

Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf Community Heritage Group



Chairman's Report – AGM 12th November 2020

It has been a strange year with so little but yet so much happening since our AGM last October. In November a presentation by military historian Steve Smith furthered our knowledge on interesting aspects of the Norfolk Regiment during WW1. Then, with the cancellation of our speaker for the meeting in January, we quickly got to work researching our village staithe and put together a presentation for January. This then formed the beginning of our project for the Broads Hidden Heritage initiative and continues. Even though the Norfolk Record Office closed to the public in March, the Barton Turf History Project and Neatishead Nostalgia archives proved an invaluable source of information for us, together with conversations within our communities. Discussions are ongoing as to how and when this research will be published. Many thanks for Michael and Carol for their valuable input into this.

In February we obtained over 100 aerial photographs of Barton Broad and the three villages for our archive as Mike Page, well known for his aerial photographs of Norfolk, offered electronic copies to local community groups.

With an outline of plans for VE Day Celebrations in May, an application for a grant to cover some of the costs was made to the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Fund. The following month the coronavirus hit hard and by 16 March 2020 we were all in lockdown. Everything postponed and then, disappointingly, cancelled. Local WW2 research based around John Yaxley's map of local incidents has continued slowly and with our grant application being successful, we hope to be able to hold an event to display this sometime in the future.

Small village celebrations for both VE Day in May and VJ Day in August took place with flag waving, music and afternoon teas, within the Government guidelines and appropriate social distancing.

With Jackie joining the committee last year and her interest in the origins of houses in our villages, new and old, together with our request in the newsletter and NIB for information, a number of people have been in touch – thank you. Jackie has been busy collating this information which will, in time, form a fascinating archive for the group.

With varying health concerns, the committee discovered Zoom and throughout lockdown kept in touch remotely. At a meeting in September to discuss the future of the group it was acknowledged that valuable research had been undertaken over the last seven years together with very successful events and fascinating presentations. It was agreed that the likelihood of being able to hold any further meetings at all this year, indoors with more than six people, would not be possible. And so, looking to the future we agreed that NIBCHG would continue with a less intensive programme of events and move to a quarterly programme of presentations with perhaps occasional Sunday open afternoons, as and when it was felt appropriate and safe to do so. It was suggested that this would allow for members to follow their own particular research interests in aspects of the villages' heritage.

At last year's AGM I mentioned a Community Archive Project for which the Norfolk Record Office had secured Heritage Lottery funding and to which we had signed up for together with 34 other Norfolk heritage groups. This got underway in April by which time a different way of conducting the project had to be worked out in the light of the pandemic. A Community Archive Network Forum was set up and a Community Archives Toolkit created. These are available online and will be a very useful resource for us. The two particular areas we will be working on are (1) the cataloguing of our archives and research material and (2) creating, editing and managing oral histories. Our first meeting, with the Project Team of two, took place remotely at the beginning of October and further meetings and training will take place between April and June 2021. Meanwhile we have various tasks to undertake before then.

It has not been an easy year for any of us and we hope next year will see the group able to meet again to share and further our research. You will hear from Gareth that the group is financially in a good place at the moment but the continued support of our NIBCHG Friends is invaluable.

This year has been like no other we have known. We would like to include the highs and lows of our villages' life through this time for our archive so that those living here, long after us, will know just what it was like. Please let us have a photo, a drawing, thoughts, poems – whatever you feel is a represents some aspect of our villages during lockdown. A moment today is a memory tomorrow.

Finally a thank you to all the committee Michael Brandon-Jones, Carol Horner, Susan Lamb, Gail Murrells, Gareth Pritchard, Barbara Pilcher and Jackie Simpson for their ongoing support over this past year.

Claire Penstone-Smith, Chair, NIBCHG, November 2020