



Report from the Chair to 2018 AGM

Welcome to the AGM – a month late but for very good reasons. After a fairly slow start the year has got better and better – I am so impressed by the get up and go of our members. We may be a small society but we seem to accomplish a great deal.

Last year's AGM was a chance to sort out our administrative arrangements. As summer arrived things started to happen.

Anne Hill led our outreach work with assistance from others and a few of us were able to participate in an event at Peckover School although the rain intervened and the afternoon was a literal wash out. It did turn up part of a horseshoe that our equine expert, Ann Hyland, has been able to identify as medieval. The outreach team does a great job informing young people about the past. Her team has attended Orchard's School, Burrowmoor, St Peter's and Hillcrest. We do need to make sure that they have Roman helmets of large enough size, I understand.

Andy and Bob carried out a geophysics survey in two sections of Wisbech General Cemetery and that report, written by Andy went to the Wisbech Society who commissioned the work, and to the County Archaeologist. It will help inform the work that is being carried out on the Chapel.

The weather in 2017 was difficult for farmers and we weren't able to get onto the new site in Wisbech St Mary until quite late in the year. However, 11 of us were able to carry out a very successful field walk – some very muddy boots as a result. Again an official report has been written by Andy and Bob and has been much appreciated by the County Archaeologist. This seems to me to be a really interesting area showing considerable economic activity in the Romano-British landscape.

It is worth noting that there is a great deal of preparation needed to make these events work and they don't start until we receive an official site number from the Historic Environment team at County Hall. Writing reports for geophysics, field walks and digs is an essential part of that process and in 2017/18 we have shown we can rise to the challenge. I hope that in 18/19 more members can learn that side of archaeology to take the burden off of others, particularly Andy who as well as this activity has found time to teach us the art of identifying pottery finds and so much more.

In September we started our winter season of speakers and were immediately overwhelmed by huge numbers turning up for Andy's tunnel talks. This led to two repeat performances and we had to institute a booking system so we avoided queues and disappointment. This has worked well and members should not

underestimate the time and effort Bob has had to put into making these talks successful by running the booking system as well as handling publicity and the technical side. Great work Bob. All the talks since Andy's tunnel talks have been a sell out and all have been received enthusiastically. Special thanks go to Josephine for arranging such a variety of speakers and I am sure we are all looking forward to the next season.

As our thoughts turn to 18/19 we have already been busy working with the High Street Project in organising the dig that will take place in the museum gardens at the end of this month. Chris and Josephine have been our liaison officers for that dig, and Andy continues to keep the tunnels project alive. Chris has organised timetables and form filling and Andy is preparing display cabinets.

We are working much more closely with the Museum. This include finds waging and a Takeover day. Another good thing was the very successful inaugural young archaeologists meeting ran by Garry. This will hopefully grow in the coming years so we have a new generation of Fenland Archaeologists. Garry has also been writing for the Fenland citizen and the Fens magazine

Later in the year we hope to be able to GeoPhys the site in WSM that we field walked last year. The finds were very promising from that walk and the Roman presence was large and obvious. We have narrowed down where the Geophys needs to happen and when the results are viewed, we can talk with the landowner about a possible dig.

On the subject of GeoPhys, two of our members took advantage of some free training provided by JIGSAW and I hope that this year some more of you can learn how to handle the kit and prepare the reports. With that in mind it is worth reminding you that we borrow the kit from JIGSAW – Garry has attended the necessary training to allow us to do this - but we are currently working on an HLF bid for our own.

Membership has grown significantly since the beginning of the year and we now have just over 30 members. I would hope that some more people will sign up after the museum dig. Please engage with the members of the public – the people of Wisbech have a genuine interest in the history of the town as has been borne out by the attendance at our talks. You will see later on in tonight's agenda we are proposing to lower the membership fees. In fact, we have already done so in anticipation but I hope you will support the move as the lower fees put us on a par with other local groups except you get more for your money with FenArch! One Cambridgeshire archaeological group charges members £2 for attending talks and members of the public £3. As you know, for our members talks are free and we only charge the public £2. Our approach means that this year we have built up a nice bank balance which Christine will report on.

I hope that I have covered most of the points I should – there was things such as finds washing at Ann's, good Christmas event here and so on – all of which are important ongoing activities which point to the good position we are in. If I have left you out please castigate me under AOB.

I am pleased to say that all your current officers and committee members have agreed to stay on but I will take nominations from the floor when we reach that item. That seems a suitable time for me to stop, other than to thank Bob and Christine for their work as Secretary and Treasurer respectively and all the members of your Committee for the work and effort they have put in this year.