



Alresford Historical & Literary Society

NEWSLETTER
1st December 2021



THE SOCIETY'S PLANS & NEWS

Our first live meeting in 18 months was a resounding success. We had an audience of 103 for Peter Pooley's talk, comprising 79 members plus 24 visitors, a superb result! Yes, we now know that the quality of sound was a problem, particularly for those at the back and we plan to try to find solutions in time for the next meeting. It will certainly be better when we can all feel more comfortable sitting together closer to the front, but for the Omicron moment we plan to keep socially distanced, improve the use of the microphone and also locate acoustically dead spots and advise everyone to avoid them.

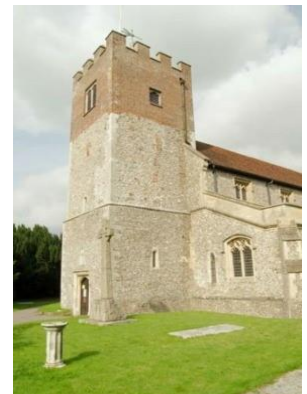
News of our member Dr Hugh Bethell MBE, (hjnbethell@gmail.com) (Director Staywell Programme, Basingstoke & Alton Cardiac Rehab); he launches a book *Get off the Couch, Before It's Too Late!* this month (<https://www.waterstones.com/events/search/category/1/author/5433268>) and it will also be available at Oxley's bookshop.

The Society's Plans? We are in the process of finalising plans for 2022 with monthly live talks, summer "outings" and the society's annual dinner. The 16th March meeting will a special event, the book launch of *A New History of Alresford*, edited by our captive academic Brian Tippett, who by the way also contributes the following commentary on Peter Pooley's excellent talk. Before Christmas we will send out forms and to renew membership or to join. We are pleased to confirm that annual membership remains a snip at £10!

REVIEW OF THE LAST MEETING

Peter Pooley, *Unremarked Ancient Curiosities in Alresford*

To do history the Peter Pooley way you must have a sharp eye and an enquiring mind. In this fascinating and original talk Peter opened our eyes to a myriad of local curiosities that he has spotted but most of us have never noticed — graffiti incised into walls, elaborate door knockers, a triangle marking the original line of the church roof before its Victorian enlargement, boot scrapers (one a twin, large male and small female), gravestones, mysterious locked doors in the churchyard wall, roofs steeply angled to take thatch but now tiled (the 'Alresford pitch'), all with a story to tell about the church or the town. Why does the war memorial stand by the church door and not in Broad Street? Because that was what benefactor Herbert Walford of Arlebury House wanted, and he was paying the bill. Local GP Dr Hodgson tragically lost two young sons in the Great War, both commemorated on brass plaques in the church. His home and his practice were at the Lindens in East Street where three ancient doorbells remain marked 'Servants', 'Surgery' and 'Night', the latter to summon the doctor from his bed. Peter has been out and about with his ruler and discovered that the 'pole' (a medieval unit of measurement derived from the pole used to control oxen), applies to many dimensions, including Alresford's burgage plots and the modern cricket pitch. [BT]



GLIMPSES OF ALRESFORD'S PAST (8) – by Brian Tippett

AN EDWARDIAN CHRISTMAS AT THE RUNNING HORSE



An early 20th century view of the Running Horse
(Photo courtesy of Godfrey Andrews *alresfordheritage*.)



The Running Horse in Pound Hill closed about six years ago but in 1905/6 it was in its heyday. Under landlord Richard Blencowe it was then the hub of the social and community life of what a newspaper called Alresford's 'western end'. Christmas Festivities over eight days began with the Running Horse Sick and Benefit Supper, at which the local MP Mr W G Nicholson was guest of honour. Boxing Day was packed with events: a comic football match in Mr Beasley's field, a tug of war, a huge feast (one of the joints of beef supplied by Mr Hasted's butchery weighed 861/2lbs)..and a smoking concert in the evening with innumerable toasts. The climax came with the New Year concert on Monday evening. A newspaper reporter wrote:

"Songs following upon songs in such quick succession, the unusual situation was witnessed of the Chairman calling a five minutes halt for breathing time, the usual prevailing state of things in other places being the difficulty experienced in getting singers to come up to the scratch. Among those who contributed to the programme was Winchester's well-known comic, Corp. Henton, of the Rifle Brigade, who [said the reporter] literally brought down the house in his character songs".



← Fortunately, in spite of the Corporal's efforts at comedic destruction, the building has survived until the present day. [BT]



THE 1921 CENSUS RECORDS ARE COMING

For those of us with an interest in researching our family history the release of the 1921 Census early next year will be an important event. It will then be possible to see the pages for addresses across the whole country and these will reveal more personal detail than in any previously released census. For example, employment status and divorces are revealed for the first time, and if your Alresford house is an established one you can learn what went on there in 1921. Such details have never before been released since they are held confidential by law for 100 years. Disappointingly, however, the census will, at least initially, not be accessible free of charge. Access will be through the family history website www.findmypast.co.uk/ and they will charge £2.50 for every record transcript and £3.50 for every original record image. It is hoped that access will eventually be cheaper and easier and that the Society will be able to use the census to throw new light on Alresford in the crucial years just after the end of the Great War. [GG]

NEXT MEETINGS

Our next three meetings will all be held in St John's, 7 for 7.30pm start. Dates for your diaries:

Wednesday 19th January John Miller *John Gielgud, an Actor and His Times*

Wednesday 16th February Charles Ackroyd *Historic Huts of Antarctica*

Wednesday 16th March Brian Tippett *Book Launch!*

The 2022 programme will be distributed soon as will membership renewal information. We will also send you a January Newsletter further setting things out.



We wish to thank members for their loyalty to the society during unusual times. You have been superb to have stuck with us and deserve to have a very Merry Christmas. Best Wishes from your Committee: Glenn Gilbertson, Brian Tippett, Vic Prior, Mike Dickens, Charles Ackroyd, Nancy Webb and John Miller, and our President Peter Pooley also sends his greetings.

Mike Dickens

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