

Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING AND 40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Friday 27 June 2014



About ninety members and friends packed into Nayland Village Hall and the Chairman, John Alexander, opened the meeting by stating how and why the Society was formed. Past achievements included the Restoration of Horkesley Lock, initiating a Local List of unlisted buildings and structures in the parish, acquisition of the Nayland Meadow and Lot 3, Thrift Farm. He said: "we can be proud of our Achievements which I firmly believe add to the quality of life in Nayland and Wiston and its preservation for future generations"..

Wendy Sparrow and Joan Moore, Founding Members of the Society, were presented with bouquets by Andora Carver, Hon. Secretary.

Item 2 on the Agenda was an amendment to the Society's Constitution to the effect that on the dissolution of the Society items of historic and public interest acquired by the Society shall be deposited in the Suffolk Record Office. This was unanimously approved.

Chris Hunt then compered, with great skill and humour, a lively discussion between Valerie Munson, Shirley Scarlett, Eva Rolfe, Roy Norfolk and Rosemary Knox who related stories about what the village was like BCS (before Conservation Society). A slide show of photos illustrated the stories.

For instance, Chris told the audience that Butlers shop, at the junction of Bear Street, Birch Street and Mill Street sold paraffin and paint by the pint, catapult elastic by the yard, nails by the pound and cartridges as well as general hardware.

Farming was the main industry of the village in the 1930s and 40s, through to the early 1960s. Recreation involved the Scouts and the Youth Club, film shows behind the Queen's Head and dances on Saturday evenings in the first floor room at The Mill (which had a smart maple floor).

Harpers Estate, with a gravel road, was the first village development, two years before the Coronation and many families moved there. The Heights were built in the early 1960s and the by-pass at the end of the decade.

There are two names on the WW1 Memorial whose families still live in the village, Oakes and Norfolk and they were represented this evening by Valerie Munson and Roy Norfolk.

Valerie told the audience she was an attendant to the Queen of the May in 1937 (aged six) and her dress was made by Alice Prestney who lived in Fen. Street. She recalled being fitted with a gas mask before the war and the air raid shelter which the family built in the garden of their house in Horkesley Road, still survives intact.



John Alexander and Andora Carver with founder members Wendy Sparrow and Joan Moore



Chris Hunt, Valerie Munson, Shirley Scarlett, Eva Rolfe, Roy Norfolk and Rosemary Knox shared stories about the village

Shirley Scarlett, whose father Dr. McMichael, was the village doctor, came to live in Nayland in 1946 and worked for four years at the Jane Walker Hospital – then known as the Wiston Sanatorium, which were the happiest days of her life. Dr McMichael prescribed his own medicines and Chris commented that “brown medicine was for above the waist and white medicine below”.

Mrs. Walsh, who lived at Stourbank (now Bear House) held tennis parties and fetes in the garden and would often entertain American airmen from nearby bases. Indeed one of them was buried in the garden at his family’s request in the 1950s and Shirley only discovered last year that his body had been taken back The United States.

Shirley also recalled that cows would walk up Fen Street twice a day from the Fens to be milked behind Robert’s shop in the High Street. The resulting free manure was left for the cars to collect on their tyres!

Roy Norfolk remembered Fen Street in the 1950s – Biggs bike shop at no. 1 and Kit Square with five cottages which was Deaves’ Yard. One cottage was the mortuary. They were knocked down and replaced by three houses built on the site. Two families lived in the Ancient House.

At the end of Fen Street were Abell cottages which were knocked down and three houses built on the site. There was also a tannery and concrete factory.

In 1897 Norfolk’s transport business was founded and on 11th January 1915 the first motorbus service went into Sudbury. In 1984 Norfolk’s fleet included seven double decker buses and six single deckers. In 1991 the business was sold to Hedinghams Bus Company.

Eva Rolfe, whose family owned the bicycle shop at the top of Fen Street and who now lives in Wiston Road, filled in some “antidotes”. She recalled dancing at Stourbank – on the grass.

Mrs. Walsh (Stourbank) formed the Over 60’s club and the Walsh Trust. Teas were held at the Old Chapel (URC) in Stoke Road. Eva has been involved ever since and ran a canteen in the Dance Hall (Mill). She recalled the village petrol pumps being commandeered for the war effort, troops being billeted and the village being very dark at night.

The Sanatorium at Wiston was a large enterprise and one fifth of the working population of Nayland were probably employed there. Rosemary Knox arrived in Wiston in 1962, three years after “The San” was closed. The Fox Pub also closed at that time.

She recalled the story of American troops camping in the disused huts and then discovering the pub with amusing consequences.

Questions followed about the Tennis Club, the Pest House, the future of the Scouts and the Scout Hut and “babbing” – fishing for eels which were attracted to the butcher’s sewer outlet into the Mill Stream. The audience also learnt that the Home Guard was based in Bear Street, the nearest Air Raid Siren was at Mile End, Colchester, the Anchor Bridge was mined and there were tank traps in Bear Street.

Martin Wright, Vice Chairman, proposed the Vote of Thanks.

Andora Carver



