



How well do you know

Stowmarket? Join us on **Wednesday July 3rd** (Stowupland Village Hall @ 7.30pm) when **Darren Dordoy** will take us on a photographic tour of **Stowmarket, Past and Present.**

Can't make July 3rd, then join us on August 7th for something very different when Robert Halliday will be taking us on round Suffolk, sharing with us what he knows about intriguing and quirky wood carvings on some Church Bench Ends.

But now, Jerry reminds us of our May meeting when we welcomed Geoff Robinson from Worlingworth who spoke to us about a **1721 Emergency Services.**

“This month Neil had managed to get Geoff Robinson along to talk about “The Worlingworth Fire Engine”. Geoff noted as the talk started that in the 18th century many Parishes had their own fire equipment and Stowmarket’s is in the local Food Museum. As far as he was aware Stowupland did not have its own.

Geoff also highlighted some fires that occurred around the county where residents were not so fortunate to have firefighting equipment. In the Middle Ages thatch and wood buildings were at great fire risk, and the only solution was old fire buckets with a chain of helpers passing buckets along to aim towards the seat of the fire. This also needed a water supply so not a great way of doing things. The Bungay fire in 1688, saw three quarters of the town destroyed in 4 hours. 1666 saw the great fire of London lasting 5 days and was tackled by creating the first fire breaks. This meant creating a cleared area so the fire could not spread further, but to do this effectively some property had to be deliberately destroyed. This method is still in use today especially in forest fires and fires on moorland.

Richard Newsham was credited with inventing the Fire Engine which comprised a two-handle pump with a water tank on the back. The tank was filled by man handled buckets of water or connected to a water supply (nearest pond or stream). The pump was positioned and worked by a four man team but after its first use it was found that the water jet did not reach high roofs so a long nozzle was invented and fitted.

George II was so impressed by demonstrations that he ordered one to cover firefighting duties at St James Palace, where he lived while in London. Geoff mentioned that amongst others he knew of one that was in North Walsham in 1725 and another in Ipswich in 1732. The Ipswich one can be seen at the Ipswich Transport Museum.

The Worlingworth engine was stored in a barn at Worlingworth Manor, with a team of volunteers kept on hand for call outs. Geoff informed us that there was no evidence that it had ever been towed by horses or lifted on to a horse and cart in times of emergencies, so depending on where the fire was it could take quite a long time to turn out and get into action. It was bought by John Major for the Parish in 1760 and it continued working until 1927, being decommissioned in 1928.

Notable incidents included a fire at the Manor where a barn caught fire in August 1914. The fire crew were called into action, but as it was at night it took about an hour to get everyone together, however after hard work the barn was saved. Unfortunately, a house next door to a barn caught fire, and again it took about an hour to get the engine into action. Apparently, in the adjacent house, a lady upstairs was giving birth, in spite of all the drama going on next door, she told the midwife that she would not move and calmly carried on. Mum and daughter were fine, and all was well. In an interview with the daughter many years later, she had asked her mum why she didn't move, and she said that she had faith in the fire crew to bring everything under control which in this case happened.

With the decommissioning of the engine the Parish Council took over ownership and it was stored in the local church where it was sadly neglected. Then someone suggested to the current parish council that it might be a good idea to have the engine restored. Geoff approached the producers of the BBC Repair Shop to see if this was the type of work they would do. For those of you who may not have seen this programme, members of the public are encouraged to take their memories along with treasured artifacts, that are now not quite as pristine as they once were, for repair. The BBC agreed and Geoff transported the Fire engine down to the Repair Shop workshop which is situated in Sussex.

Between the Repair Shop agreeing to taking on the task of restoring the engine and the airing of the finished show Geoff and Worlingworth were sworn to secrecy about the details. However Geoff did reveal to his audience that his experience of being involved in the making of the programme was fascinating, The upshot was that the engine is restored to working order, and all involved had great fun shooting water all over the place at the studio.

The week after our meeting Geoff emailed us to let us know that we could watch the restoration of Worlingworth's Fire Engine on:

The BBC's "Repair Shop" - 15th May, 2024.

Despite Geoff's concerns about how he might come across on TV we can reveal it is a worthwhile look and I expect you can find it on Catch Up TV. The Fire engine is now back in its village and Geoff and the team hope to bring it out for community events.

Neil thanked Geoff for his talk and took questions from our audience, thanks once again to Neil for organising this talk. As always Annie and Liz were on hand for welcome refreshments".

While we may not have had our own heritage project broadcast on national TV, on behalf of SLHG Neil has put together a leaflet publicising some aspects of our past.

“Our Village – A Brief Look at Stowupland’s Heritage”

Neil explains ‘this is the title of the group’s recently published leaflet which by now you may already have seen. Our aim is to give an idea of how Stowupland has evolved over time by giving ten brief descriptions of various buildings such as Holy Trinity Church and Freeman’s School along with areas of the village such as Thorney Green and Saxham Street. These descriptions are short, but a QR code is included which when scanned using a smart phone scanner app will link to the corresponding page of our website, where a more in-depth account as well as further illustrations will be found. This is aimed especially towards the many newer residents who would like to know more about the village.

For those less familiar with the village a location map is included along with the What Three Words code. 400 copies have been printed by Gipping Press and are available at various places around the village, at local history group meetings or from the secretary’.

Even as the leaflet was still hot off the press, the wisdom of linking the information to our website became apparent. Neil spends many hours deciphering the manorial rolls and has puzzled over where **Dodds Way** might have been. He has now been able to place this as a ‘lane to Creeting’ that runs beside Bramford Farm, it exists today as a footpath.

Please contact Jerry on 01449 703717 or voden@btinternet.com if you want to make a comment or have a query about Stowupland’s history or our meetings. And especially if you have any memories or photos of the 1940s.



Continuing the theme of **summer fetes**, this month we go to Sheepcote Hall which seems to have been a regular venue. In July 1965 Mr & Mrs Eric Stearn were prepared for our British summer weather as the **‘stalls, sideshow and teas had to be under cover’**.

Three years later in July 1968, the church fete was again being held at Sheepcote Hall but realising that it would clash with the final day of Wimbledon and perhaps mindful that people might be torn between going to a fete or watching Wimbledon, a **Colour TV** had been **‘set in the hall switched on so that visitors could watch the finals at**

Wimbledon? This was only the 2nd year of Wimbledon being broadcast in colour. Though I am a bit puzzled as in 1968 the men's finals were scheduled to be played on the Friday (this was the last year for the men's tournament to be completed on the Friday) but did bad weather mean the singles finals had to be played on the Saturday; or was the interest in the ladies' doubles finals in which the British player Ann Jones with Francoise Durr were beaten by the American pair, Rosie Casal and Billie Jean King.

According to Google the winners of the singles finals were Rod Laver and Billie Jean King and 1968 was the first year that the tournament offered prize money. The total prize money for the event was £26,150. The winner of the men's title earned £2,000 while the women's singles champion earned £750.



On 19th century maps Sheepcote Hall is called Sheepgate Hall, and I apologise for the poor-quality image, but it is the only one in our archives.

According to the 1851 census Thos Stearn is aged 56 was a farmer of 230 acres employing 16 men and 3 boys, In the 1950s Eric Stearn's wife, Hilda, was President of the Stowupland and St Peter's WI. Her mother Mrs Forrest had been the first president when in 1939 Stowupland combined with Creeting St Peter to establish a local WI. By the 1970's seven of the farm barns were being used by George McDonald for storing and displaying china and glassware and then in 1981 planning permission was sought to convert one barn into a dwelling.

FROM MEMORY LANE

Do you remember your first experience of watching TV? Was it in the days of a small screen, with a grainy black & white image or have you only known good quality colour TV? Do you remember the young girl on the test card or watching till the small dot shrank to nothing at the end of the days broadcasting?



MR. HENRY GILES (left), Regional Director of the Property Services Agency, presenting Mr. Robinson with the Imperial Service Medal.

Back in 1948, local resident Sid Robinson **'built a television receiving set...it was believed to be the first seen in Stowupland.'** Sid's

son remembered that his Dad was the go-to-man in the village for getting your TV repaired – back in the day when electrical gadgets were repairable and not disposable items.

Sid had a very varied career, maybe something for a future Telstar. As seen here it culminated in being presented with the Imperial Service Medal in July 1977.