

The Friends of the Cardall Collection

NEWSLETTER

No 6: Winter 2009



From the Archives...

During the initial cataloguing process many interesting items from the Collection have come to light and so far we have only been able to examine some of them very superficially. Included in this category are items like the book of wallpaper samples which has been used as a scrapbook to hold newspaper cuttings relating to Southam and the surrounding villages during the period 1936–45, although there are some articles from both before and after these dates. Below are two short articles from December 1944 and January 1945:

Gaydon: Starling "Gatecrasher" – A starling was found to be in the Reading Room while a Christmas dance was in progress. As it was unable to find its way out, and as some of the ladies appeared nervous, the door steward fetched a man with a gun, who promptly "despatched" the bird.

They certainly did things differently in those days! Imagine the kerfuffle today if someone called in a man with a gun to remove a bird from a dance.

Southam: Uncle Sam Solves Traffic Problem
The U.S. Army has speeded up a much needed improvement in a Warwickshire town. During recent wintry weather there was a huge traffic jam in Southam's High Street, the bottleneck feature of which was the prime cause. During the clearing up of the troubles a vehicle which formed part of an American Army convoy skidded into the side of one of a block of houses scheduled for demolition after the war. The result of the mishap was to render the premises unsafe and the work of demolishing the property is now in full swing. Thus Uncle Sam has hastened the day when Southam will have a High Street fit for modern traffic conditions.

Maybe there is something to be said for a slightly unconventional method of speedily resolving local traffic problems?

John Turner Festival

November 7th saw the Silver Jubilee of the John Turner Festival held at Southam College, and the first appearance of the Friends of the Cardall Collection at the Festival. We shared a room with the St John Ambulance volunteers and enjoyed a few interesting moments as visitors to the room exerted themselves trying to resuscitate one of the dummies (no, not a member of the Friends!).

In between watching the first aid demonstrations we had a respectable flow of visitors to our exhibition which featured the Oral History project run by Helen Morris. To date Helen and her team have compiled three CDs of recollections from older Southam residents and over 60 copies of these CDs have been sold – a very impressive total and a welcome contribution to the Collection's funds. If you would like to buy copies of the Oral History CDs, please get in touch.



The main feature of the Oral History display was a series of photographs of the people who have given their recollections together with an opportunity to hear snippets of their stories before purchasing a CD.

In addition to Helen's display we also had a "guess the objects" box assembled by Barbara Pink and featuring two items of police equipment from by-gone days. This exhibit was aimed at children and consisted of a box with holes in the side through which the children were encouraged to put their hands to guess what the objects were by feeling them.

**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.*



Many correctly identified the handcuffs, antiquated though they were, but the truncheon was much more difficult to guess. In the picture above we see Barbara explaining, but not demonstrating, how the truncheon was used!

Galanos House

For the duration of Remembrance Week the Friends constructed a display featuring items associated with local residents and both the First, and Second World Wars. This display was positioned in the foyer of the Royal British Legion's Galanos House in Southam, and made use of our new display boards which were partly financed by a grant received from the Heart of England Community Foundation. Jenny Fell and Jenny Frith developed and assembled the display, which also made use of our new poster advertising the Collection. Two key items in the display were a poster on some captured German artillery, which was "given" to Long Itchington, and a four page letter by "your own correspondent", Rene Cardall, describing her experiences around VE day. The artillery was later dumped in the pond by some unappreciative local residents!

During their dismantling of the exhibition our two volunteers were approached by several members of staff expressing their delight at the display. "It sparked a lot of interest amongst our residents, they really enjoyed it" said one. "A marvellous display, please do one again sometime" said another. In addition Jenny Fell remarked that she had found it very easy to put the display together and had learnt quite a bit more about the Collection while doing it. We hope this will be the first of many occasions when people will come forward with ideas for developing and constructing more displays associated with events in and around Southam.

Reminiscence at Galanos House

Our 'Outreach' programme has changed emphasis this year. As well as attending the major town festivals such as the Carnival and the John Turner Festival, we thought we might work with some other groups in the community. So, thinking the collection could have something to offer to the older generation Barbara Pink (our

Outreach group leader) offered her services to Galanos House to run 'reminiscence' sessions.

Barbara was made very welcome at Galanos House and after watching one of the staff taking a 'reminiscence' session, the next time she was on her own. Barbara soon discovered that what appears a simple enough idea: have a bit of a chat and use parts of the collection to stimulate memories of the past - was far from simple! Barbara quickly learnt a number of things: residents going to sleep is always a good indication that it's time to stop! Barbara covered themes about schools, transport, royal events, radio and the latest session 'Where did you get that hat?'



There are obvious difficulties in taking items from the Collection out into the Community – not least that everything is most carefully wrapped up and packed away. However, the visits to Galanos House have stimulated some wonderful recollections and created a wider interest within the community there. We feel it is another effective way of letting local people know we are here and illustrates another good use of the collection.

Annual General Meeting 2009

In September we held the 2009 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cardall Collection at the Stoneythorpe Hotel. The attendance was a little bit down on the previous year. Unknown to us when we chose the date it coincided with an 80th birthday party which involved a number of people who would otherwise definitely have attended. Also the location at the Stoneythorpe, kindly provided free of charge by Belinda Hewer, was a little less central than the Library, where we held the 2008 meeting. We choose the Stoneythorpe partly because the Library has now started to charge for such events, and partly to vary the location. We will look again at the location for next year and try to avoid conflicting with other significant events.

The meeting was none the less a lively one with quite a lot of discussion, particularly in the bar after the formal proceedings.

The Chairman reported on the events of the year which was a significant one for the Friends since it was the first such meeting after moving the Collection from Rene Cardall's former home into the Old Labour Exchange.



The Chairman thanked all the people who gave generously of their time during January and February 2009, when a lot of help was needed to repair and redecorate the building so the Collection could be moved quickly. One surprise during the evening was when Tony Lorimer, representing Southam and District Lions, presented the Chairman with the third of three contributions the Lions had promised the Friends. This was a year earlier than had been expected and was very welcome.

The Management Committee was re-elected en-bloc. However we are hoping that by the next AGM there will be others who would like to join the Committee now that the group is becoming well established. For details of what is involved (not a great deal) and a no-obligation discussion, please contact the Chairman.

Spreading the Word

Quite a lot of hard work has gone into getting the Friends of the Cardall Collection off the ground, but now the group is well established, news of our success is starting to get around. For example our Oral History leader, Helen Morris, was asked to contribute to a course for several start-up groups in Warwick to tell them of her experiences in launching an oral history project. The Chairman was recently invited to attend the launch event for another similar group in Northampton because it was felt our experience was worth passing on to others trying to follow a similar path.

We have also started to feature more on the internet. If you go to Google and enter "Cardall Collection" as your search, the first and third entries point to information about Southam's Cardall Collection. The first hit is the Southam On Line web site (www.southamonline.co.uk) and the third is the Community Archives web site (www.communityarchives.org.uk) where you can read the full archive of Friends' Newsletters. Why not go and take a look, browse through the newsletters, see what's been happening and think about how you might be able to get involved?

Fire Brigade Controversy

Arguments about how and whether the Fire Brigade should be reorganised have featured in the local press this year, but such debates are nothing new to Southam. This recently discovered letter (reproduced below) from 1922 shows how passions were roused about who should do what, the facilities made available, and how they were funded nearly 90 years ago. You can see from the tone of the letter, written to Captain W Cardall, how strongly the writer felt about the matter he believed had been agreed.

Dear Cardall,

*I am very astonished to receive yours of the 12th handed to me at the Board this morning. As I pointed out to you at the Fire Brigade Committee meeting on Friday, the money subscribed for the new motor fire engine was on certain conditions, and that the joint Committee definitely stated that the condition of handing over the new Petrol Engine would be that the Brigade put up Mr*** as Captain, and you personally gave me and the Committee your assurance that this would be done. Now I am informed that the voting was equal and that you gave a casting vote in favour of ### instead of in favour of *** as you had undertaken.*

I am still prepared to attend your Dinner to-morrow night, but you must understand I must support most strongly the recommendations of the Fire Committee as representing the public meeting which was held at the Court House at Southam some months ago.

*Unless you carry out the appointment of Mr ***, I see no help for it but to call a public meeting, and unless they decide otherwise, to cancel the order with Merryweather for the Fire Engine and return the money to the subscribers.*

*I am obliged to say I never thought you would have let me and the Committee down in such a way, after giving me your word that, with my help at the Dinner, *** would have had the unanimous recommendation of the Members of the Fire Brigade.*

Yours truly

The letter was typed on notepaper headed "Blue Lias Lime and Cement Works, Stockton, Nr Rugby", although whether it was written in a company or personal capacity is unclear.



Acquisition & Disposal

We are now reaching the end of the first stage of the documentation process, and hope to have all the items in the Collection logged into the Accession Register and onto our simple database early in 2010. However, as news of the Collection has spread, we have had several kind offers of donations to add to the Collection. Unfortunately we do not have sufficient space to accommodate any large objects, but we are very keen that important objects and memorabilia associated with Southam are not lost forever, for want of space. If you have small objects, or good quality photographs or documents relating to Southam's past, we would be happy to accept them as a donation, so long as we do not have one already!

To help us decide what to accept into the Collection in future, we have developed a formal 'Acquisition and Disposal' policy (with the help of Warwickshire Museum Service). Objects in Southam's Cardall Collection should relate specifically to the history of Southam and the surrounding villages. If you would like to discuss a possible donation, please contact the Chairman of the Friends.

Warwickshire Museum Service



Funding for Training & Equipment

Next year we hope to buy equipment and set up some training courses to enable us to make progress with the more specialised aspects of our work. There is still a lot to do to record the Collection and make it more widely available, and whilst we do have a small and dedicated band of volunteers, we also need money to take some of the projects forward.

Our fundraising team have been working hard to put together various funding applications, and we have just been advised (December 09) that our application to Warwickshire County Council's 'Renaissance in the Regions' fund for help to buy photographic equipment and provide appropriate training has been successful (with conditions).

If all goes to plan, we will receive £1,000 to enable us to start photographing objects in the Collection and take us one step nearer to making the Collection available to a much wider audience through digital media and the internet. We hope to start this training and work early in the New Year.

For those of you who would like to get involved in recording and preserving the Collection, but who lack the necessary computer skills, please don't be put off!

We are also hoping to obtain funding to set up beginners and improvers computer courses. These will be specifically designed to provide training on how to record (on computer) the many fascinating documents, photographs, hand-written memoirs and notes within the Collection. If you would be interested in this type of training, please do get in touch.

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 a small 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**

