

The Friends of the Cardall Collection

NEWSLETTER

No 5: Summer 2009



"The Old Labour Exchange" our new temporary home

Since the Spring 2009 Newsletter a tremendous amount of hard work has been done on behalf of the Collection by many people. Our objectives were to conclude the necessary agreements for the five year lease of the Old Labour Exchange building in Warwick Road, then to refurbish and redecorate the building, and finally to physically move the Collection in. We also had to negotiate with all the relevant bodies to minimise the running costs of occupying the building.

Agreeing the lease took a great deal of time, not because it was particularly complicated, but because of difficulties and delays with one set of solicitors. For our part, we had tremendous help and support from Wright Hassall in Leamington Spa who gave unstintingly of their time and expertise for no charge. But we did not always meet with the same speed and flexibility from the other side's Solicitors!

After agreeing the lease in early January we then had to redecorate and refurbish the building. However almost before we obtained the keys there was a burst pipe in the kitchen during the frosty weather in January, which proceeded to spray water onto the ceiling - just what we needed! Fortunately the Collection was unaffected, and repairs were speedily made.

One third of the Old Labour Exchange had been unoccupied for about 10 years and some significant repairs were needed to make it safe and fit for use. Both parts needed the electrics rewiring, we had to fit a new burglar alarm, and then undertake complete redecoration. Before decorating much old material needed removing, old paintwork sanded down, ceilings replaced, holes filled etc. Much of this work was done by a small team of volunteers, including Geoff King, Norma Byrne, Mike Hill, and David Wise, supported by Alison Biddle, Jacky Graham, Jenny Frith and others. Their efforts completely transformed the building, as anyone familiar with

its original condition would agree and we are very grateful to them for all their efforts.

Following the renovation work we replaced the old office furniture with some generous gifts of modern office desks, chairs, filing units and partitions from Millward Brown. This provided a more comfortable and up-to-date working environment. In addition we were lucky to obtain some excellent storage shelving from the Herbert Art Gallery in Coventry and from Dywidag Systems in Southam.

Alongside the practical work, we also had to negotiate an appropriate electrical tariff without the benefit of any historic usage data and then finally to apply to and work with the Valuation Office and Stratford District Council to minimise the amount of Business Rates payable on the building.



At long last we were ready to move 111 boxes of catalogued items plus a further 20 boxes of uncatalogued items from Rene Cardall's former home, into the Old Labour Exchange store rooms – quickly filling one third of the building. Many thanks to all those who contributed to this successful project. Mike Hill's large estate car made a first class removals van!

We now have a temporary home for the Collection. It is not the permanent home we need: it is not big enough to exhibit the Collection or to open to the public. However, at least it's a place where we can keep the Collection intact, work on it and use it for the benefit of the town. Meanwhile the search for a long term home continues – all suggestions welcome!

**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 death in 2007, 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.*

Outreach Activities

The process of moving into the premises in Warwick Road has meant we have had to scale back some of the plans for Exhibitions and Outreach events for the current year. Nevertheless, we have managed to participate successfully in three events during the first half of 2009. The first event was an exhibition for the official opening of our new home at the Old Labour Exchange on Saturday April 25th (see *Opening Day section below*).

The other two events were both firsts for the Friends: we had displays at Southam and Harbury Carnivals. The theme of the Southam Carnival this year was 'Heroes and Villains'. The Friends Committee decided to adopt the 'Heroes' part of the theme, with an exhibition focussing on the part played by Southam ladies in the voluntary nursing movement during the First World War. A number of public buildings in Southam were requisitioned during the Great War as convalescent hospitals for troops wounded in France and elsewhere.

At both Carnivals, Linda Doyle's daughter, Jennie Daniels, provided fantastic support for the Collection by entering the Carnival parades mounted on horseback and dressed in two different and spectacular uniforms of the FANYs (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry). Barbara Pink's novel idea for raising funds was to introduce the more staid members of the Committee to the concept of the 'Human Fruit Machine' which proved an interesting experience for both participants and spectators. As well as the entertainment value, this event raised a fair amount of money for the Collection funds from attendees at the Southam Carnival.



The Harbury Carnival, a few weeks later, benefited from some slightly better weather and was very well attended. At Harbury, while

mounting the same exhibition on local heroines, we focussed a little bit more on details about the Cardall Collection and its association with Southam (since this would not be so well known in Harbury). Jennie Daniel's side saddle display of the original FANY uniform won her third prize in the mounted section of the Carnival Parade.

Both events were a success and raised valuable funds for the Collection as well as providing an excellent opportunity to publicise our activities. We will certainly be aiming to participate again next year and would welcome support from members and non-members alike. Grateful thanks to the volunteers who helped on each day.

John Turner Festival

This year, the Friends of the Cardall Collection have been invited to have a stall at the John Turner Festival. This event is held annually at Southam College, and will be on Saturday 7th November. We are busy planning our exhibition stall, and look forward to seeing you at the Festival. If you would like to volunteer to help us run the stall on the day, please do get in touch.

Opening Day April 25th

Having done all the hard work of getting the Old Labour Exchange into a fit state to house the Cardall Collection the Committee decided it would be appropriate to mark this important milestone by asking the Mayor of Southam to officially open the building.

On Saturday April 25th Cllr Rev Wayne Hawkins officially opened the new home for the Cardall Collection in front of an invited audience of benefactors and sponsors.



In the afternoon we were able to invite members of the Friends of the Cardall Collection to view the building and also to see a small selection of items from the Collection. We displayed some of the Southam Fire Service uniforms, photos and other memorabilia from the Collection, together with a number of photographs showing the Collection in its previous home plus an interactive slide presentation on the computer showing the transformation of the Old Labour Exchange from

its original state into the new temporary home for the Collection. Much of the design work was undertaken by Barbara Pink who was her usual fount of ideas and enthusiasm.

Fortunately it was a beautiful day, despite an early shower and a strong wind which threatened to blow our balloons away. As a result many people were able to come along and see for themselves what had been achieved.



Those who could not attend were able to read about the opening in the local press since both the Observer and the Leamington Courier sent photographers along and included articles and pictures in the following week's editions.

Oral History: now on CD!

At the Opening Day and again at the two Carnivals, Helen Morris, our Oral History team leader, presented work from the Oral History project. We are pleased to report that CDs of the many oral history interviews are now on sale to the general public.

Helen and her team have worked hard interviewing, transcribing and then recording onto CD the reminiscences of various Southam folk. They include fascinating personal accounts of living and working in Southam in the past and include an interview with Rene Cardall herself.

The CDs are well worth a listen for anyone interested in Southam's history. They cost just £5 for CDs 1 and 2, and are available by contacting any member of the Committee. All funds received from the sale of CDs go directly to support the work of the Friends of the Cardall Collection. We will have CDs on sale at the John Turner Festival in November – and we are sure they would make an unusual and welcome Christmas present for anyone interested in Southam's past.

If you have memories of old Southam that you would like to have recorded, please let us know, and we will contact you for an interview as soon as time permits.

Publicity

Following on from the publicity in the local press the Collection also obtained valuable exposure in the local media with three local radio interviews broadcast in May, June and July. There were two interviews with BBC Coventry and Warwickshire and one with 102FM Touch Radio.

The first interview with BBC C&W was a short piece with the Chairman, Bernard Cadogan, on the Liz Kershaw Breakfast Show broadcast around 8:15am live to the sound of traffic whizzing past the Old Labour Exchange. The second BBC interview, with Bernard and Helen Morris featuring Helen's Oral History Project, was recorded on the same day but broadcast in early July as part of the Sunday lunchtime 'Wedge's Warwickshire' programme presented by Keith Wedgebury and featuring interesting aspects of life within Warwickshire.

The 102FM Touch Radio interview focussed more generally on Southam town but the Collection did get a mention.

This was the first time for a few years that the Cardall Collection has featured on local radio and was a fascinating experience for both Bernard and Helen as they were launched somewhat unwittingly into the fast-paced world of the online media – quite an eye-opener in fact!

Hopefully the sessions mean that more people are aware of what the Friends of the Cardall Collection are trying to achieve and now that we have 'broken into' the world of local radio we will be able to obtain more exposure in future.

A Note from the Chairman & Notice of Annual General Meeting

As we move into Autumn we will once again come round to the AGM. This year the AGM will be on Thursday 17th September and will be held at 7.30pm at the Stoneythorpe Hotel. Members may submit items for the Agenda and Nominations to the Committee, to be received by 3rd September. The meeting is open to the public, and I hope as many as possible of you will come along to hear more about what has been going on and to give us your input and ideas on how you think we should move forward.

However before we get to the AGM I would like to ask you to do one thing for us and that is to think about whether you, or someone you know, would be prepared to take a more active role in the Friends. We have a Committee of 10 members, elected at the AGM each year, and up to now there has only been one retirement and one new Committee member in the past three years. In

addition, we have had the same officers (Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary) over this period.

Any organisation needs new blood every now and again, not only to inject fresh thinking into what can become routine, but also to give those who have already served a chance to recharge their batteries and take a back seat for a while. In addition, a rotation of Committee members is a healthy thing for the organisation and helps demonstrate to sponsors and the wider community that the group has not become the preserve of a self-elected clique. For younger members of the Community, serving on a voluntary body Committee can also form part of (dare I use the phrase) continuing professional development, and help in acquiring new skills away from the glare of the workplace and work colleagues.

Please give some thought to whether you could play a more active role as a member of the Management Committee of the Friends. If you would like any further information on what is involved (and it is not a great deal) please feel free to call me for a no-obligation chat and, if you are interested, we can arrange for an election at the AGM if necessary.

Bernard Cadogan

Grant Application Success

In June this year we made an application to the Heart of England Community Foundation for a grant of just under £1,000



to help us buy some basic equipment for mounting displays and exhibitions. The Heart of

England agreed to make an award from the Kingscliffe Fund, and although it was for only £200, the success of this application was very good for our morale, and we learnt a lot about the grant application process. The quality of our application was good, but the amount we were awarded was a reflection of the limited amount of

funds available and the high level of competition for them. This grant will cover approximately 50% of the cost of purchasing our own portable display boards. This means that in future, we should not be dependent on begging and borrowing this equipment from other organisations. It will be much easier to plan and arrange displays when we have the resources available 100% of the time rather than for just a few days before the actual exhibition!

Following on from this initial success, we are now working on a much larger application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will ask for a significant contribution towards the computerisation of our records (as part of the documentation project). We will also be asking for funding to enable us to fulfil our Outreach objectives. We need to create a set of resources from which we can mount educational displays and provide activities suitable for all the age groups within the town.

In addition, we recently asked for a donation from Cemex because they had mentioned supporting us in their literature. A cheque for £200 was duly received, and is gratefully acknowledged.

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

**You can renew your annual membership, join the Friends, or simply make a donation by completing and returning this form to our Treasurer.
Please make your cheque payable to: The Friends of the Cardall Collection**

Name (in capitals please)

Address:

Email: Telephone:

Donation enclosed: £.....

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

**Send this form, together with your cheque and a stamped addressed envelope to:
Jenny Frith, FoCC Treasurer, Beech-Hurst, Warwick Road, Southam CV47 0HN**

