

Annual report of Sturmer Local History Group 2015

In 2015 Sturmer Local History Group (SLHG) concentrated on three areas: our local church; Victorians and the Magna Carta.

We began the year on a cold January morning with a survey of medieval graffiti in St Mary's church, Sturmer. Luckily, Bari Hooper of Newport had given us some pointers as he had surveyed the church twice before. We found a number of interesting examples and shared them with our tutor, Mathew Champion. Mathew has published a book on medieval graffiti in Norfolk and is spreading the word far and wide on this topic. Facebook has been full of images of this graffiti from all parts of Britain and abroad this year. Our file on the topic was on display at our Annual Meeting and we were pleased to see one of our examples included in the presentation of the work of Stour Valley Community Archaeology at their Annual Meeting.

We revised a guide to the church for our archives and the Parochial Church Council produced a double page pull out for the Sturmer Village News. Residents can keep this if they wish – we sometimes find even people living in the village do not know where the church is as it is tucked away by Sturmer Hall.

We attended a tour of North West Essex churches in the summer with the expert, John Vigar and enjoyed the Clavering study day on church history in November, organised by the Clavering Local History Recorder. This added to our background knowledge.

In April, at the request of Haverhill and District Local History Group, we put on an exhibition about SLHG in the corridor by the History Room in the Arts Centre.

Three of us attended the Suffolk Local History Council conference on Victorians this year and a number of members supported three more Victorian Schoolroom re-enactments in the village hall (in partnership with the Village Hall Committee who shared the small profit made). These days also included handling "mystery" Victorian objects and, for the younger children, playing with some of our newly acquired Victorian style toys. Quite a change from X Box and I Pad !

We also displayed our research on Magna Carta at our Annual Meeting. We attended a workshop on the topic at the Suffolk Records Office, followed this with some appropriate reading and TV programmes and I visited the exhibition at Braintree Museum. We found our local Magna Carta Lords in Clare and Hedingham. We will be attending the postponed talk on the subject by David Starkey at the Haverhill Arts Centre in the Spring.

The end of the year also saw us visiting Cambridge University Catalogue of Aerial Photography (CUCAP) for copies of aerial photographs of Sturmer showing crop marks – on the golf club (1976) and near Mere Cottage (1951) – a topic for further investigation.

We continue to publish regular updates in the Sturmer Village News and on-line at www.sturmerhistory.com and our Twitter account @Sturmer_History.

Our annual trip was to the Munnings Art Museum in Dedham and we also had lunch, visited the craft centre and the interesting church as well as stretching our legs with a walk around the village as the weather was mild.

The Chairman and I hope to meet soon to discuss ideas for activities in 2016 and will be inviting suggestions from members by e-mail when this report is circulated – may be a trip to Gestingthorpe Roman Villa site and exhibition and a stall at Sturmer Fayre this year ?

Linda Bevan

2 January 2016