

The Friends of the Cardall Collection

NEWSLETTER

No 9: Autumn 2011



Chairman's Update

The past six months have been as busy as any in the past 5 years with many things happening, some good: like organising at less than a month's notice, a display at Southam First's Retro Revival Day, and some not so good: like hours of discussions with Severn Trent over the water meter at the Old Labour Exchange. However our volunteers have risen to the challenges and the Collection is now seen to be playing a bigger and more significant role in the life of the town.

For example, the Mayor recently asked us to take a large group of German exchange students around the town for a morning. Also a local school has asked us to help with their current term history project. We have also been contacted by several individuals and local groups keen to know more about the history of the town.

In May we had a stall at the Carnival, and spent most of the day sheltering from the downpour. But in July when we took part in Southam Open Gardens the sun shone and we were very pleased at the number of people who popped into the Old Labour Exchange for a chat en route between gardens. Please read on for details of our other recent activities.

Despite all this activity there is always one item in the forefront of my mind and that, of course, is how we can find a suitable permanent home for the Collection in Southam.

A Home for the Collection?

Without a proper home the Collection really has no future. It will not be possible to continue in the present location for very much longer. Apart from the question of the lease, other considerations mean we will need to re-locate within a relatively short time.

Fortunately progress is being made. As well as interest from the Mayor, Mike Gaffney, we have also had great support from District Councillors Jennie Ellard and David Wise, and an enthusiastic

visit from some officials from Stratford District Council. We are keeping the future of the Collection in the forefront of the minds of the decision-makers. However, your support for the Collection and the tremendous effort being put in by Committee members is also having an effect.

It was very gratifying to receive 191 signatures of support in a single day from our petition at the Retro Revival event. This clearly demonstrates that the people of Southam do want the Collection to be part of the town's future. However, the battle is not yet won.

We need to keep the Collection in the forefront of everyone's mind. As plans for the redevelopment of the Town Centre once again come to the fore, the next six months will be crucial.

Developing Local Partnerships

After establishing links with Southam's Fire Station last year we decided to enlarge the partnership to include Southam's three primary schools.

Following discussions with each school we offered 90-minute workshops at the Fire Station that would explore the history of Southam's Fire Service and also provide an opportunity to see and compare this to the working of the modern Fire Service.



Funding for this project was generously provided by Southam United Charities and this enabled us to buy a reproduction uniform complete with brass helmet and child-sized jacket, made using extra buttons and badges from the Collection to give the final touch of authenticity. We were also supported by the Fire Service's educational advisors and of course the local Southam Firemen who gave freely of their time to enable the children to make the most of the sessions.

Our workshop combined puppets and story-telling as a way to introduce the children to the unique part that the Fire Service has played in the town's

Southam's Cardall Collection comprises artefacts, documents, photographs and memorabilia associated with Southam and its surrounding villages. Started by the late Mr Jack Cardall, its custodian was Mrs Irene Cardall until her death in 2007. The County Museum Service inspectors agree that it is an important record of the life and times of our historic market town. The Collection urgently needs a permanent home in Southam where it can be displayed, used and appreciated by the general public, local history societies, schools, reminiscence groups and researchers.

history. This contrasted brilliantly with the input from Watch Commander Andy Duckett MBE and his team. Both children and adults learnt a lot. I'm not sure how to plan for a call-out when the fire-fighters all disappear and leave us 'Home Alone' at the fire station!

A total of 60 children attended the workshops, and at the end of the week we also supported the Fire Station Open Day. We have developed some fire related activities which you can try out for yourself at the John Turner Festival on 5th November.

Our workshops were a great success and we are planning for them to be a feature in every Southam school child's life. This means that they will have some early contact not only with the Fire Service and its work, but also with Southam's Cardall Collection.

Money Saving

In our last Newsletter we mentioned insulating the Old Labour Exchange roof space. Mike Hill and the Chairman spent a number of mornings squeezing through the loft hatch and delicately wandering around on the slender beams wondering who would be the first to put a foot through the ceiling. Well fortunately neither put a foot wrong and it looks like with a combination of good weather, the insulation and better management of the heating we appear to be about £150 better off. This is good news for our finances and the environment.



Also, following the installation of a monitoring device, we can now keep an eye on the temperature and humidity in our storage room and do an even better job of looking after the Collection.

Annual General Meeting

The Friends hold their AGM in September and this year it was in the rear room of the Congregational Church Hall in Wood Street on 20th September.

We had decided to change the format, aiming to compress the formal business to half an hour, and open up the meeting afterwards for a social evening. This worked very well, and allowed people to see some of the items from the Collection and also chat informally to members of the Committee and each other about Southam's history and the Cardall Collection.

Barbara Pink did a fantastic job in providing the food for the event (even though she had to make everything twice after a domestic misunderstanding on her husband's part) and everyone enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

Weatherwise, we chose the worst possible night - it poured down and everyone arrived drenched. It was therefore magnificent to see 35 people turn up including the Mayor and Mayoress of Southam, Councillor & Mrs Mike Gaffney and Jennie Ellard, Stratford District Councillor for Southam. We really appreciated their support. As well as displaying some of our latest acquisitions we also put on a rolling, big-screen display of some of the photographs of old Southam from the Alan Griffin collection, (which was donated to us last December). Everyone appeared enthralled to see these pictures - many of them available to the public for the very first time.

Special thanks to David Hudson for looking after us so well on behalf of the Congregational Church.



Southam First: Retro Revival

Southam's traders and community groups, working with Katherine Geddes of Stratford District Council, are trying hard to improve the image of the town and make it more attractive for shopping, entertainment and tourism. The first event organised by Southam First, "Retro Revival" on Saturday September 24th, was a huge success.

Southam's Cardall Collection had a stall at the event - always keen to show people what an asset the Collection could be for the town.

To say that we were overwhelmed by the number of visitors would be an understatement. We don't think there have been so many people out and about on the streets of Southam for many years. Our stall was outside Rockingham's shop, and we estimate it was visited by about 500 people. Over 100 people took part in our 1950s quiz and 191

people signed our petition to Stratford District Council showing their support for our aims.



We had a number of business related items and toys from the 1950s on display, plus a vintage pram loaned by Jenny Frith. We also had a selection of photographs and banners depicting Southam streets in the last century. Ian Brodie, one of our members, brought along a collection of old motorbikes and a fantastic vintage car. Last but not least, our very own Robert Cardall with his band 'Sixty Plus' entertained the crowd with Rock and Roll classics for most of the morning. It was a long day with Committee members on duty from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, but it was very worthwhile, and we hope to take part in future Southam First events of this kind.

The Oral History Project

Since our last report, CD No 4 'Accidents and Disasters' has been completed and gone on sale. Also sets of all four CDs have been produced for sale. The CDs cost £3 singly and the sets of four are £10. We also have some sets of two available for £6. All these will be available at the John Turner Festival on 5th November, or by contacting us direct.

Work on Disc 5 has started. The theme is 'Businesses' and we already have interviews with Andy Duckett, about the Cement Factory and Graham Clews, about Southam Zoo. Suggestions for potential interviewees or offers of help with this project are always welcome: contact project leader Helen on 01926 812830.

The Documentation Project

Everything in a museum has to be documented - ie a record made of what the object is and where it is stored. A team of volunteers have been working regularly for nearly 4 years cataloguing the contents of the Cardall Collection.

Documentation is usually done by two people working together. One makes the entry in the

Accession Register (a special large heavy book) allocating a number (eg 2011/45 means the 45th item entered in 2011) plus a one line description of the item. There is also space to enter the name of the donor, if known.

The second person makes a less official but more detailed entry into a large white binder containing printed sheets, recording the Accession Number, category, object type, description, condition, what it is made of and its box number. This information is subsequently transferred to our computer database, and in due course a digital photograph or scan of the object is appended to its computer record. The Accession Number is attached to the item either by writing on it in pencil, by using a special tie-on label or by sewing it on with cotton tape. The final task is to put the item into its allocated storage box.

This is great fun to do as you never quite know what you will find next. A lot of time can be 'wasted' discovering exactly what the objects are and reading information on bits of paper!

As well as dealing with new acquisitions we are in the process of going through again, what has already been put into boxes, and adding more detail onto the computer record. Our regular documentation sessions are on Wednesday afternoons and alternate Thursday mornings. If you would like to get involved in this fascinating work, please contact our documentation project leader, Jenny Frith on 01926 814643.

Mystery Object - Solved!

In the Spring Newsletter we printed a picture of a magnificent plaque related to Southam Carnival donated to us by Jane Soni. We have discovered a lot more about the plaque since then, with help from Jacky Atkinson. Jacky saw and remembered the plaque and also remembered who had made it - Peter Lambert.



Peter still lives in Southam, and we now have this picture of him holding the plaque. He told us a lot more about it and the story of

how he came to design and make both the plaque, a number of similar ones and about 50 smaller medallions which were presented to the winners of races and competitions on Carnival day 1973. They were made at the behest of the 1973 Southam Carnival Committee, and Peter also told us he had given Rene Cardall the

original mould used to make the medallions. With this information we were able to find the mould in the Collection and correctly catalogue it. We also found a 2-page article on the origins of the plaque. We had not known these three items were related. Peter told us he believes he knows where the Brazen Face mask used in the 1973 Carnival is stored, and we are hoping to follow up on this and get (at least) a picture of it for the Collection.

Starting with one bit of information, appealing for further details, and then piecing together the complete story is very rewarding work. Many thanks to Jacky for the initial clues and to Peter for telling us the full story as well as allowing us to take a picture of him holding one of his plaques again after all these years.

Now the question is: "whatever happened to all the other plaques and medallions?" Do you know?

VAD Hospital - The Grange

Can you help? I am looking for descendants of women who worked as VADs (Voluntary Aid Detachment) at the Southam Red Cross Hospital at what is now The Grange, during World War I.

We have in the Collection a number of remarkable group pictures of the nurses and the wounded servicemen they cared for, together with important and quite rare VAD artefacts belonging to Sarah Cardall. These include Sarah's badges and her Red Cross Medal (see photo) together with her nursing manual: we know what she was required to learn!



Nationally much knowledge about the work of VADs has been lost and if we can develop the background to these artefacts it would be an important nugget of social history. As the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War approaches, it is even more appropriate to investigate and record how local people were involved in the War effort.

At this stage we don't know if any of the WWI patients at The Grange were local lads, or did any of them settle here? If you can supply any information to fill out the picture or want to help with this research, please do get in touch. You may have Certificates in your family papers (girls were required to have two qualifications) or

perhaps letters, photographs or even cap badges and so on. I would be interested to hear from anyone whose mother, aunties, grannies or friends served. Please give me a ring: Val Brodie on 01926 812179.

More International Visitors

In previous editions we have mentioned visitors from Canada. This year we have had more interest from abroad. In August a lady from Australia called in to the Old Labour Exchange during one of our regular documenting sessions. She and her husband are staying in Southam for 18 months whilst she studies at Oxford University. She is a keen local historian and, having been in Southam for some months, has started researching Oxford Street. She had been looking for an opportunity to meet with us and spotted the door open as she drove past. Since then we have exchanged quite a few emails and she has become a member of the Friends. We are hoping to use her skills for our mutual benefit, and maybe even get her husband involved as well.

In October we were pleased to help Mayor Mike Gaffney entertain a group of 24 exchange students and 2 teachers from Germany through an arrangement with Southam College. Mike asked us to take the group on a short tour of the town and talk about some of its more interesting buildings. It was a nice sunny day and the town was looking its best as Linda Doyle and the Chairman each took half of the group on a tour. We are hopeful that this successful exercise will lead to further partnership working with Southam College. This picture shows some of the students with Mayor Mike Gaffney in the Council Chamber just before we set off on the tour.



Cardall's Corner

Don't forget to check the Southam Advertiser magazine each month for our "Cardall's Corner" articles. We use these to generate interest and tell everyone more about some of the items in the Collection. Thanks again to the District Advertisers for very kindly allowing us to publish these articles each month without charge.

Southam's Cardall Collection



Information and Contacts

Are you interested in local history? Do you belong to a local community or business group that would be interested in hearing more about the Cardall Collection? Would you like to join the Friends and support their work? This is the information you need:

General Information, Suggestions or Enquiries:

Please contact the Chairman, Bernard on 01926 613503 or email cardallcollection@hotmail.co.uk

“Walk and Talk” Events

A short guided tour of Southam on level footpaths to see some of its most interesting buildings, and hear something about their history, followed by tea and chat at the Old Labour Exchange. Complete session lasts about 2 hours. Fee: £5 per person includes refreshments.

Contact: Linda on 01926 814214 to find out more.

Presentations and Talks for Local Groups

We can attend one of your group meetings or visit your premises and give a presentation and talk about the Cardall Collection's role in Southam's history tailored to your interests.

Contact Bernard on 01926 613503 or Linda on 01926 814214. (A fee will be charged by agreement.)

Exhibitions & Workshops:

Available for residential homes, schools and similar institutions, Reminiscence and/or educational sessions with displays and activities appropriate to the age group.

Please contact our Outreach Project Leader: Barbara on 01926 612402.

Membership of the Friends and/or Donating:

If you would like to support our work please complete and return the form below, with your payment. This form can also be used to renew your existing membership. *Note to existing members: Following a Constitution change at this year's AGM, your membership, (which is renewable on 1st October,) will lapse if you have not paid your Subscription by 31st December.*

Friends of the Cardall Collection

The Old Labour Exchange, 2/4 Warwick Road, Southam CV47 0HN

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL & DONATION FORM

Name:

Address:

Telephone: Email:

I would like to be a member of the Friends of the Cardall Collection and enclose herewith my membership subscription. (Current subs are: £15 for individuals, £20 for a couple, £5 for the over 70s)

£

I would like to donate the following amount to support the objectives of the Friends of the Cardall Collection.

£

Signed:

Date:

Please return this form with your payment to the Treasurer: Jenny Frith, Beech-Hurst, Warwick Road, Southam CV47 0HN. Cheques payable to: The Friends of the Cardall Collection. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your receipt. Payments by internet banking to: HSBC Account Sort Code: 40 42 15 Account No: 31436848 Ref: (your name).

Membership is renewable on 1st October each year. Many thanks for your support.