



**AGM 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016 - Looking forward – Claire Penstone-Smith, Chairman**

Our group have enjoyed a great deal of support from the New Victory Hall throughout our WW1 Project and in autumn 2015 they asked if we would be interested in establishing a permanent heritage resource for the villages. Since the end of our WW1 focus, we have therefore been looking into the feasibility of such a resource. In doing so it was agreed that two main questions needed to be answered – firstly, is there a need for permanent heritage resource? And can it be sustained?

To see examples of the facilities of other heritage groups we made an interesting visit to Aylsham Heritage Centre, housed in an old building adjacent to St Michael's Church. I also visited an exhibition by Docking Heritage Group who have a dedicated room set aside in their village hall.

Previously, our group had agreed that we need to establish and maintain a presence in the community and in order to do this were keen to ensure that we met regularly and that meetings were widely publicised. To this end, during the last 8 months we have held evening meetings at a variety of local venues. These have included a tour of the Radar Museum, a guided walk around Barton Turf from the Black Shed and a talk by a member of the Norfolk Historic Houses Group. We liaised with the New Victory Hall about using the Community Room to display our exhibitions on various aspects of the three villages' history. These have taken place at the Farmers' Markets and one other day a month. The most recent one can be seen here tonight which was on display at the Classic Vehicle Show held here a few weeks ago.

In addition a very successful Neatishead School Reunion attended by over 100 ex-pupils and their families took place in February.

Wishing to acknowledge other significant events of WW1 during the four year centenary we mounted a small exhibition commemorating the Norfolk Regiments involvement at the Battle of the Somme, here, over the weekend of 1<sup>st</sup> July and during the Wherry Band Concert here on 1<sup>st</sup> July, when appropriate readings and music were performed in remembrance.

The Radar Museum have been very supportive of the group since we held our first monthly meeting there in April and in allowing us to use their facilities. And having seen previous exhibitions they invited us to display our Battle of the Somme exhibition in their Neatishead Room since July – where it has been very well received.

The numbers attending our meetings have been gradually increasing and we have had very positive responses about the work of the group. Our questionnaires distributed via NIB generated some positive and encouraging responses although the number returned was disappointing.

Considering we are a relatively small group, we are pleased to have achieved so much. After such a successful start we now think it important that our group's activities continue in order to preserve the heritage of the three villages. We wish to maintain the interest of the community and as a way to do this we propose to create a Friends of NIBCHG – we would like to continue to hold monthly meetings and produce displays at the Farmers' Market. We hope that individuals or small groups (either committee members of Friends) might undertake smaller projects under the auspices of the Group and so further expand our knowledge of the history of the villages.

Possible topics for future research have been proposed and they include Life before 1900, the history of the schools – because of course there used to be two, one at Barton Turf as well as at Neatishead, WW2, local airbases, the origins of village names. Whichever route we decide to take for further topics, we have many valuable sources to tap into; the Norfolk Record Office and the Norfolk Historic Environment Record both of which have searchable databases online, the Norfolk Museums Service as well as our own ever growing archive and [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) to which the group subscribes.

An interesting development could be the opportunity for family history research followed by a "Who do you think you are" exhibition. Another avenue of interest might be the study of your house with the help of the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group who are happy to undertake this, at the owner's invitation.

So in summary, we have a range of interesting ideas and possibilities to keep the group active well into the future. As mentioned earlier we would like to establish a "Friends of NIBCHG" with an annual subscription, a regular newsletter and possibly other benefits we are looking into currently. Before the end of this year I hope we can plan a programme for 2017 for our monthly meetings utilising The New Victory Hall, The Radar Museum and The Black Shed. We have been asked to produce a "History of Neatishead" for display at The Radar Museum as well as a small permanent display for the Black Shed. I would also like to see us produce a display about our group to be shown at local events to publicise the group further. I should also mention here that we have our own recording equipment for in order to make permanent audio recordings of people's memories of earlier times.

I began by posing two questions, firstly "is there a need for a permanent heritage resource?" We believe there most certainly is – the work of our group so far demonstrates how vital it is that this generation must preserve the heritage of yesterday – there has been encouraging enthusiasm and interest shown by so many so far. And secondly "Can it be sustained?" With determination and by keeping up the current momentum and interest, I'm sure we can.

As Vincent Van Gogh so aptly stated "Great things are done by a series of small things brought together"

Thank you.