

NAILSEA AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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As 2005 draws to a close, I believe the Society can look back on this 30th Anniversary year with some degree of satisfaction.

In addition to our programme of speakers, we made a return visit to Tyntesfield, enjoyed an evening at the Parish Church and historic College in Westbury-on-Trym, barbecued with 2467 Squadron (Nailsea) Air Training Corps, and socialized in the delightful garden at Backwell of our President, Mrs. Norma Knight.

To inaugurate our Anniversary, Ann Cahill & Steve Pateman designed and launched our Society Website. In its first full month of operation there were 4,500 hits! This increasingly important aspect of our Society

not only helps to maintain our public image and accessibility, but

also disseminates information in accordance with our Aims & Objectives via articles, e.books, photographs, programme and publication lists.

Peter Wright published "*While There's a Country Lane*", his third book about Nailsea at war.

We did not achieve everything planned for 2005. I had hoped to produce a commemorative booklet for our members, and a new tea towel for sale in time for Christmas. Also planned but not realized was an updated version of the popular (1982) "*Then & Now*" book of local "before and after" photographs.

Every few years the Committee has on its agenda a review of our activities. Long standing

members of the Society will recall the formation of the Civic Society, when it was realized that more time was being expended on conservation issues and archaeological excavation than on local history research. The last major review was in 2000 when the Committee considered, among other things, its failure to attract a new generation to our membership. Activities for teenagers were suggested, including exploration of local coal mine sites. Who was going to run this additional programme when volunteers for our core activities were not forthcoming?

More recently the Society has supported the formation of NEAT (Nailsea Environment & Archaeological Team) set up and led by Committee member Cllr. Phil Barclay. This small but enthusiastic group is making good progress in systematically surveying and recording the landscape of Nailsea, including stone walling, hedges, significant trees, archaeology and pre 1930 buildings.

Where the Society was once engaged in the archaeological excavation of Middle Engine Pit and the Glassworks, these two projects are again making demands on the time

of individual members who are involved in the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust, the Glassworks Steering Group, Middle Engine Pit Sub Committee and the Nailsea Historic Monuments Trust.

So it can be seen that Nailsea & District Local History Society - once just Nailsea LHS - is constantly evolving in response to external priorities, but at the same time maintaining its core programme of research, publications and monthly meetings.

Now, once again, the Society is to have a change of emphasis, this time brought about by internal pressures. Like so many other organizations, our membership is ageing and fewer people are willing or able to take responsibility or even to assist in the running of the Society. As intimated at the recent AGM, I myself will be standing down as Chairman next October, and Peter Wright will be considering his responsibility for Pennant and other publications.

Our Society has a future, but your Committee has agreed to slim down activities now to avoid serious problems at a later date. Our core activity will be the programme of monthly speakers,

visits and social events. Mike Phillis, our Programme Secretary, will need active support to help plan and run this. We will need to purchase a new projector and invest in a sound system, probably a lapel microphone and amplifier.

Research will play a far lesser role. We have 30 years behind us and have covered in our books and pamphlets most aspects of Nailsea & district. This will of course have a knock-on effect on future publications, which in turn may well affect this significant source of income. Peter will continue to publish as “comfortable” to him, whilst minor research can be included in Pennant or added to the Website.

We will make it clear on the Website that we will no longer deal with family history enquiries. Exhibitions will in principle be discontinued as they are time consuming to prepare and there is nowadays relatively little response from the public. However we will still support both the Victorian Fair and Nailsea Showcase to maintain our profile.

On the more positive side, we see our Website assuming increasing importance - this provides a high profile image;

disseminates information; and is a vehicle for incoming information and general enquiries. Norma Knight and myself will continue to provide talks and guided walkabouts. Liaison with external bodies will be maintained to retain our reputation as a consultative organization, to keep a watching brief on planning and civic issues, and to support the establishment of an interpretation centre, heritage trail, and scheduled monuments open to the public.

How can you help carry the Society forward?

We need:-

- *Accessible storage space for our stock of publications - approx. 9 crates.*
- *Someone to work with / shadow Peter as he prepares Pennant or any other publication.*
- *Two or three members to team up with Mike Phillis to liaise with our speakers and provide the equipment they require at meetings.*

- *One, two or possibly three members to sell our publications via:-*

Local shops

Post

Monthly meetings and special events

- *A Chairperson (male or female) for October 2006 to Chair the Committee and front our monthly meetings*
- *An accountant to check our books*

Please help to carry the Society forward by considering how you could help in these or other ways. Contact telephone numbers are on the new Programme Card.

Our Programme for 2006 promises to be one of the best ever, so why not bring along a friend or neighbour to our next Meeting - *“The Edwardian Christmas”* - on 12th December. (non-members pay £1 admission). Spare Programme Cards and Membership Application Forms will be available that evening.

Please insert the enclosed white A5 sheet in your copy of Pennant 37. It contains updated information.

