

Polstead Village Recorder's Report for 2009 – 10

During the past year we have continued to develop our collection of records of Polstead and have received many welcome additions to our collection, including many old photographs and publications. We are in the process of organising these to make them as accessible as possible, particularly to local residents and those with past links with Polstead.

Our main activities have included the following.

Current events

We have continued to record events in Polstead which we feel may be of particular interest to future generations. These have included, first, the major excavation in June 2009 of the area of the churchyard extension by the Suffolk Archaeological Team. Their full report is awaited, but we know that one most interesting find was a pair of ancient pots, apparently of differing periods which, most unusually, were unbroken (*see below*).

Secondly, the erection of estate fencing around the extension (to match the new fencing at Polstead Hall) and the renewal of the rest of the estate fencing around the churchyard by Kevin King (whose workshop is in Stackwood Road) (*see below*); and the repair and part rebuilding of the North wall of the churchyard by John Presley, who worked with Bill Richardson on the new Cathedral tower and is responsible for conservation work on the remains of the abbey buildings at Bury St Edmunds.

Thirdly, on-going events, as opportunity offers, for example, the Parish Hog Roast in September 2009 (*see below*).



Excavating Bronze Age pots



Kevin King installing new fence



Hungry residents at Hog Roast

If anyone has pictures of local events that they feel would be of long term interest we would be very grateful to receive copies, particularly if they have been taken on a digital camera.

Records of the past

We have continued to make a number of notable additions to our collection of records, in addition to the many individual pictures, as mentioned above.

Census records

Martin Mitchell has again very kindly added to our collection of census records with the 1861 census. We now have a full set of the census records for Polstead from 1861 to 1901 to assist those searching for information about their relatives and to build up a picture of how the community has developed over the years.

Burial records

Martin and Jackie Mitchell have kindly up-dated the index to the detailed burial records we have from 1876 to 1986; and have also helped to improve the map that was compiled by the Womens Institute in the 1980s. We intend to complete this process in the course of this year.

Polstead News

Erica Pomerans has kindly donated an extensive collection of copies of the Polstead News from its initiation in 1973 to its incorporation into the current combined Community News of Leavenheath, Nayland, Polstead and Stoke by Nayland in 2006. We hope, in due course to complete this collection from other sources.

History of Polstead School

Anne Lewis has been carrying forward her work on the history of Polstead School (1886 to 1990); and she would greatly welcome any further material, such as photographs etc. that may be available.

Public Houses in Polstead

Anne Lewis is also continuing to gather information about the public houses that have existed in Polstead; and would welcome any information and records that may be available. She is particularly interested to verify the site of the Rising Sun Inn, which we think was located at Hadleigh Heath.

Open Day

We held a very successful Open Day at Polstead Village Hall on Sunday 15 November. The intention was to enable all who were interested, particularly local residents, to view the collection of records that we hold and to investigate what special interest these might have for them.

The event generated a great deal of interest and attracted well over a hundred visitors, mostly from Polstead but a number from much further away, including Basingstoke, London and the South Coast. In addition to the general interest in old photographs, maps and other documents, there was particular interest in the census and burial records we have as people searched for records of their past relations; and it also proved to be a very pleasant social occasion.



Open Day 15 November 2009



Open Day



Open Day

We made enough from selling refreshments during the day to finance the rent of the hall and assure that we are able to repeat the event this year on Sunday 15 November 2010.

BBC Suffolk

Bill Wigglesworth was interviewed on BBC Suffolk when Leslie Dolphin's dartboard led her programme to Polstead in February 2010. He found himself described, appropriately enough, as "the old recorder"; and had an opportunity briefly to explain this role to a wider audience, as well as listening to a selection of locals giving vivid descriptions of their experience of Polstead and its past.

Suffolk Recorders' Day, October 2009

We jointly attended the Suffolk Recorders' Day on 17 October 2009. The new venue at Elmswell Community Centre proved excellent and the day was very successful. Topics included items of great interest relating to Ipswich and Hadleigh; and we were particularly grateful for advice from the Suffolk Records Office about the care of archives and their deposit on loan to the Records Office.

Inquiries

We continue to receive a wide range of inquiries, mostly about possible links with past residents of Polstead, as the interest in family history continues to burgeon. The most recent inquiry relates to the location of the workhouse in Polstead up until 1834, when local workhouses were combined on to a site at Semer (opposite the present site of Letts Swimming Pools). If any one has any knowledge on this subject we would be most interested to hear about it.

Future activities

We intend during the next year to:

- (1) progress the projects mentioned above;
- (2) hold another Open Day on 15 November 2010 which, as before, will be open to anyone interested.
- (3) establish a recording facility for oral testimony of current residents; and
- (4) continue to develop the information available on the Polstead web site.

Any suggestions about the scope of our activities would be most welcome.

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