

# Newsletter



**HALESWORTH AND DISTRICT MUSEUM : XMAS 2012**

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## THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

### 2012: A Landmark Year

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**2012** has proved to be a landmark year for the Museum.

At the end of 2011 our Curator, Mike Fordham, published a booklet about the Blyth Navigation with a print run of a hundred copies. Demand was so great that another hundred were produced and to date all have been sold, which, for a rather specialised subject, is something of a triumph.

Thanks to the ready co-operation of the staff of Halesworth Library, we have been able to use the Library to bring the activities of the Museum to the fore. We now have a regular display in the front window of the Library.

Some of the history of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Halesworth was depicted in a remarkable spring evening at The Cut, where the illustrations of Halesworth author, Thomas Fella, were shown to an appreciative audience of nearly 200.

During the summer a grand display was staged in the Library, commemorating the Olympic Games and showing all the sporting activities in and around Halesworth. This was well supported by all the local sporting groups.

All these events were due to the hard work of our volunteers and, in particular, of our Publicity Officer, Vic Gray.

Alongside all this another Trustee, our Treasurer, Brian Howard, has been bringing the Museum's website and IT facilities into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will eventually enable the Museum's archive material to be accessed at the touch of a button! He has also been heavily involved in the acquisition, fund raising, preservation and eventual display of the Wissett Hoards, which promises to be the highlight of 2013.

In partnership with the Suffolk Police Museum, our Curator, Mike Fordham has also mounted a small, temporary display (our first winter exhibition) on 'Policing Victorian Halesworth' to commemorate the anniversary of the murder of PC Ebenezer Tye 150 years ago.

Finally, we have been able to attract a number of experienced new volunteers who, in due course, will be busily engaged in future plans to improve the facilities which the Museum provides for the people of Halesworth and the surrounding area. Meanwhile, thanks are due, as ever, to our dedicated band of stewards who have enabled us to extend the Museum opening hours throughout this Landmark Year. To all them, and all you, a very Merry Christmas.

*B. A. Holmes*

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## IN THE NAME OF THE LAW

*150 years ago, on 25 November 1862, P.C. Ebenezer Tye, while attempting to detain a local burglar, John Ducker, in Chediston Street, was cudgelled to death. In tribute to Tye, the Museum is staging a short exhibition on Policing in Halesworth during December. Mike Fordham looks into the background.*

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**Policing in Suffolk** changed little between the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The county remained dependent on the established system of Justices of the Peace, parish constables and town watchmen. Each hundred had a High Constable who was directly responsible to the Justices for the maintenance of public order within the hundred.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, parish constables were compulsorily selected and every householder was liable to serve if called upon. The constable was given powers at common law to 'apprehend any person committing crime, about to commit crime, a minor offence or a breach of the peace.' When apprehended an offender was required to be brought before the local Justice of the Peace. Where no pound, stocks or lock-up existed, the offender had to be detained in the constable's own home.

Parish constables were not equipped with uniform or warrant card and relied on their staff or truncheon as both a badge of office and a defensive weapon. The truncheon was individually made and decorated and usually carried the royal crown as a symbol of authority.

In 1840 the Justices of the Peace for East Suffolk, unhappy with the inadequate system of parish constables, made application to the Secretary of State for approval to set up an organised police force under the newly passed Rural Police Act of 1839. At the March Quarter Sessions, held at Wickham Market, John Hatton was appointed Chief Constable for East Suffolk. A Police Committee was formed and convened at Saxmundham and the Force Headquarters was set up at nearby Yoxford.

The new constabulary consisted of three superintendents and 60 constables. A constable in the new force was paid £1 a week and issued

with a free uniform of greatcoat, cape, jacket, badge, trousers, boots and shoes, top hat, stock and a staff or truncheon made of wood. The new force was organised into three divisions; Beccles, Woodbridge and Lowestoft, each under the command of a Superintendent.

Lowestoft and many of the smaller boroughs, however, still maintained their own 'Borough Forces' based on the High Constable and parish constable organisation. In 1839 John Aldis senior of Halesworth was still styled High Constable of Blything Hundred and retained the now-outdated title of Chief Constable for Halesworth in Blything Hundred until after 1846.

The first police station in Halesworth was located close to the corner of Pound Street and Steeple End but was gone by 1845, when a deed describes how 'a messuage and tenement on the corner has lately been divided into three dwellings. That part occupied by John Davy has since been used as a police station but is now unoccupied.' A house in Chediston Street was used as another temporary police station but by 1846 a 'neat police station' had been erected in Quay Street as the chief station of the Beccles Division of Police.

Meanwhile, the first level of justice was meted out at the Petty Sessions, held every alternate Wednesday at the Angel Inn, while more serious cases were referred to the Quarter Sessions in Ipswich.

When the 1851 census was taken, Richard Deare, aged 35, Inspector of Police, was living with his wife and two children at the police station in Quay Street, together with Edward King, 26, a police constable. At the same time, living in Bungay Road, was Major Peter Allez, a Guernsey man, now aged 42, who was no less than the Deputy Chief Constable of East

Suffolk, based in Lowestoft. Much later, in 1869, he would become Acting Chief Constable for the County, when his boss resigned following his imprisonment for debt. Back in 1851, Allez had a lodger in Bungay Road, William Runnadey, 39, a second police constable for the town.



*Men of the Halesworth police force gather at the grave of P.C. Tye in 1862*

Staffing levels remained throughout the period at this high level (judged by today's standards) and when the 22-year old P.C. Ebenezer Tye

moved to Halesworth in 1861 he was to serve under Sergeant Daniel Taylor at the Quay Street police station, alongside William Lucas and Henry Cattermull. It was from here that he was sent off on the fateful night of 25 November to watch Ducker's movements. He never returned.

By 1865, the Police Station had moved again, this time to specially erected premises in Pound Street, now the Singtong Neeyom restaurant, 37 Thoroughfare. Costing £800, it was equipped with three cells and accommodation for the sergeant. 'The entrance has a room each side and a back corridor that opens on to the cell doors' said a contemporary source. 'Each cell has a brick coved ceiling, and a small barred window. High up on the wall of the left-hand cell is an iron staple and ring from which it is possible to chain the upward stretched wrists of a dangerous prisoner'.

This was the position when, in 1873, the forces of East and West Suffolk were joined together as the Suffolk Constabulary and, in the following year, Halesworth became a Divisional Police Station within the Lowestoft Division of the new force.

*The exhibition 'Policing Victorian Halesworth' continues until 15 December*

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## THE LURE OF THE WISSETT HOARDS

*It is just over a year since a cache of Bronze Age objects was discovered beneath Wissett soil. Since then, their future has become an obsession for one man, Museum Treasurer, Brian Howard.*

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**Being a Wissett man**, Brian Howard's ears pricked up when our Museum Curator, Mike Fordham, read out a letter from the Suffolk Archaeology Service at Bury St Edmunds revealing that two hoards of Bronze Age weapons and tools had been discovered at Wissett and might be offered to the Museum to purchase. Bringing them back to the area where they belonged became a bit of a mission.

They had, after all, been buried in Wissett soil some 3,500 years ago. That makes them by far the oldest human objects ever found in the area.

A year on and Brian, now the Museum's new Treasurer, has successfully led a fund-raising campaign which has secured a rare grant from the Arts Council and a number of other donations from local and national sources.

Wissett Community Council and the Halesworth Lions have been generous, as have many local people who responded, according to their means, to the appeal for funds to help buy, conserve and present these objects to the people, present and future, of the area.



*Three of the Bronze Age artefacts unearthed at Wissett in 2011*

The first hoard was found by local metal detectorists who, acting under the code of practice to which most detectorists subscribe, immediately reported their finds to the County Archaeology Service. When they went back to the site on a later occasion they were amazed to find their instruments registering more metal, only ten feet or so away from the original find site – and even more amazed when digging revealed a second hoard. To find two hoards so close together is extremely rare, but the fact that the area in which we live has so far produced few pieces of evidence of Bronze Age communities living in this area makes them all the more important and exciting. Most local finds have come from nearer the sea, on the sandy lands which were easier to work for people with only simple tools to work the soil. Here (in what is now Wissett) they were on heavier clay land, providing evidence that, by the Bronze Age (about 2100-750 BC), people had begun to move up the river valley and to clear the land for agriculture.

Why the two groups were buried is a matter of conjecture. Were they left to be recovered later? Were they some kind of offering, part of a Bronze Age ritual? Certainly, the fifteen objects

– axe-heads, spears and rapier blades - had been carefully laid out in the ground, suggesting this was more than a mere disposal of unwanted items. From their condition, it would appear that some had never been used, while others show signs of having been damaged or resharpened. There is also some suggestion from the evidence that they may have been manufactured on or near to the find-site rather than traded to the community who were living here. To prove that would require further excavation, but would be very exciting.

As Brian describes the finds, his enthusiasm is obvious. “They are fantastic. They look as though they had only recently been made in a modern forge.” It is true: the shapes are simple but elegant, the surface smooth and clean. More than three thousand years under the soil has left them virtually unchanged.

But now that they are exposed to air, the process of oxidization has started and the business of arresting that decline and ensuring that their condition will be stabilised for the future is the next stage in their progress. The business of raising enough money to complete that process and to create a display that befits their quality and their importance to the area is Brian’s current task. But his eyes are also set on future possibilities. “Wouldn’t it be good to create a reproduction of how these things looked with their original handles and shafts”, he says. “Then we could let schoolchildren handle them and see exactly how they were used. It would bring them to life.” And then there’s the possibility of further exploration of the area where they were found.

But two hoards aren’t enough for Brian. He has discovered that in 1839 another hoard was dug up in Bramfield. There were no county archaeology units back then and, because the axe-heads were interpreted as weapons rather than tools, they ended up in the Royal Armoury in the Tower of London. Nowadays, they have been moved to the store-rooms of the Armouries Museum in Leeds. Brian can’t wait to go and see them. Is it a twinkle in his eye or a steely glance when he says “Wouldn’t it good to see them back here”?

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## HALESWORTH AND THE GREAT WAR

*As we draw near to the centenary of the outbreak of World War I, Halesworth's Alan Clapson describes his mission to commemorate the men of Halesworth who served their country during the conflict*

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It was shortly after moving to Halesworth in the late 1990s that my wife and I attended the annual Remembrance Service at the town's war memorial. During this very moving service the names of those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice and who were listed on the memorial were respectfully read out by members of the local British Legion. Having over the years attended several similar services it came as a surprise that the information given about each of these casualties amounted to no more than their initials and surname.

Having by now retired and having, from an early age, had a great interest in British military history, I decided to carry out some research to see if I could fill in the details regarding each of those listed, such as their full name, where and when they had died and what regiment or branch of the armed services they had served in. Little did I know at the time what an intriguing and long-term project this would turn out to be? Right from the start I decided to concentrate only on the war dead from the Great War, 1914-19, as surprisingly these veterans are far easier to research than later casualties. After consulting the Suffolk Roll of Honour and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission record, I found in some cases this led to more questions than answers. This, I discovered, depended on how the family of the deceased and the local authorities had responded to appeals for information at the war's end. My next line of research were the wartime copies of the *Halesworth Times* newspapers, held on microfilm at the Lowestoft Record Office, which I found to be a superb source of information.

It was after going through every copy printed during the war that my research began to broaden out to cover as many of the town's pre-war citizens and their service as I could possibly trace. For, as I read through the

articles and announcements in the newspapers, I realised that apart from the war dead so many of the town's menfolk had suffered life-changing wounds and illnesses both physical and mental. In the days long before the introduction of the Welfare State and modern medicines, these were to prove traumatic for both the casualties and their families. How could a man who, prior to enlistment, had been employed as a farm or general labourer manage minus a limb or his sight! This then proved to me that these men were as much a casualty of the war as those who were laid in a foreign field.



*The medals of Private Ebenezer Brown, killed in action in October 1918, together with the commemorative bronze plaque in his honour.*

Over the intervening years I have to date been able to confirm the details of all the 70 men listed on the memorial as Great War casualties, with a further six soldiers who, for whatever reason, had not been included in the final list of names inscribed in stone. I also found a total of nineteen men who, although natives of Halesworth, had then moved elsewhere and are now remembered on memorials the length and breadth of the country.

As for non-fatal casualties and those who ended the war unscathed, I have now accounted for 36

of those born and resident in Halesworth who served in the Royal Navy, with over 350 others who served in the army. This last category is the most difficult to find and confirm because the vast majority of the war records for the millions who served in the army were destroyed in a German bombing raid on London in WW2. What records remain, either partial or complete, were salvaged from the depository where they were stored. They can now be found at the National Archives in what is termed the 'Burnt Records' because of the fire and water damage they sustained. If you are lucky and they can be deciphered, these can be a great source of information. Regrettably though, due to the large number of records destroyed, it is very difficult to identify many individual soldiers. One research source which does remain virtually complete, however, are the medal index cards of which there are over six million.



*The first Halesworth man to die in the Great War:  
Seaman Walter Adamson, d. 15 Oct. 1914 aged 18*

These, combined with both the relevant medal and silver war badge rolls, can, if the individual is listed, fill in some of the blank spaces concerning a soldier's service. In the main this only applies if the researcher is looking for a soldier of whom they have some relevant details, such as regimental number etc. or a more uncommon name. One example in the 1911 census: a single Caleb Muttitt is listed as

having been born and living in Halesworth, with no other person in the country sharing this name. A search of the medal index cards shows that Caleb served as a Private in the Northamptonshire Regt. On the other hand, if the search is for a soldier named John Brown, there are a total of 2,764 men listed under this name. Without any of the previously mentioned information, the task of finding the correct soldier is virtually impossible.

*Gales Almanac* for 1914 lists the population of Halesworth as 2,258. Allowing for women and girls and those men too young, elderly or infirm to have served, I believe the approximate total of those liable to be conscripted would have been somewhere around the 700 mark. With 480 men now confirmed I still have some way to go, although, as previously mentioned, I will never be able to prove what regiment or corps some of these soldiers served in.

During 2008, to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the end of WW1, I mounted a small display in the Halesworth Museum. This consisted of artefacts, medals, ephemera etc. from my own collection, all relating to the men of the town who had served. This proved a very worthwhile exercise. I not only managed to gain more information but the Museum received a gift of the medals awarded to Col. Sgt. Clifford Goodwin who had served during both the Boer and First War with the local Territorials. As my personal collection has now grown, I am hoping in 2014 to mount a larger display to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of 'The War To End All Wars'.

The ultimate aim of all of my research is to pay due respect to the men, women and children from our town who, during some of the darkest days in our country's history, contributed to total victory over the Kaiser's Germany.

Whether my efforts will be produced in book form or as a website has not yet been decided, but I am determined that it will be a fitting tribute to all of those from Halesworth who did their duty, whether on the home front, at sea, in the air or on one of the many bloody battlefields around the globe.

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## HALESWORTH'S WANDERING POET

*Vic Gray follows in the footsteps of a Halesworth man who fought back in his own unique way when recession struck his business nearly 200 years ago.*

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I keep bumping into John Hugman.

I first came across him when putting together the Museum's exhibition, 'Sporting Halesworth'. He was the man who wrote the poem 'Similitude between life and the Game of Bowls' which was inscribed over the door of the pavilion at the Angel Bowls Club, behind the Angel Inn. Then the Museum was presented with a copy of a painting which bore his signature, a very amateur ('untutored' might be a kinder word) painting, but a very informative one, showing the view from his summerhouse towards the Rectory and the windmills beyond.

So who was this poet-painter? He was clearly a man who did not allow his artistic limitations to hold him back. He just went out and did it!

Hugman was born in 1770, the son of another John, a tanner, whose trade the son would in due course follow and eventually inherit in 1814. Judging from the location of his summerhouse, the business must have been in or behind Chediston Street. By the time he took over the business, he had already won a certain local reputation as a versifier, putting his pen to paper whenever a suitable subject caught his eye. He had launched into the great Halesworth Theatre Wars of 1808 with some witty swipes at the protagonists in his 'Halesworth Dunciad' and had written verses in praise of James Lockwood, 'The Halesworth Pedestrian', who earned fame by walking sixty miles in twelve hours.

That seemed all there was to know. Then an idle hour on the Internet led me to a reference to a document in the Library of the Society of Genealogists, and once more John Hugman became intriguing. What I found when I eventually made my way to the Library up a side street in Clerkenwell was a copy made by a descendant, probably in the 1950s, of what are now almost certainly lost original notebooks by Hugman. He had, it turns out, gone bankrupt in 1823, a victim of the depression which hit trade

in the years after the Napoleonic Wars. By the time he had paid off his creditors at the rate of 16 shillings in the pound, he had little left to support his wife and six children. There was small prospect of alternative work. The thought of accepting the meagre relief doled out by the parish was, presumably, one he found hard to accept. Instead, at the age of 53, he resolved to try to make a living from his poetic talents.

On 24 July 1823 he stepped onto the stage of the Fisher theatre (on the site of the present Rifle Hall) which he had so boldly defended in verse fifteen years before. To what the *Suffolk Chronicle* described as 'a very numerous and genteel audience', he gave a programme of recitations, mingling his own poems with readings from Byron, Goldsmith and Dr Johnson. Encouraged by the response, he set off for Woodbridge, where an audience of 31 was appreciative, then on to Ipswich where the Mayor was among 59 people who applauded him and thence to Colchester where he appeared in the Town Hall.

The success of this tour encouraged Hugman so much that he determined on making this his future life. In June, he set off on a longer trip, starting in Uxbridge and working his way up the Thames to Henley, giving six performances on the way. At Henley someone gave him the idea of publishing a book of his poems. Thus spurred on, in the next year, he had some of his individual poems printed as broadsheets in batches of 200. While on tour, he managed to sell 10,000 of these and, on the back of this success, ventured on his first book of poems, getting his old friend Thomas Tippell, the Halesworth printer, to produce it under the title 'Original poems in the moral, heroic, pathetic and other styles: by a Traveller'.

Hugman's formula was now complete. Over the next few years, his tours spread wider and wider across Britain, reaching as far as Southampton, Brighton, Birmingham and Leeds. They were punishing schedules. In the

evenings there would be recitations in the local town hall, Assembly Rooms or hotel. He would perform and sell copies of his broadsheets and books. During the day he was travelling or, where time permitted, ventured out on door-to-door selling expeditions. When he was near enough to home, his wife or older sons (to whom he was clearly devoted) would come and join him for a day or two and whenever he could, he would send money home to support the family.

The notebooks record his journeys over the next few years, giving details of how many books he sold and, in some cases, to whom (Ladies' Seminaries were good customers!). Astonishingly his book of poems went through eighteen editions, a remarkable number for an amateur poet who had once been a tanner, and a great tribute to the grit and determination of one who refused to be defeated by hard times

## NEWS IN BRIEF

The big news at the Museum is its technological transformation. Thanks to legacy gifts, the Museum is now equipped with three up-to-date computers, which are being brought into service both for visitors to and researchers at the Museum and for our volunteers who will not only be cataloguing, at greatly improved speed, onto these machines but will be adding the vast number of research notes and tools at our disposal. Visitors will be able to access these, as well as many valuable historical sources via the Internet – another innovation for the Museum.

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Under the guidance of Brian Howard, our website [www.halesworthmuseum.org.uk](http://www.halesworthmuseum.org.uk) is being rapidly updated and constructed in a form to which any of our volunteers can add material. It now has a fresher, brighter look and contains lots more information. Visit the site and see for yourself!

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Sheila and Michael Gooch published several very important books on Halesworth history, and the researches they undertook while writing these were very extensive. The Museum has been fortunate enough to receive these notes as a donation and work is now underway by our volunteer, Ivan Sparkes, himself another important Halesworth historian, to make them accessible to other people seeking to know more about many aspects of the town's history.

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Halesworth Middle School may have closed – much to the town's regret – but it will be long remembered thanks to the donation the Museum of many items reflecting the work and life of the School across its lifetime. These include school magazines, photographs, cups and trophies and even the school bell.

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Thanks to a new partnership between the Museum and the Millennium Green Trustees, next summer our Curator, Mike Fordham, will be leading an excavation on the newly acquired Angel Meadow area of the Green. This was certainly a part of the busy quay complex which once thrived here, but the hope is that there will be even earlier finds to be made on this site.

### THE HALESWORTH AND DISTRICT MUSEUM

The Station, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 8BZ

Curator: Mike Fordham (01986 873030)

**Winter Opening Times (until the end of April): Tuesday and Thursday 10am to 12.30pm.**

*The Museum is an Accredited Museum and a Registered Charity (No. 1002545)*