

GENERAL MEETINGS 2018 - REVIEW OF THE YEAR

In **JANUARY** the AGM formalities were followed by several informal presentations featuring different kinds of collections. Metal Detectorists Larry and Sue Crane, who are members of the Federation of Independent Detectorists, had brought along some of their finds, and it was fascinating to see the range of items they have discovered locally, from keys and rings to intricate book clasps. Alf Wright gave a talk about his coin collection, some of which had also been found locally, which led to much reminiscing over the delights of pre-decimal coinage. Oh for the days of the florin, the tanner and the threepenny bit! There was also a tasty buffet, which included one of Jane's celebratory cakes.



The **MARCH** Meeting featured a presentation by Tim Turner on Country House Sales from past Sworders' auctions. Sworders have been in business since 1782, starting out in agriculture and property sales, and were based in Bishop's Stortford. Tim brought along lots of interesting material – including ledgers, flyers and maps – detailing estate sales of the late 19th and early 20th centuries which provided useful insights into the social history of the period, and tracked the ups and downs of the local economy.

Ross Stewart, Curator of Wethersfield Airfield Museum, gave a talk on the history of RAF Wethersfield at the **MAY** Meeting. Wethersfield Airbase was used by the RAF and by the American Air Force during the Second World War; it closed in 1946, but re-opened some five years later and was operational during the Cold War years. Ross worked at Wethersfield for over 30 years, and talked about his experiences there as well as its history.

In **JULY** we had a presentation by John Miners on the history of textiles in East Anglia, with a particular focus on Samuel Courtauld & Company. The mills in Halstead were very successful, and thrived during the 19th century, particularly from the production of black crepe which became a particularly fashionable element of mourning attire following the death of Prince Albert. John also brought along an amazing range of fabric samples for us to see – and handle – from beautifully embroidered silk panels to a length of the famous black crepe.

TALHG Members Darren Stone and Maggie Stevens gave a presentation to the **SEPTEMBER** Meeting entitled "Read all about it...". Newspaper articles on local villages provided a wealth of stories, and a diverse range of subjects, including poaching, theft, royal visits, murder, and socialism. There was even a report about an early speeding offence in the neighbourhood; in 1902, Cuthbert Edwards (Motor Car Driver of Easton Lodge) was summoned for driving a car at speeds in excess of 12 miles an hour near the Prince of Wales, Broxton!



A Wolseley-Siddeley car c.1904

At the last Meeting of the year, in **NOVEMBER**, Tim Luard, author and former BBC foreign correspondent, gave a talk about his great-aunt, Kate Luard. Kate served as a nurse during the First World War, in France and Belgium, first on ambulance trains and later in Casualty Clearing Stations. In 1916 she was head nurse at a unit near Ypres during the Battle of Passchendaele. Tim told Kate's story using her own war journal and the letters she wrote to her family, which vividly portrayed life at the front; these are published in a book 'Unknown Warriors', a new edition of which was produced in 2014. As Tim had been the BBC's Beijing correspondent in the late 1980s, we also asked him to talk about the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989. These two very different topics made for an interesting evening.

GUIDED CITY OF LONDON WALK, JUNE 21ST – LED BY DEREK CONNELL On a sunny summer's day, Derek took us on a 'Walk and Talk' around the City of London. The walk took in memorials, monuments, churches and historical curiosities, from the Bishop's mitre high on a wall in Bishopsgate, to the tiled plaques of the 'Watts Memorial to Heroic Self-Sacrifice' near Saint Paul's. The churches included St. Olave's Church, which Dickens described as one of his 'best beloved churchyards' whilst giving it the name of 'Saint Ghastly Grim'. The arched gateway, dated 1658, is adorned with three stone skulls on crossed bones above the inscription *Christus Vivere Mors mihi lucrum* ('Christ lives, death is my reward'). There was an interesting, and sometimes stark, contrast between the modern and the historic buildings we saw, and it is good to see that so much of London's heritage is still accessible amongst all the new development. As with all our Group outings, we also had an enjoyable lunch – most appropriately at the Counting House, a former banking hall in Cornhill. Derek was a knowledgeable and entertaining guide, and we hope to arrange another London walk in 2019.

