SAFFRON WALDEN HISTORICAL Journal

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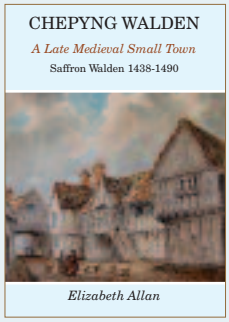
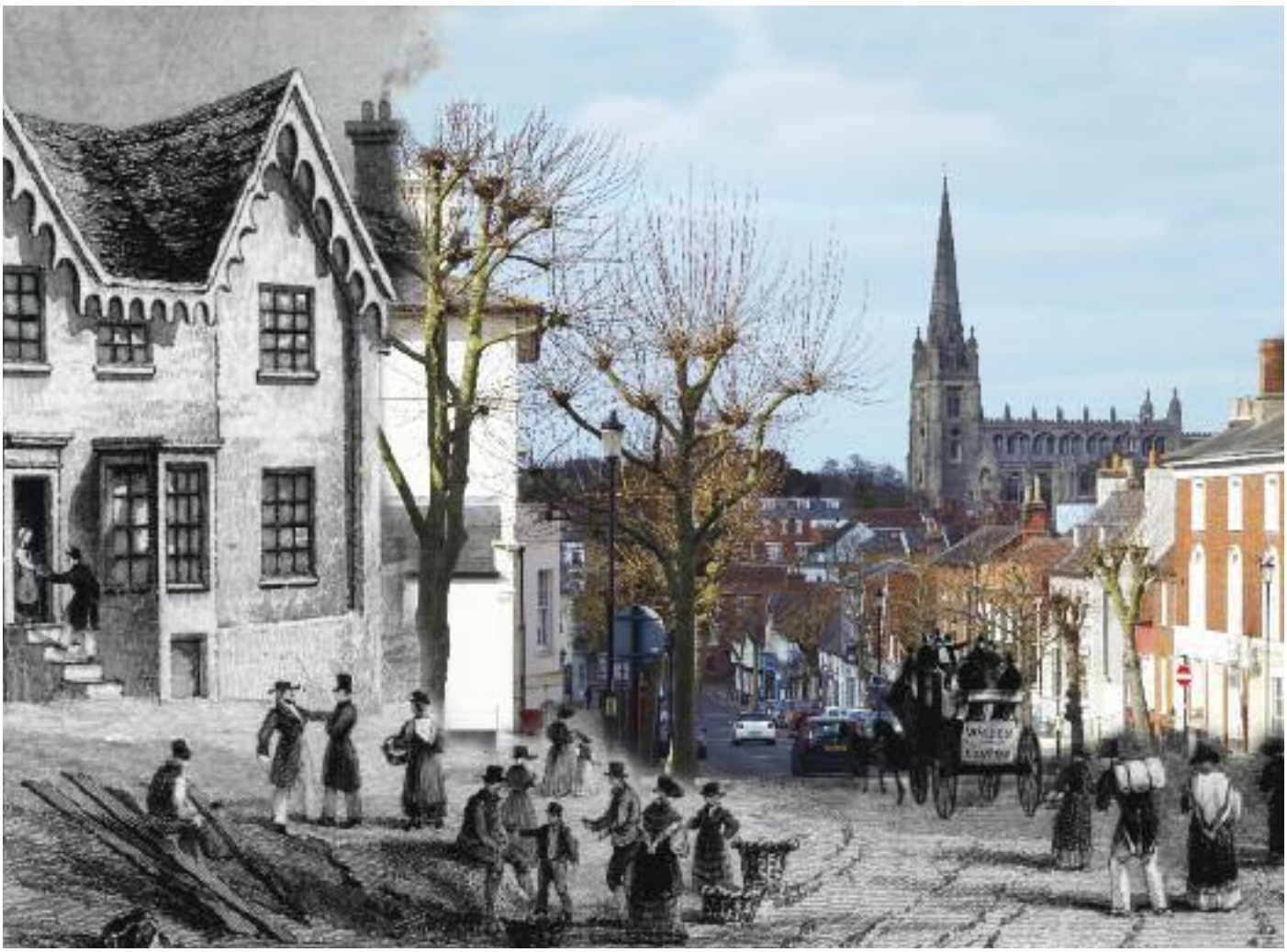






In this issue

Saffron Walden High Street
Dr Hedley Bartlett
WWI Conscientious Objector
Ancient skeleton found in Walden
Anglo-Saxon Pasture



Saffron Walden High Street, Then and Now

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SAFFRON WALDEN HISTORICAL Journal

New Series Vol 14
No. 29 Spring 2015

Contents

Human remains identified at the Tudor Works Site, Saffron Walden	*Maria Medlycott*	1
Cornelius Barritt: a WWI conscientious objector from Saffron Walden	*Martyn Everett*	2
The Remarkable Dr Hedley Bartlett	*Zofia Everett*	6
Obituary: Dr Kenneth Dixon (1920-2015)		9
Gray Palmer, High Street - Gents, Youths and Juvenile Outfitters: the story so far	*Robert Palmer*	10
A Stroll down Saffron Walden High Street in the Early 1950s	*Bruce Munro*	11
The High Street Then and Now		17
Then and Now: Saffron Walden High Street, 1800s -1900s - 2000s		18
Anglo-Saxon Common Pasture		19
The Location of Anglo-Saxon Common Pasture: a study of Clavering and Langley, Essex	*Stuart Moore*	20
A 16th Century Dagger and Distal Portion of a Scabbard found at Wicken Bonhunt, Essex	*Bari Hooper*	26
Magna Carta 800th Anniversary		27
William Gray Senior and Junior: Undertakers of Great Sampford	*Adrian G. Gray*	28
The Elm Grove Summerhouse: a geological curiosity	*Gerald Lucy*	33
Three major new local historical books		35
History News		36

Front cover: The High Street in 1832 *(©Saffron Walden Museum)* and the High Street today *(©Nick Crawley)*. See p.17.

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Editorial

The High Street is the first impression that many receive on entering Saffron Walden – whether via the quite rural descent down Windmill Hill, or the more urban aspect entering from London Road – in both cases dominated by the beautiful church spire. An unusual cover design by Nick Crawley, blending 19th and 21st century, introduces the historic thoroughfare as the focus of a number of features in this issue. The theme is prompted by a nostalgic stroll along the High Street as it appeared in the early 1950s, a more leisurely world reflected also in David Campbell's iconic black-and-white photographs: always with his camera-work, there was this narrative quality and strong sense of place, in contrast to the photo-shopped digital snaps of today. Interesting characters peopled the High Street, none more so than Dr Hedley Bartlett whose practice was there, and who owned one of the first automobiles seen on a street now choked with traffic. The Friends' Meeting House in the High Street has always attracted people prepared to suffer for their beliefs: one such was Cornelius Barritt, conscientious objector in WWI whose shocking experiences are recounted here for the first time. Among the High Street's changing retail scene, there remains one family firm that has stood the test of time for almost 175 years, Gray Palmer, who have generously sponsored this issue of the Journal.

Other articles in the Journal explore the wider landscape, its once-pastoral greens and commons, the archaeology lying beneath its fields, and the old rocks that litter those fields. At a time when the extraordinary discovery of King Richard III's skeleton has captured imagination, we can only envy the scientific resources that might enable us to find out more about the ancient bones found recently by builders at Debden Road (see opposite page). Likewise, the trade records of a village undertaker, shedding light on Victorian burial practices, remind us that the 'short and simple annals of the poor' often sink into obscurity on which only surviving documents might throw any light.

Fortunately, we have fine historians to bring the past to life, and in this issue we review three important new books, one of which is a landmark volume of medieval research on Saffron Walden, which the Saffron Walden Historical Society, in its imprint of SWHS Publications, is proud to publish. We hope that many of our readers will be able to join us at the forthcoming launch of *Chepyng Walden - a Late Medieval Small Town: Saffron Walden 1438-1490* by Elizabeth Allan (see enclosed notice).

SAFFRON WALDEN HISTORICAL Society

Website: www.saffronwaldenhistory.org.uk

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The Saffron Walden Historical Society was founded in the 1930s and still today supports Essex heritage through its lectures, visits, journals and books.
The committee arranges monthly lectures from autumn to spring.
There is also an annual meeting in May with a talk and a summer visit.
New members are welcome.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: £7.00 per member. Visitors £2 per lecture.

Chairman: Revd Canon Michael Swindlehurst, 9 Radwinter Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 3HU
Secretary: Kathryn Fiddock, 6 Gallows Hill, Saffron Walden, CB11 4DA
Treasurer: Malcolm White, 10 Victoria Gardens, Saffron Walden, CB11 3AF

PROGRAMME OF LECTURES 2015

All meetings Wednesdays 7.45 pm at Friends' Meeting House, High Street, Saffron Walden.

Wed 22 April 2015	Rural Royalty: words and music about Tudor royalty and nobility in East Anglia: Ancestral Voices
Wed 20 May 2015	Annual General Meeting. A short talk on St Mark's College, Audley End.
Wed 23 Sept 2015	Lecture - subject tba
Wed 28 Oct 2015	Living in Saffron Walden in the 18th Century: Hilary Walker
Wed 25 Nov 2015	'Over the Hills and Far Away', Soldiers' Correspondence from the Napoleonic Wars: Alan Moorcroft

Saffron Walden Historical Journal

The Saffron Walden Historical Society publishes the Journal twice a year, price £3.00 from Waitrose, the Tourist Information Centre, Saffron Walden Museum, Lankester Antiques and other outlets. Selected articles from back issues can be found on the Saffron Walden Historical Society website: **www.saffronwaldenhistory.org.uk** Proposals for new, previously unpublished articles are welcome, relating to the history of Saffron Walden or NW Essex. They should first be discussed with the Editor. Illustrations should be supplied with proof of provenance and permission for publication, and submitted as separate hard copy or high-resolution jpeg attachments. No guarantee of publication can be made. All Journal articles are copyright, and those wishing to copy articles must obtain permission from the author via the Editor. Selections of articles from previous issues are available free on our website. The Society also publishes a range of history books under the imprint SWHS Publications - see below. **The Society wishes to acknowledge the generous support of Gray Palmer Ltd in sponsoring this issue of the journal - see back cover.** *Statements in the Journal reflect the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the editors or publishers. Every effort is made to establish copyright of illustrations, but we are pleased to correct in a future issue any errors of attribution.*

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SWHS Publications

(On sale at Saffron Walden Tourist Information)

Vol 1: Land, Agriculture and Industry in North-West Essex by Geoffrey Ball *£7.50*

Vol 2: The Place Names of Saffron Walden by Malcolm White *£8.50*

Vol 3: Sir Thomas Smith: scholar, statesman and son of Saffron Walden by Jeremy Collingwood *£7.50*

Vol 4: Chepyng Walden - a Late Medieval Small Town: Saffron Walden 1438-1590 (forthcoming) by Elizabeth Allan *[see p.35]*

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