

History Group Report to OPC May 2022

Bar Pritchard: enquiries and contributions are always welcome: 01366 328 730,
bargeoff@yahoo.com

Since reporting last May on the failure to establish a formal History Group committee, little has changed organisationally.

James Parry – who has extensive experience and knowledge of history, as an author and publisher - continues to advise and support.

Mike Craig very kindly retains Treasurer responsibilities, ensuring funds are safe and accounted for.

Now standing at £4025 + £77.95 petty cash (compared to £4025 + £16.50 petty cash this time last year), this balance continues to be largely earmarked for publication costs for the 'History of Oxborough' book on which work continues, mainly by myself supported by several others. No major expenditure has therefore been committed to.

I continue to maintain the archive, with thanks to the Village Hall's generosity and support in providing the space.

I also respond to any enquiries and contributions. These come from individuals and organisations, both locally and from far afield, relating to individual family or house history as well as parish history and archaeological finds. Contact is generally made via word of mouth, the village websites, related organisations, or from visitors to our historic village.

e.g. Much has been discovered this year about the church's clock and separate striking bell, both lost when the steeple fell. I was contacted by the *database manager for all turret clocks made in the UK*, (after he'd visited the church while on holiday here). He wanted any information I could provide. Piecing it all together from his experience (6,000 + separate entries on his database, and growing all the time) he currently thinks it unique in having had its own bell, (attached to the outside of the north face of the spire), when church clocks generally used one of the existing pealing bells in the belfry.

This year has been marked in particular by the very welcome easing of pandemic restrictions on social contact, plus the culmination of the massive repair/restoration work by the National Trust at the Hall, (itself an incredible construction feat and landmark within its history), but with discoveries and historical finds - now in the thousands! – that greatly exceed all expectations.

We have subsequently not only forged stronger links with the National Trust, but also with the Breckland Society, the Brecks Fen-Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme (BFER), Norfolk Museum Service and Stoke Ferry's embryonic History Group, between them prompting the following activities, all covering any costs, and making just a little extra.

Tues 9 Nov A History Group initiative, in the church, involved the National Trust in celebrating the 500th anniversary of the death of William Schankey – a highly-regarded, pre-Reformation organist recently discovered by Martyn Clarke, to have been buried beneath

the present organ; plus the discovery beneath floorboards at The Hall of fragments of C16 choir music, hand-written by the same copiest as used by composer Thomas Tallis. Presented by Martyn, along with Anna Forrest of the NT, these finds place the Bedingfeld family at the forefront of contemporary music at that time. Choral music of the period was beautifully sung by Peddars Quire, and Tudor 'Light Bytes' and mulled wine very kindly provided by Susie and Nick Emmett. The final word on the night went to Sir Henry Bedingfeld, whose ancestors built the Church and the Hall, and unusually for a parish church, paid an organist, and possibly even a choir? The 40 participants donated £400 towards repair of the terracotta tombs. (The event is written up in the Breckland Society Newsletter Feb 2022)

Sun 16 Jan: An off-road Winter Walk from Oxburgh Hall to the old ferry site at The Hythe. It took in the Old Rectory, to see the ruins of St Mary Magdalen Church in its grounds, and Hythe Cottage for refreshments - very kindly provided by Fliss, and neighbours Karen and Graham. Run jointly with Jim McNeill of the new Stoke Ferry & District History Group, this was a fabulous morning, with gorgeous weather and amazingly, 80+ participants + dogs!

Mon 14 Feb 2-4 A session of Open Archives was well-attended.

Mon 28 March The History Group hosted the first of a touring drop-in event collecting *Tales from the River* as part of the Breckland Fen Edge and Rivers landscape project). 30/40 people attended and viewed the river displays, with many adding to the BFER research by sharing their own 'river stories' of the Wissey, Gadder, Stringside Drain, Little Ouse etc. Stories are still welcome! Link to pictures of this event and information on the project <https://www.imogensriverswims.co.uk/blog/os-brecks-2/oxborough-history-and-memories-afternoon/>

Mon 6 June 2-4 pm Special Jubilee event with displays celebrating Royal Coronations.

Possibilities coming up ...

NT presentation of the recent finds at The Hall and/or **conducted tour of their new displays**, which will focus on the Bedingfeld family's endurance and survival through 500 years of persecution as Catholics.

Possible trip to Kings Lynn Museum to see Oxborough items there, including some not generally on display. Especially a Roman lead tank, one of only 12 known to exist, all of them in England, with this the only one in Norfolk. Found in very bad condition in 1985.

BP