

GENERAL MEETINGS 2025 - REVIEW OF THE YEAR

In **JANUARY** the AGM formalities were followed by a presentation from Tim Turner about Audley End – its history, its families, and its various collections. The collections, mostly accumulated by different generations of the Braybrooke family, featured an eclectic range of material, including items from the Crimean war, geological specimens, and an array of taxidermy – something for everyone! There was also time during the evening for New Year drinks, nibbles, conversation, and gingerbread cake. The cake was made by Jane Pedley, to a recipe developed by Avis Crocombe, the head cook at Audley End in the 1880s.



Our next meeting was held in **APRIL**. Darren Stone gave a presentation about the history of The Three Horseshoes pub in Dutton Hill, with additional input from Derek Connell and Michael Chapman. Darren also featured some great stories from the 1960s through to the 1990s, collected from local newspaper archives. He finished the evening with a quiz requiring the identification of a selection of local hostelrys. This was very entertaining – though it was a shame to see just how many pubs have closed in recent years. This is a link to the list of Dunmow Brewery pubs at January 1965:

https://breweryhistory.com/wiki/index.php/List_of_Dunmow_Brewery_Ltd_pubs,_as_at_January_1965

In **MAY** we had several presentations and displays relating to the 80th anniversary of VE Day, and the impact of the Second World War on local communities. Alf Wright had put together a display of photographs and artefacts for a Bank Holiday event a few weeks before, and brought this along. He and Lesley had also portioned up some of the items rationed in 1945 – including staples like tea, sugar and butter. It was interesting to see how small some of the packages were, though it was generally thought that 8 oz. of sugar a week was more than enough! The airfield at Easton Lodge featured in the evening too, and several members shared wartime family stories.



In **JULY**, we had a presentation from Maria Medlycott, author and Senior Historic Environment Consultant, on ‘Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Essex’. Maria took us through the discovery of a variety of sites, and finds, in Essex. It was fascinating to hear about the work carried out by archaeologists, and to consider the insights into the past that the world hidden beneath our feet can provide. One of the finds Maria discussed was a Roman dodecahedron, found at Newhall, near Harlow. These objects are rare, and their purpose unknown – though suggested functions have included measuring devices of some kind, glove-making tools, and candlesticks. A dodecahedron discovered in Lincoln was featured in ‘Digging for Britain’ (Series 11, Episode 4).



At the last Meeting of the year, in **NOVEMBER**, we had a presentation from Charlie Dixon, illustrator and artist, featuring ‘Stories from a London Mudlark’. Charlie is a licensed mudlark who searches the foreshore of the River Thames in London for historical artefacts. He brought along a selection of his finds for us to see, with items going back to the Roman period. The magnificent Bartmann jug – in the centre of the photograph – was found in 110 pieces, and painstakingly re-assembled. Charlie’s illustrations bring the objects he finds back to life, and provide a fascinating context for them; this is a link to his website:



<https://www.charliedixonillustration.com/mudlark>

Charlie also has a local connection; his dad Kenneth Dixon (“Ginge”) has a long association with the Group, as does his brother, Ben.

The Group had information stands at various local events during the year, designed to share some of our excellent local history archive, and to showcase what we do. Alf Wright also kindly lent us his splendid albums of postcards and photographs for people to peruse at these events.



4TH MAY 2025 – ‘DUTON FEST’ AT THE THREE HORSESHOES, DUTON HILL

As suggested by Alan Spinks, the TALHG display featured well-known musicians with local connections – including Cliff Richards, who lived at ‘Battailes’ (a large country house in Great Easton) in the early 1970s. Cliff set up a Christian meditation centre there, and with him came Jack Filby, who later became Vicar of the Five Parishes. Eric Clapton and James Fox were among the guests at Battailes.



5TH MAY—LITTLE EASTON CHURCH
Remembering the 80th Anniversary of VE Day



10TH MAY – NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OPEN DAY – GREAT EASTON VILLAGE HALL When considering the future of our neighbourhood, it’s also important to look at its history and heritage. The Group was asked to put together a display showcasing our local history.

3RD AND 4TH OCTOBER – TILTY CHURCH FLOWER FESTIVAL



The theme was ‘a favourite childhood book’, so the display featured local literary figures and their works. These included John Pudney, who lived at Tilty Hill Farm; H.G. Wells, and his wife “Jane”; S.L. Bensusan, who co-authored several books with the Countess of Warwick; and John Margerison, a writer of short stories and novels for boys.



5TH NOVEMBER—the *Back in Our Day* event at the Moat House’s Community Coffee Afternoon



28TH JUNE – VISIT TO AUDLEY END

The Group enjoyed an outing to Audley End House and Gardens at the end of June, in gloriously sunny weather. The visit started with an excellent talk by Rebecca Fowell, introducing us to the history and previous owners and occupants of Audley End.

We then explored the house and gardens at our own pace, before all meeting up again after lunch for a guided tour of the Stableyard. This included a look around the stables, a meeting with some of the horses who reside there, and the chance to try riding side saddle (on a model, not a real horse!).



Val demonstrating how to ride side-saddle