record Office offering their services as volunteers. Many of the NADFAS Church Recorders were well known to the staff, but we had been unaware of the work of the Heritage Volunteers. Nine years and many projects later they are one of our longest standing volunteer groups and we are extremely grateful for all the work this dedicated band of volunteers have done for us – in August 2008 one of their number calculated they had worked a staggering 2024 hours in total.

The group, which ranges in number from 4 to about 6, work for a couple of hours on Monday afternoons and have completed many different projects including indexing photographs of listed buildings, listing and numbering glebe terriers (lists of Church lands) some of which date back to the 17th century, numbering and repacking diversion orders, parsonage house papers, coroners' inquests, quarter sessions records and several large family and estate collections. They have particularly enjoyed this last activity, as the records included letters and diaries (as well as deeds and estate papers) which gave them a fascinating insight into the daily lives of those who wrote them.

During 2008 and 2009 they worked with Dominic Wall, our conservator, on some preservation projects. These included cleaning Quarter Sessions records (with erasers, soft brushes and vacuum cleaners), making bespoke boxes for fragile and damaged volumes and putting their sewing skills to good use making covers for our bean bag book rests. They also really enjoyed helping to clean and pack some of the glass plate negatives that formed part of the Shrubland Hall photographic collection purchased by FOSRO in May 2008.



Much of the work they undertake makes it easier for staff to produce materials for the public; the listing jobs have improved access to collections and the preservation activities help to safeguard items for future generations. As with all our volunteers the group have their own skills and expertise and we often learn from them.



Elsbeth Foley, who co-ordinates the group says that they enjoy cleaning work, and box making, but also tasks which require a 'bit more brain power to give some variety and interest'. So this year they have gone back to listing and have worked on sale particulars from the Cross Ram solicitor's collection (which is part of the cataloguing backlog project) and are currently listing and packing 9 boxes of architectural files relating to churches in East Suffolk.



Bridget Hanley
Collections Manager



Other Volunteer Projects

During 2009-10 135 volunteers and work experience students contributed over 7180 hours towards various projects at the record office. Activities included cataloguing both archives and local studies material, book and archive cleaning, box making, newspaper indexing, transcribing, helping with exhibitions, scanning and compiling detailed finding aids for parish register fiche. We also had help from volunteers at events in Endeavour House where councillors and senior SCC staff were able to meet volunteers and understand what volunteers gain from their time at the record office.

During the backlog project we realised that we need more volunteers who are interested in computers and data entry projects. We would like to get more of our catalogues onto our new Suffolk Heritage Direct website so that people can search for information from home. Some of the records needing inputting may be from newly catalogued collections but we also want to continue our work inputting the paper catalogues that are currently available in the searchroom. If you are computer literate and would like to help, please get in touch - contact details are on page 8. We will provide training on how to enter data into CALM using record office computers and it may also be possible to establish projects for remote volunteers where data can be typed into Excel.

Judith Stephenson
Searchroom Services Manager



Suffolk Record Office Contact Details

For any queries or comments about the Friends please contact the secretary or treasurer.

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Website address: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro>

FOSRO Purchases

FOSRO has made two purchases this year. These were detailed in the February newsletter and are also mentioned in the Treasurer's Message on page 3 of this edition. If members of FOSRO do learn of archives and records that are for sale, or may be destroyed please contact the archivist at the relevant branch so that we can make arrangements to try and secure the safety of the records. Contact details for all offices are listed above.

FOSRO Goes Green!

We mentioned last year that the Friends are looking at ways of becoming more environmentally friendly, with the added aim of saving both money and time by distributing newsletters and AGM papers by email. Several members have elected to receive their papers by email and this has worked very well. If other members would like to do the same please contact the Secretary by email at

Judith.Stephenson@suffolk.gov.uk