



THE LITTLEPORT SOCIETY



Caring for our heritage, our present, and our future

[Home](#) [Membership Application](#) [Bookshop](#) [Historical Features](#) [Contact Us](#) [Genealogy Resources](#) [Forthcoming Events](#) [Old Littleport](#)

LATEST NEWS

The Unveiling of the Thomas Peacock Blue Plaque Saturday, 4th June 2011

The day finally arrived when Thomas Peacock, the founder of Hope Brothers factory was officially recognised for all that he did for his home village of Littleport.

Thanks are due to the family of his brother William (to whom he was very close) a plaque was presented as a gift to Littleport and unveiled by Valerie Beattie. Thomas was her great, great, great uncle.

The Whitfield Group, who purchased the factory after its final closure proceeded to convert it to luxury flats, they gave the Littleport Society permission to mount the plaque on the side of the building in White Hart lane. The weather was good and thankfully a very large crowd had assembled for the unveiling. I am sure Thomas would have appreciated every moment, from the Ely Town Crier, to the people dressed in Victorian costume including a Mary and Thomas look-a-like.

An opening speech was given by the Chairman Grenville Goodson, followed by Valerie Beattie who stated that before last November she knew very little about members of the Peacock family. She said that as a child she



had heard mention of Hope Brothers but it meant nothing to her – until she and her partner John were looking through a box of items left by Valerie’s late mother, a postcard with an address on the back, which stated: Miss Flanders, Vanbrugh House, Victoria Street, Littleport. Valerie was aware of a Flanders connection and that was it, a jubilant Valerie contacted Bruce Frost, the information she received left her speechless and partner John was on the case. Vanbrugh House was one of the houses Thomas had built for family members and Amelia Flanders was found. The quest then started in earnest. Amazing when you think what finding one postcard can do.

The curtain was opened to loud clapping by the crowd. Who were then invited to partake of refreshments and view the exhibits in the Village Hall (formerly called the Constitutional Hall). Thomas would have been very proud and pleased at the venue, as he had a hand in building the hall.



The W.I. is to be commended on the super display of food, which not only looked good but tasted as good as it looked. A penny farthing cycle and another Victorian cycle were on display, kindly loaned by Mr & Mrs David and Beryl Smith. Attending were Mr & Mrs Colin and Margaret Bedford from the March cycle club, Mr & Mrs John Smith had a wonderful display of Victorian skates and lots of skating pictures, Mr



Garth McGowen (Mac) was in charge of the bookstall. Mr Des Smith decorated the stage with a picture of Thomas in pride of place, in front of this were family photographs loaned by Valerie, the large bell and the later whistle that were used to call the employees to work. A very long family tree which made a lot of work for Mr Bruce Frost, and many artefacts from the Society archive which included wills, photos, recipes and information on the family. Thanks to Mr Des Smith and Mrs Ann Lightowlers for all their help. A cake was then cut by Valerie Beattie and Mr Whitfield.



It was a truly remarkable morning and enjoyed by all, such a joy to see so many interested people, in particular many of the former factory employees. It was great for them to get together, I think everyone will agree it all went like a dream; I would like to add my personal thanks to anyone who helped in any way and to everyone for attending, not forgetting those who have donated photographs of the day.

Maureen Scott



WANTED ITEMS

The Littleport society would like to acquire garments made by Hope Brothers' as well as other connected items or ephemera for a permanent Heritage display in Littleport.

The Society welcomes donations, permanent loan items, or items for purchase.

If you would like to help preserve this important part of our heritage please contact the Littleport Society, or any Committee member.



Further details of the Society's activities are reported in its 12-page quarterly magazine, which is free to members and is packed with

articles and features about Littleport and surrounding areas. Please click [here](#) to apply for membership of The Littleport Society.



ARCHIVE NEWS - 1

The Society has acquired the MILITARY MEDAL awarded to Corporal Walter Sidney Sallis, son of John Riches Sallis and Sarah Sallis of St. Peter's Cottage, Ely Road, Littleport for gallantry on 14/15 October 1916, for his part in the assault on the Schwaben, Redoubt, Thiepval. He was subsequently promoted to Sergeant 325421 and was killed in action on 29th July 1917 aged 26 years. He was buried at Duhallow A.D.S. Cemetery, Belgium. His name appears on the Littleport War Memorial. His Military Medal was purchased in June 2009 by The Society for £879.07 and is the most money that The Society has ever spent on a single item.



ARCHIVE NEWS - 2

AT A MEETING of the Littleport Town Band in November 1916, a presentation was made to Mr. Edwin 'Teddy' Dring of a silver mounted baton inscribed '*Presented to E.A. Dring from the Littleport Town Bandsmen Nov. 1916*'. The presentation was for the tremendous work he did to bring the band to a state of efficiency. This baton eventually found its way to Australia, and The Society are most grateful to Peter Groves and John Taylor for sending it back to Littleport.

Mr. E. A. Dring's baton:



The engraving on the baton:



THE FAT MAN OF THE FENS

Member Mr. Bill Murfitt, who lives in Maidenhead, asks if anyone can help with information about Samuel Murfitt who was born about 1833 in Manea, or perhaps Wimblington. He had four brothers, Bill has identified two, Edward, born 1817, and John, born 1822, but has got stuck with his research. A nephew or perhaps great-nephew of Samuel was William Murfitt, born 1880, and murdered at Risley in Suffolk in 1938. Samuel Murfitt died in 1877 weighing 40 Stone, his burial was recorded in newspapers around the world. The following is from the New York Times:

FUNERAL OF THE LARGEST MAN.

From the London Daily News, Jan. 26.

Some thousands of persons visited Prince's End, Tipton, yesterday, to witness the funeral of Mr. Samuel Murfitt, who was recently exhibited as the largest man in the world. The deceased, who died on Friday, after a few days' illness, was a native of Wimblington, Cambridgeshire, and was 55 years of age. His dimensions were as follows: Height, 6 feet 1 inch; weight, 40 stone; girth of waist, 100 inches, and he measured 20 inches round the calf of his leg. A hearse could not be found large enough for the deceased's removal, and he had to be conveyed on a flat. The sashes had to be removed from the windows, and nearly 20 men employed to get the body through the window on to the flat.

