

The Friends of the Cardall Collection

NEWSLETTER

No 4: Spring 2009

The search for a home for The Cardall Collection

Since Rene Cardall died in the summer of 2007 the Cardall Collection has faced the uncertainty of not knowing how long it would be able to remain in Mrs Cardall's former home. The property would eventually be sold and the big question was when this would happen and whether we could find a new home for the Collection before we were forced to move.



Over the course of 18 months Committee members walked the town, scratched their heads, met with District Council officers, District and County Councillors and local businesses. A large number of properties were viewed and a multitude of suggestions from the Friends and the general public about possible premises were considered.

Hopes were raised very high on occasions, especially in one particular meeting with Stratford District Council officers. However all of these efforts were to no avail. Either the premises offered were too big, too far from the town, too expensive, too small, potentially difficult in terms of access, or in one case

suddenly snapped up by a local business who could meet the landlord's terms.

Just as we were despairing of ever being able to find somewhere suitable at an affordable price, Major and Mrs Mills offered the former Labour Exchange building in Warwick Road. There were a number of issues with this building due to its construction and age, but it did have the advantage of being roughly the right size and near to the centre of the town. Furthermore Major Mills was prepared to offer it at a substantially reduced rent and on terms that the Committee felt were acceptable.

The Committee announced this breakthrough at the Friends AGM in September 2008, anticipating moving into the premises within a few weeks. The detailed negotiations with Major Mills' representatives, and the legal processes involved in setting up the lease took far longer than we anticipated. After an extremely frustrating delay, we have now signed a lease for between 2 and 5 years commencing Jan 8th 2009.



The picture above shows the Chairman holding the original Labour Exchange sign outside the building with Major Mills second from the right and other members of the Friends of the Cardall Collection.

**The Cardall Collection is a collection of artefacts and memorabilia associated with Southam and its history. It was started by the late Mr Jack Cardall, and until her recent death, its custodian was Mrs Irene Cardall. Representatives of the County Museum Service have inspected the collection and agree that it is an important record of the life and times of our market town. The Collection urgently needs a permanent home in Southam where it can be displayed to the public, and be used and appreciated by local history societies, reminiscence groups, researchers and schools.*

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Now begins the task of preparing the Old Labour Exchange to accept its new tenants. There is some minor refurbishment and electrical safety work to be done before we can move in, and this will commence in the week beginning Jan 12th. Meanwhile, the Cardall Collection remains intact - safely boxed and documented at Beech Loft, by kind permission of the new owners, Ken & Jacky Graham.

Exhibition News Southam Celebrates

Over the two weeks from Oct 6th to Oct 18th 2008 we presented a display in Southam Library of photographs and items showing Southam Residents celebrating various events during the 20th Century.



Alongside the Exhibition Barbara Pink, assisted by a large number of volunteers, devised and ran a series of 5 workshops for classes from all three of Southam's Primary Schools. The children came along to learn about the photographs, act out scenes from the old Lady Godiva parades and decorate shoes as part of understanding the costumes worn by various characters from the town in days gone by. In total over 160 children, teachers and classroom helpers attended the two days of workshops. Ken Graham can be seen in the picture above relating some of the history behind one of the photographs to an attentive audience.

Barbara is pictured showing the children the pair of clown's shoes worn by Billy Stevens when he entertained the townspeople at various events.

The results of the children's efforts at decorating shoes were displayed on top of the Library bookshelves for several weeks following the workshops to encourage children to bring their parents in to view the exhibits



Mary Thompson introduced the children to the story of Lady Godiva and then the children dressed up and played out the story to their classmates - much to the enjoyment of all present.

Exhibitions and workshops have now been put 'on hold' whilst we concentrate on setting up the new home for the Collection.

Oral History News

This project has been proceeding steadily since May 2007, when the late Mrs Cardall gave the first interview describing her late husband's life. She subsequently added another recording providing remarkably lucid comments on some of the interesting objects in the Collection. Sadly Rene passed away only a few weeks later but nobody listening to her excellent talk would guess the fragile state of her health at the time.

We have since recorded the memories of several more Southam residents. Michael Hill gave us an entertaining talk about his life in the Fire Brigade, some of which was used in an interactive program devised by Adrian Beaumont and stored on CD. This computer presentation was used by groups of school children during the Library workshops. They found it fascinating, particularly the description Mike gave of the rescue of a cow from the cellar of a local farmhouse. Michael has also been active in collecting more contributions.

Another contributor to the CD was Mary Grant who talks about her childhood at the Convent. She recalls, among many other

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things, a nearby spring which supplied the Convent and her father's farm with water. Others mention the Convent in their recordings, particularly Mary Rock, who gives a very detailed account of her experiences there as a school secretary.

Betty Gardner, the late Rosemary Trussler and Ruth Haynes attended the Convent as pupils and remember some of the Sisters who taught them. These ladies' recordings give a very comprehensive picture of life in Southam during the last century.

Wartime was remembered by former Mayor Rowan Parker in his entertaining recording. He gives a memorable account of his boyhood exploits and early memories. Robert Cardall's contribution adds further interesting details about father's early life and Jim Fox, along with Phyllis King, detail the social life of young adults as provided by various organisations in Southam. Betty Phillips has recorded her appreciation of Southam. Although not born in the town, she has enjoyed a productive and rewarding time here and mentions many of the good friends and people she has met over the years.

Jacky Graham contributed a well-researched and fascinating account of the many celebrations organised in Southam and Ann Turner very kindly gave a history of the life of her late husband John Turner, whose name is remembered every year through the John Turner Exhibition at Southam School.

Our future plans include memories of Pastor Graham Adams (after whom the Graham Adams Centre is named) offered by Janet Whitehead and histories connected to St James Church which we hope to collect from Mary Williams.

We aim to make these recordings available on CDs and on line in due course.

If you, or someone you know, has interesting memories of life in Southam and would like to make a permanent recording of them, please let us know by contacting Helen Morris on 01926 812830.

Many thanks to those who have helped the Oral History team, particularly Bill Pease who has scrutinised all the transcriptions.

AGM Overview

On the evening of Sept 23rd 2008 the second AGM of the Friends of the Cardall Collection was held in the Southam Library. The meeting was attended by over 35 people which was more than twice the number in 2007. We hope this is indicative of the increasing interest being shown by people from the town in the group's activities. The meeting was attended by both members and non-members and afterwards there was an opportunity to chat about things that had been discussed over refreshments kindly provided by Jacky and Ken Graham. A number of people took the opportunity to offer their help in various areas, particularly when the time comes to move into the new home.

At the start of the meeting the Chairman was delighted to be able to congratulate Major and Mrs Mills, who were present, on their diamond wedding anniversary which they were celebrating that day. The audience gave the happy couple a standing ovation.

Another pleasant duty during the meeting was to accept a cheque for £1,000 presented by Danny Barker, President of the Southam Lions. This was the first two instalments of the Lions generous contribution to the work of the Friends. Danny is shown on the right presenting the cheque to the Chairman.



Jenny Frith, Treasurer, detailed the finances of the group and the projected expenditure once we take on the new home. It was clear the Friends need to focus on raising funds if they are to be successful. Jenny also formally proposed that the annual subscription be increased to £15 for individuals with £20 for couples (the over 70s subscription would remain at £5). This motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

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Fundraising and Support

We have been fortunate to receive some very generous donations from several private individuals. In addition, we have received grants from Southam Town Council, Southam Lions and the Misses Barrie Charitable Trust.

A significant amount of assistance and valuable material support has been received from the following businesses without whose assistance we would not be able to do all that we have done.

Wright Hassall, Solicitors: A substantial amount of legal advice, including drawing up the lease for the new home on a pro-bono basis.

Hewer Builders: Advice in estimating costs for repairs and refurbishments of the new home.

Colin Baldwin Associates: Survey work on the proposed new home.

MCI Electrical Installations Ltd: Electrical survey and repairs to the building's wiring.

Millward Brown: Donation of office chairs and aluminium storage boxes.

Dywidag-Systems international Ltd: Donation of storage shelving.

Warwickshire County Council: Computer, storage crates and boxes, professional museum skills and advice and guidance, use of Library facilities

Calling all WH SMITH Employees! Do you know anyone who works for WH Smith? We may be able to apply for funding towards our educational projects through an employee of WH Smith using their WH Smith Trust awards. If you know anyone willing to help, please supply contact information to the Chairman.

Joining the Friends

Membership of the Friends group is open to anyone with an interest in preserving this unique collection for the benefit of the Southam community. You pay an annual subscription and membership entitles you to attend general meetings and vote on matters concerning the Collection.

You can also become actively involved in many ways. Find out more by contacting any member of the Committee, or the following:

Chairman: Bernard Cadogan (Tel: 01926 613503)

Treasurer: Jenny Frith (Tel: 01926 814643)

Secretary: Pam McConnell
(email: cardallcollection@hotmail.co.uk)

If you are interested in local history and would like to support the work of the Friends of the Cardall Collection, please complete and return this form

Name (in capitals please)

Company (if applicable)

Address

Email

Phone

Date

Donation:

Membership subscription:.....
(£15 for individuals, £20 for a couple, £5 for over-70s.)

This form may be given to any Committee member, or sent to the Chairman:

Bernard Cadogan, 41 Vicarage Lane, Harbury, Leamington Spa, CV33 9HB

If you would like further information before committing yourself, please telephone Bernard on 01926 613503