

The Friends of the Cardall Collection

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2007

Mrs Irene Cardall
1923 - 2007



It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Mrs Irene Cardall on 18th June 2007. An obituary and tribute to this wonderful lady and further details about her life appear on pages 3 & 4 of this Newsletter.

The death of Mrs Cardall is a great loss not only to her family, her many friends, and the local groups she was involved with, but also to anyone with an interest in Southam's history. It has also brought an even greater sense of urgency to the work of the Friends group in documenting the collection and finding it a new permanent home.

The Future of the Cardall Collection

At their Committee meeting in July, the Friends of the Cardall Collection re-affirmed their commitment to continuing Mrs Cardall's work, and preserving her much loved collection for the benefit of the people of Southam. It is now imperative that we find a suitable home for the Collection within Southam town, and any suggestions or offers of assistance will be gratefully received.

The Cardall Collection is now in the care of Mrs Cardall's immediate family. They have confirmed that the collection will remain in their custody until a safe and suitable home is found for it. At that time, it is envisaged that ownership of the collection will pass to a public trust set up by the Friends group.

Notice Of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cardall Collection will take place on

Wednesday 26th September 2007 at

The Stoneythorpe Hotel, Southam at 7.30pm

It will be an open meeting, and paid up members of the Friends of the Cardall Collection group will be entitled to vote on any proposals put forward. Nominations for the Committee, and items for inclusion on the Agenda may be submitted by emailing the Secretary on:

cardallcollection@hotmail.co.uk or by writing to the Chairman, Bernard Cadogan at 41 Vicarage Lane, Harbury, Leamington Spa, CV33 9HB

**Agenda items to be received on or before
Wednesday 5th September 2007 please**

**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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Progress Update

(1) The Documentation Group: Carolyn Akeister on 01926 814544.

The work of the documentation group continues on apace, and so far over 200 items have been marked and logged. However, this represents only about 10% of the collection, so there is much more to do. Members and volunteers meet each week to continue the work of marking items with unique reference numbers to Museum standard and registering them into the collection's accession register.

Items that have been catalogued are going to be stored in museum-approved storage boxes. We need more volunteers for this work, so if you are interested in helping, please contact the group leader. You will be shown how to mark and record the items, and will also get to know more about this fascinating collection of artefacts.

(2) The Oral History Group: Helen Morris on 01926 812830.

In the few weeks before her death, Mrs Cardall was actively involved in making recordings with the Oral History group of her own personal memories. These recordings are being transcribed and saved to digital media for inclusion in the museum.

The Oral History group has plans to meet and talk to many older Southam residents who may wish to have their memories of life in the town recorded for posterity. If you would like to become involved, please do get in touch with the group leader.

Also, if you have an interest in listening to, recording and transcribing memories of old Southam, we can certainly use your help and ideas.

(3) The Exhibitions & Education Group: Ken Graham 01926 813652

The Open Day on June 3rd was extremely successful, and Mrs Cardall was very pleased with both the number of people who attended and the number of 'helpers' involved. A total of £230 was raised, which was donated to Mrs Cardall's chosen cause, the Friends of Southam Parish Church.

From Monday 29th October to Saturday 10th November we are staging a small exhibition at Southam Library titled 'Southam's Soldiers'. Artefacts

and documents from the collection are being prepared and local schools have been invited to take part in themed workshops in the Library in the weeks leading to Remembrance Sunday. School ideas / support packs are being distributed on 13th September, and the Library has agreed to display work produced by the children who become involved. Many thanks to Mrs Barbara Pink and Mrs Mary Thomson who have agreed to join the Exhibitions group and help with this work. Thanks also to our Library for providing the space.

A Permanent Home for the Cardall Collection in Southam

We are in touch regularly with both the Town and District Councillors regarding the proposals for a central 'one stop' Library, Heritage and information centre in the town. We have received positive responses from our Councillors, and the need for a proper, permanent home for the museum is recognised by them.

There are also various initiatives under way aiming to improve the facilities in Southam, and our Committee Chairman is working hard to ensure that the Cardall Collection's profile remains high. However, these are generally long-term plans, and we would be most interested in hearing from anyone who can assist us in providing either safe, temporary storage locally, or a permanent home for the Collection within Southam. If you feel you can offer advice or assistance, please do contact 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 of the group leaders, or the following:

Chairman: Bernard Cadogan (Tel: 01926 613503)

Treasurer: Jenny Frith (Tel: 01926 814643)

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

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A tribute to Mrs Irene Cardall, 1923 – 2007

Irene (Rene) Cardall, who died on Thursday June 28th 2007 aged 83, wife of the late Jack Cardall, was one of Southam's best known residents. She was a keen promoter and collector of everything associated with the local history of Southam and the surrounding area.

Rene was born in London, in 1923, one of two daughters of Percy and Mabel Luhmann and attended Barking Abbey School. Her father was a railwayman. She had an early interest in history, and played Hockey for the school team.

Rene taught at Ripple Road Junior School, and was proud that one of her former pupils is ex-West Ham Footballer Sir Trevor Brooking, who is now a director of the Football Association. Rene's passion for history and being part of history is shown in a letter she carried in her hand bag. It is dated the 10th May 1945 to her sister Maud, brother-in-law Fred and nephew Trevor, and is a contemporary account of the VE Day Celebrations in London that she attended along with her mother and father and family friends. Rene describes the day and the speeches of Winston Churchill and King George VI and the fun and laughter in Trafalgar Square and outside Buckingham Palace. She concludes with her concerns about the fighting in the Far East.

Rene liked tradition, and had many life-long friends. She was a school teacher until she married Jack Cardall whose family had resided in Southam for generations. Rene came to Southam in 1963 and joined a large family. During his lifetime Jack Cardall, a local journalist, musician and businessman, developed a keen interest in local history and started to collect papers and objects associated

with the town's history as well as writing many pamphlets and essays on the town. The collection was first shown to the public at the church fete on the lawn of Beech-Hurst in July 1968 when Trevor Rogers took the entrance fee of sixpence (6 old pence). The collection was visited by BBC's 'Down your Way' in 1974 when Jack sounded the bugle that had been used by both the Scouts and the Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Following Jack's death in 1976 Rene moved from Beech-Hurst into a converted coach house and took with her the collection started by her late husband. The collection soon extended to occupy the complete ground floor of her home as Rene carefully tended it, added to it, researched it and documented it. It was re-opened at a Southam Lions Fete at Beech-Hurst in 1978.

Rene loved Open Days and group or individual visits and has written historical articles virtually every month until her death. These articles were all hand-written, and were published, for example, in the Southam District Advertiser and the Southam Parish News. Her final article was about life on a working narrow boat and was published in July 2007. Today the Collection includes approximately 2,500 items associated with the town and surrounding area and is acknowledged by the Warwickshire Museum Service as being of significant local interest.

Rene made the Collection available to interested persons on request and also to the townspeople at Open Days on several occasions each year, with the proceeds going to another of her favourite causes, the Parish Church of St James. The photograph of Rene in this Newsletter was taken at the last Open Day held on June 3rd 2007 just a few weeks before

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she died. This event raised over £230 for the Friends of Southam Parish Church to help maintain the church building and the churchyard. Rene was an active member of the St James' congregation and a regular attendee at Church services. She read the lesson on a regular basis.

During 2006 a number of public meetings were held in Southam regarding the preservation of the Cardall Collection. As a result, a group of local people was established to pick up the work of finding a permanent home for Rene's life work. The group was formally constituted in November 2006 as 'The Friends of the Cardall Collection'. Rene could not have been more delighted with the progress made by the group in documenting the Collection to Museum standards and raising awareness of the Cardall Collection locally. On several occasions during her last few weeks the group asked whether they should cease their work, which was taking place in her home, to allow her to rest and recuperate from her treatment in peace and quiet. Rene would hear nothing of this and insisted that work continued apace.



Rene belonged to the Southam Friendship Group, a ladies group who have a regular programme of talks, visits and social events and who meet each week in the Congregational Church Hall. Rene, who was a pleasure to work with, and who was Chairlady for 30 years, will be sadly missed for her enthusiasm, ideas and encouragement.

Rene was a founder member of the Southam Local History Society which held a meeting at her home with Rene in

attendance a few days before she died. Despite her illness, she was adamant that the Cardall Collection Open Day went ahead on schedule in June 2007 to benefit her beloved local Church. Her passion was to contribute to her local community.

Rene recorded her reminiscences for the Oral History project for the Friends of the Cardall Collection just four weeks before she died including singing a local ditty 'Chips and Fish'. She even embraced the very latest Podcast technology by recording her contribution earlier this year to the Shakespeare Country "Talking the Walk" series on Southam which can be downloaded from the Internet.

Rene was a very private, independent person who was helpful, enthusiastic and committed to every thing she did. She had lived by herself since her husband died until just two days before her death. She loved her garden and the birds that brightened it up in the bad weather, and from her chair she would ensure things were done her way. Two weeks before her death, and following treatment in hospital to relieve her symptoms, she was heard issuing orders to a member of the family from her upstairs window concerning the garden. She was passionate about making her contribution to Southam in many ways; she was fiercely independent and had an indomitable spirit which was visible right up to the end. It can truly be said of Rene Cardall, for so many years a stalwart citizen of Southam: 'they don't make them like that any more'.

Mrs Rene Cardall's funeral took place at St James' Parish Church on Monday July 16th 2007, followed by cremation at Oakley Wood cemetery.

(Compiled from Notes provided by Ken Graham and Bernard Cadogan.)