

## Mapping Museums project interview transcript

Name: Terry Gilligan, Alan Heasman, John Dymond

Role: Trustees (and co-founders), Aldbourne Community Heritage Group

Museum: Aldbourne Heritage Centre

Location of interview: Aldbourne Heritage Centre

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Interviewer(s): Toby Butler

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*For readability the transcript has been made using 'intelligent' transcription (removing ums, ers etc).*

[00:01:12]

TB: first of all can I ask you in turn to introduce yourself. Please say your name and date of birth.

TG: I'm Terry Gilligan, I was born on the XX XXX 1947.

AH: I'm Alan Heasman, I was born on the XX XXX 1944.

JD: I'm John Dymond, I was born on the XX XXX 1945.

TB: I don't know how you'd like to do this, but do you feel free to chip in, in turn. But just tell me the story of how this started. We are particularly interested in where the idea came from, how it came about, how decisions were made to set up the museum, so really early days. Can you just give me the story of how this came about.

[00:03:02]

JD: Well I think we can go back even further than when we started, because some years ago, 30-40 years ago, there was in the village a Civic Society where another group had a society similar to ours, but did not have ambitions of creating a museum. But there was a lot of interest on the history of the village. And really that's where the interest in history came from. If we will forward then to 2012/2013 it runs onto Terry he became aware that the youth centre who had previously been in this building were moving out, and the parish council we're looking for some use for what was, to them then, a redundant building. Terry picked up, had ambitions - you had better tell the story, Terry.

TG: Well it actually goes back further than that because when the premises here were public toilets, the District Council decided that they didn't want to fund public toilets any longer, and handed them back to the village. The village didn't know what quite do with them, so they had to thoughts; one was to turn it into an industrial premises or offices or whatever; have a second one was to see what the village would like themselves. The village wanted to run a youth centre from here, although there was competition from another group, of which I was part of, to turn it into a museum. The youth won if you like, because the museum part was only half-cocked anyway. So they actually have internet cafe and the youth centre which they ran until 2013, the beginning of 2013.

TB: OK so when did that start roughly?

AH: 2007.

TB: Right so for about 6 years it ran successfully.

TG: So the youth were then offered, a farmer offered to buy a building across the road and hold it in trust for the youth to convert to a Youth Centre which is what happened, so this building was vacated in 2013 and I badgered the parish council; Alan came along with me a lot of the time, and we kept on to them and said look, what are you going to do with it? And they said well it's not empty yet, this is the beginning of 2013, but obviously it was going to become empty. And the time came and it was emptied and they said right we are going to have to put this out to tender. So we thought 'oh no'. So they did that there was only one interested party and that was us! So we called another

lady in the village who actually was already operating and Aldbourne archive. We called the public meeting and this is when John got involved as well in October 2013, which followed into forming a pilot group with a few others. And then we went active in the last few days of December 2013 I think, roughly.

JD: Yes, We produced a proposal for a consultation for the new group, and how the new group should be organised, and we called the public meeting on the 18th of December 2013.

TG: Ahead of that we had organised a big dig in the village, it took in our existing football field, and a field further over, which is in the village hands, and that really led to the serious thinking about us having a museum. Even though we knew that we wanted to have the building.

TB: well that's interesting tell me about the big dig, that was a archaeological thing was it?

AH: It was metal detecting; because we knew the site that Terry is talking about, what we call the football pitch, was used by the 101st Airborne as one of their main bases when they were in the village. As we believe that there would probably be some artefacts, leftovers, remnants and things under there. And because the site was going to be redeveloped, not extensively but enough, the parish council gave us permission and we engaged with a the metal detecting group from Swindon who has the expertise to do it, and over a weekend they came and surveyed the whole pitch, found quite a few objects which gave us the core or the start of our Museum here. In fact that was our main display in the very first days, until we have managed to accumulate some more material, so that was The catalyst, it was the metal detecting survey which we called the big dig just for a catchy name.

TB: I see your collection started off of two things; one was the items that you found on that dig, and the other was an individual at the museum who had already started to collect archival things, is that right?

AH: Yes, Terry referred the lady who did the archive, it was very much of digital, visual archive rather than an object archive. But we did know that people held material in the village, in their own houses, things that they had collected or inherited as part of the property. So we knew that we could probably borrow items to flesh out the museum, as well as the big dig items as well. And since then we've been accumulating various artefacts.

[00:08:55]

TB: So in those early days it was Civic Society, it kind of grew out of that, then there was the public meeting, at that point you formulated the steering group or the interest group set up the museum, OK.

AH: And that's the Aldbourne Community Heritage Group, to give us our full title. The group being very much focused on providing a service for the community so we got that word into the title. And that we would hold talks, we would have evening talks, not just a static Museum. So does John alluded to we have monthly talks. So this is part of that activity, for visitors principally, but also the villagers, and villages come to a evening talks where we get 50 to 60 people once a month who are interested in the local history.

TB: Fantastic so if this building hadn't have been made available; if this toilet wasn't here, do you think that still would have happened, or was that the trigger, the spark?

JD: Eventually it probably might have happened, if a building somewhere had become available, that was affordable; the key to it was that it was a public building that they were prepared to rent to us for a peppercorn rent; and very much in the middle of the village as well. If we go back to 2000, every decade, 1970, 1980, 2000 and so on have held the festival. And in 2000 one of the amateur historians and the village got together a collection of objects to do with the village and put up a weekend Museum, a sort of Flash museum in one of the redundant industrial buildings in the village. And that was so interesting; that brought a lot of interest in the village and raised the profile of what could be done.

[00:11:05]

TB: That's fantastic so literally a pop-up Museum, put on a unit

JD: Well it wasn't unit it's actually an 18th century fustian Mill, which was on the point of going derelict although the new owner has now well restored it.

AH: It's certainly true to say that we would be hard pushed to find any other buildings of that type in the village. All are occupied for one reason or another, it's not like a town where you might find the odd industrial unit that becomes available, and the parish council didn't own any property as such, unlike town councils who often have an older building. We weren't that lucky. And obviously we're thinking ahead now and thinking where on earth would we go if we needed to move from here just from an expansion point of view. We can't really think of anywhere else at the moment.

TG: Initially you see we had no money; the parish council were willing to let us have this at peppercorn rent, which is what we are still on today, although we have got a long lease on it, but had it not been for that we may not have done it. I think we probably would, but it was 50/50.

TB: Can I ask you individually now, personally, how and why did you get involved in this. Terry I think you were in a Civic Society already so perhaps you had a long lead in, but personally what is it about this that gives you satisfaction.

[00:12:40]

TG: We've all got different reasons. My personal reason if you want me to start, is it I've been a bell ringer ever since I was 11. So I'm into the history of our bells and the bell Foundry. In itself this is a good reason because I'm passionate about bell ringing, it follows. That actually leads into all sorts of other things but it was a good start, and when we have the dig on the football field, that brought up so many things it just leads into thinking, well, we've got something here. That's me.

JD: I think Terry's missed out something, which is the fact that of the three of us Terry is the native of the village; he's a Dabchick, which is the name for natives of the village, Alan and I are both incomers.

TB: That's very interesting because almost everyone that I'd interview to a setup local history museums haven't come from the place where they set one up, isn't that interesting. So there was

something going on there, perhaps curiosity, perhaps a need to fill, I'd love to hear what you think because your newcomers.

AH: Exactly Terry has been born and bred here and has a good knowledge of the village. I came 15 years ago, I was curious about the village as you've just said. And I realised after a couple of years there was quite a lot to learn that wasn't known very widely, it certainly wasn't displayed at all, there were one or two articles that had been written, and as John and Terry alluded to one or two previous historians, to give them favour they did what they could, but now with the advent of the internet you can search out a lot more information. So my curiosity was aroused and obviously I then got interested in forming the group back in 2013. So I was a newcomer, wanting to learn about the village I was living in. Well the parish strictly.

TB: And what's your background Alan do you have an interest in computers?

AH: Professionally I was a meteorologist, until I retired. And then we moved from a busy area of Reading down this way because it was a bit quieter. But I've always been interested in history, I would have liked to have taken history at school it was one of those times when you did science so I ended up doing meteorology.

TG: It was quite helpful so that we were neighbours; we were always together and we talk about things, not with anybody else but amongst ourselves sort of thing. So we developed a mutual passion for it.

TB: And how about you John tell us about your story.

JD: Well I came to the village 32 years ago. At that time I was a computer geek and a computer consultant. But I was also interested in family history as a genealogist. And for the last 25 years I've been studying the families of the village. I've transcribed and published on my website the entire transcription of the registers and the censuses, and the marriage licences and so forth, of the village and reconstructed a number of family trees, including Terry's, back for a good number of generations. So that was where my interests came from and it was also piqued by that display that was put up in 2000, that was put up for the festival. And a realisation of just what the history of this village is. Because for a village of only what, 15 to 1700 people maybe, we have a history that goes from the Bronze Age right through to such things as Doctor Who. An incredibly interesting history. And when we heard about what Terry was calling his meeting for my wife and I came along and immediately got involved because it just fitted in exactly what what our interests were.

[00:17:08]

TB: I'm fascinated by the family history thing. It sounds like you've been involved with it for Very very long time. What is it about family history of that really excites you, what's behind that, I'm intrigued.

JD: Well it probably stems from the fact, well it probably stems from my wife's family than me actually, the interest. Because her great-grandparents had 15 children. All but one of whom lived into adulthood, and she has this enormous extensive family and as soon as I married her, I got together with my new mother-in-law and started to try to work out this family, just from that point on I became interested and I started researching my own, and really when we came back to England at the time that we moved here, I then almost immediately then started to going to register offices,

record offices and studying, going back through the registers to find my own family history about which I knew nothing.

TB: But what do you get out of it, what's the pleasure that you get from it? Could you nail it down?

JD: I am a person who likes order. You've asked me a question but I don't think I can answer it, not rationally. It isn't a rational reason at all. I like finding order and finding the patterns. If I had lived 30 years earlier I would probably have ended up at either Bletchley Park or I'd have been a code breaker or a cryptographer or something. I like to find patterns.

TB: that's fascinating, so you're finding patterns in this village then.

JD: Finding patterns in the village finding patterns through their history. How those patterns all interlink.

AH: I think very much, for what I've learnt from John looking at his websites, and the registers, that not only do you get names but you got occupations, and then you think I didn't realise that they did that in the village, that they made collars, or they made chairs, or they made straw hats and all sorts of things. So that then opens up the whole industrial side and social side as well. So I think just having that skeleton, that John has worked on for many years, it's a great start for a group like this.

TB: That's interesting it's almost like it's the scaffold, and then you're finding these building blocks or bits of puzzle I suppose aren't you and getting an idea of the greater thing.

JD: And we suddenly realise that between us sort of all of these things fit together.

AH: Yes, Terry's family goes back a long way in the village, and links - and we are very fortunate but there has only been one history written of the village by this lady, but in that encapsulates all those sorts of things, and that's also great start to someone coming new to the village, having a book to read in the first place. But then your curiosity gets sparked off to want to know a little bit more. That was certainly the case for me.

TB: And when was that published was that's a little while ago

JD: Early 1970s, 72 I think.

AH: The lady was well into her 80s when it was published. And she again was in incomer. She wasn't a native of the village, but wherever she went she wrote, she was very good at writing and she wrote about the village, and she very much fell in love for the village, and lived here a good number of years. So that's really the only collection of historical information that's ever been published. There have been one or two little leaflets, but this is a great source of information and it sparks off some of our themes for our displays, which we try and refresh each year.

TB: This is the 'The Heart of the Village' by Ida Gandy.

JD: and Ida Gandy will be the subject of one of our talks to the village next year.

TB: it's great to have that as a starting point isn't it.

[00:21:27]

AH: For us and for newcomers yes.

TG: Alan has a skill also in researching the history of people in the village, and he has mostly done our named people over there, and in our magazine, the village magazine, the Dabchick, he writes in most of the editions, of someone who lived in the village, who lived in a village like ours, and you get people like Lord Dorfen(?), who was Chancellor of the Exchequer and famously had to resign, he was one of the subjects; and it goes on (laughs).

TB: So Alan, you are drilling down to an individual biography almost.

AH: Yes local people, personalities that are interesting, , retired soldiers and that sort of thing and also some who had a high profile outside the village, who left the village and made their name. We mentioned earlier Thomas Fairchild, he went off and found fame if not fortune in London as a gardener in the 17th century. So all those people that perhaps a lot of people in the village didn't know about. So just thought I'd bringing it to their attention through the village magazine and hopefully they might then join the Heritage Group, of which we have got over 100 members out of a small population as John said.

JH: about 120.

TB: that's astonishing and the population of the village she said was...

JH: about 1700

TB: Right, OK, that's about 8% *[it is 7 percent!]*

JH: as I said earlier we get 60, 70 sometimes as many as 90 people come to one of our monthly talks.

AH: We keep putting out chairs! But we stick to Aldbourne as much as possible because there's so much so that we don't tend to general history as you might say, Kings and Queens of England, we don't tend to do that other than when they have an impact on the village from time, as John will tell you.

TB: So the thing you enjoy is building up those individual stories but I suppose hunting down the information, which is great, OK. And Terry do you get involved in any of the research side of things?

TG: Yes we all do, the other members of the committee as well.

TB: Are there any particular topics that you've picked up?

TG: Well bells is my main thing, but 3 or 4 years ago, quite a while after my father died I discovered that he had kept some diaries and scrapbooks of his mother and her mothers, going back to the 19th century. And they have been really useful. Only this last week John borrowed them because they have got written recipes and that sort of thing. They also kept births, deaths and marriages. And John with his genealogy hat...

JH: I suddenly have birth dates, and not just baptism dates - fantastic!

[00:24:16]

TG: And it linked things up for him. There's lots of other things as well that I have used ever such a lot. And my own grandfather was a top jockey in his day and I've done quite a lot on that. It brings us closer to the people that lived in that time, or even beyond, and I feel quite an affinity. And particularly with the bell ringers who are buried in the churchyard. There is one in particular outside the back of the church. There is a hole in his grave and we always say: 'what did you think of the ringing today then Broom?' 'Rubbish!' [laughs] we like to tell that one to The Americans.

AH: We are also lucky I suppose in a village like this that hasn't changed much in 200 plus years, but the actual buildings, cottages, where these people lived are still here and still being used so it makes for very interesting walk about tours, that we have done from time to time for locals, as well as the Americans I mentioned earlier. When the Americans come and visit us because the hundred and first airborne were here prior to D-Day. You can actually still see those buildings, we haven't suffered, if that's the right word, too much degradation in the middle of the village. There is a little bit of modern building on the outskirts but not on in the centre.

JH: We had over 400 Americans come this year, at varying times. But that's how popular those tours have got.

TB: I mentioned migration earlier, I suppose that was a big, temporary Migration wasn't it, the American GIs

TG: Well they almost doubled the population overnight.

JH: 1000 paratroopers suddenly arrived in the village, of what was then probably only 1200 people.

TG: The thing is that bit of history, when we've got that much [spreads arms]

JH: it's only a fraction.

TG: And we keep saying this but even though we've got a lot here, it's mainly because the Americans like to see it when they are here. We had about 5 or 6 days when they came so it's good to keep up a good record right through the summer for them. We can't keep taking things down and putting them back up again. But it is an interesting part of our history and the villagers, they identify with it as well, because it's not that long ago.

JH: But we get people, visitors, coming from all over, following the Band of Brothers. So it's not just those Americans who come, we get people from Australia who have come here, who have come to the village, because they have been following the Band of Brothers. And lots of people, for instance there is a military college a dozen miles or so away, and quite often will get an email from somebody over there saying we've got some new recruits I would like to come. So we open up for them specially.

TB: For the recording could you just say but you've got a connection with the museum in America and this is part of a trail almost, could you just explain a little bit about that?

JH: What it was Terry here when he started it, I'm not quite sure what the story of that was. But we have this arrangement, about a year or so after we started, Terry was approached by the National Museum of World War II in New Orleans, which was started by Stephen Ambrose, who was the chap who wrote the book The Band of Brothers, to say that they were organising a tour following the



route that the Band of Brothers had taken and could they come here, and what arrangements could be made for them. And for the first couple of years there were only a couple of tours a year, and it was a fairly informal arrangement.

TG: It was all of us to Luxembourg buy a Luxembourg travel agent and coach company. The fact that came from Swindon, I knew the travel agents in Swindon, they knew me, evaded know anyone else in Aldbourne, that's how it really started off. So these people in Luxembourg were handing this tour for people in America - in England! But it worked OK. Then the Americans decided that they would do it all on their own, although they still engaged they're coaches from Luxembourg. So they drive from Luxembourg to Aldbourne, to Heathrow rather, pick up at Heathrow, bring them to Aldbourne and they're here for 3 hours, 3 1/2 hours. We give them dinner, they pay for it, but we give them dinner in our local pubs. And they stay overnight locally, and then go down to Portsmouth and then across the channel to tour northern Europe.

TB: So that gives you a nice regular stream of visitors.

JH: A regular visitor stream and as we charge them for the tours that we give them, we walk them around the village and point out everything to do with 101st airborne and quite a lot besides. Which adds them so it's an income stream for us and quite an important one.

TG: People love seeing them, in the village. They love them. Because they were good, they were good when they were here, but the airman first were here they were good to the village, there was no falling out like you might think with American people in English people. They were very good, they behaved themselves, they were gentlemanly.

JH: Some of the local young man weren't so happy about the behaviour of the young ladies. But apart from that....

TB: GI Brides or not Brides...

JH: Yes there were a few of both.

[00:29:48]

TB: So it's clear to me that someone from America finding their roots must be absolutely fascinating. Let me just ask you generally for the village itself, clearly you have got a fair percentage you are a member of it, which is amazing, but also it sounds to me like there was a public meeting, I don't know how many people came to that, but there was one of interest in doing this so what do you think this museum has, where the energy has come - from them, what has it given the village?

TG: The energy was from the individuals who forms the committee. We had John and Liz, Alan myself and 2 or 3 others. Really passionate about wanting to do it. We couldn't have this building until - don't forget we started it at the end 2013, we couldn't have the building until August following, so we had to do something in between, so that's why we form the Heritage Group so that we could do things in between, meanwhile building up to what we could do when we opened. That went right through the summer, we did talks, monthly talks, and gradually thinking about what we were going to do, but it became vacant and then we had 6 weeks or so empty, so that we can actually do it up, paint it.

TB: Tell me about that, because presumably you inherited a space that have been used by the youth group, so have been converted from a toilet at that point, but still that's quite the struggle to get back together so how did that all work, but also what money did you have to do it?

TG: Previously it was basically an internet cafe, run by the youth group who operated it as well, so they had actually done it all out, the kitchen and everything. So it was quite easy to move in to.

JH: An electricity supply and so forth, which was brilliant.

AH: Lots of power points and things like that which was very useful. We found some display cabinets from a shop in Marlborough that was closing down, a jewellery and ladies gift shop, we managed to get those for not a lot of money, because that would have been a real problem, the glass display cabinets. because it took us a while, once we have formed group, to raise some funds. We were lucky with one or two donations locally, and a couple of grants to kick us off. We have a membership fee for those who join the group so that gives us a little bit of income as well. And so we've been building that up and now we're reaching the stage where we are perhaps investing, we've got one brand new cabinet that we have purchased recently which is obviously a lot more expensive. But it needs to be on a standard that may satisfy other museums if we wish to borrow items. At the moment everything is homespun, and while our security is reasonably good, a standard glass cabinets and things like that, we have got to bring up. And I think you'll find that in many small village museums, they have just scrounged cupboards and shelves and things. I think these were some old boards somebody had

TG: They are photographers display boards

JH: And the museum group on Freecycle has proved very useful.

AH: John is very good at scavenging, if I can use that word, for materials, so we gradually added to that. There is one or two more things that would like to get in here, but obviously we have got limited space. But what we have done we have done on a shoestring really. We haven't had any massive grants, we have had some small ones. We've just recently had an opportunity for local Co-op shop here on one of these charity schemes, a bit like Tesco and Waitrose do, so for the last year of proportion of their turnover has come to us in the last few weeks, we are at the end of the 12-month cycle. So that has helped us, and that really paid for that cabinet that we have just purchased over there.

TB: Fantastic you mentioned a couple of grants, that was perhaps one of them but can you just tell me the source of the others.

TG: It wasn't really grants that you had in the first place, it was all Village money. There was a housing association; I attended a meeting for that; the local coach company that were actually based in Aldbourne but they moved out of few years ago now, but we are very friendly with them and they let us have quite a good sum of money. Richard \_\_, a chap who has got a big house, he gave us a nice sum.

JH: and our local area board, Marlborough area board, gave some money.

TG: But the actual initial funding came from, I'll go back to when we have a big dig, we had an exhibition a head of our public meetings for all this, and we had a donations box out. And you got something like £100 or something. It was really that that started it off.

JH: And in that first year we did things like bric-a-brac sales, open gardens and various ways, a pint and a pie evenings and things, anything that we could do to just fundraise. And we got a lot of support from the village and a number of private donations as well, beyond the £12 a head for the membership.

[00:35:10]

TB: So what kind of budget did you have at the Beginning then to fit it all out. Can you give me a ballpark figure?

JH: £1,500? A 1000 to £1,500. Our cabinets cost us I think £350, something like that.

AH: We have things like the initial insurance, and we got hit with business rates and things like that, which go on every year of course so there is always that underlying thing, paying for the electricity. Fortunately as John and Terry has said we got a peppercorn rent on the actual building so that's not too onerous. We brought materials and things like that, about £1,500 really got us going at the beginning. And even though we are still only up at about £4,000

JH: A bit more than that five, £5,500. and actually when the money from the Coop comes in, this year we will have actually turned over closer to 7000. So our coffers are quite full. So that's why we're looking at the possibility of improving.

TG: There was no lottery Grant; we have the area board Grant and that's really about it, we have the housing association money.

JH: We haven't yet put ourselves forward for accreditation with the Arts Council because that opens up a lot of possibilities for larger grants but in a building this size, what are we going to spend a lot of money on? We don't really need lots of money.

AH: We went to a meeting, there's a Wiltshire museums group in Wiltshire, and John and I went to Chippenham yesterday for one of these meetings. And we learnt about one of the museums there that has just spent some money refurbishing. And it gives you a few ideas. But then when we think around here, actually we couldn't do some of the things they've done which are very sophisticated, but it does give you an idea that we could improve further, slowly. And we are going, as John said, we haven't gone for accreditation yet, but we are trying to properly register with the charity commission, partly because our turn over has been pushing the limit of £5,000. So we need to do it anyway but it will remove from a some personal responsibility of being trustees; the committee are the trustees of the group and therefore at the moment and at the moment we have Personal liability should anything, touch wood, go wrong. But when we become a CIO, a charitable Incorporated organisation, it gives her a little bit more protection.

JH: It's effectively makes us a limited company, in everything but name.

TB: So at the moment you are still an organisation, but you are going to move to that status.

JH: We are unincorporated yes, so we are trustees but ultimately we personally are liable. And we would really like to remove that liability.

[00:38:16]

AH: It's not too onerous but as I say. The other thing was although we registered with HMRC as a charity which means that we can get Gift Aid which has been a little bit helpful, we haven't had a huge amount, but still, but that is not the same as registering with the Charity Commission, following all their rules and regulations. It's a slightly more onerous a step.

TB: Yes you have to submit accounts annually I think as a charity.

AH: Yes fortunately we probably won't be at top level, you won't be up there with the RSPCA and other huge organisations, but we do have to submit some financial report at the end of each year in due course, which we haven't had to do so far.

TB: OK. So how many people do you have on your trustee board now.

TG: Eight.

JH: Julia has just come on, so that's 8. Plus we have got room for another couple.

TB: I was going to ask how decisions are made; you have got the trustees but also you've got the membership which is a large body, and I'm sure they come and go depending on the talks and things. Is everything done by that core group at the moment?

JH: Everything is done by the committee, and then once a year we have an annual general meeting, which if we have done it all wrong they can throw us out. And our new constitution as a CIO says that we will have to put ourselves forward for regular re-election.

TB: Let's just talk a little bit about the collection because it started off for those few finds that you had from the big dig; but I can see that it's come on hasn't it, so tell me about that, about that process and how you managed to find all of these things.

[00:40:11]

TG: Well the bells were the first things; we knew, apart from the dig that we did, we had bells, the village has got bells, Alan had quite a few already that he had been buying.

AH: I have got an interest, just through this, seeing things on eBay, and I bought one or two little bells which I knew to have been cast in Aldbourne in the past. One of the first people to have joined the group had been an enthusiastic bell ringer and bell collector, and he has loaned us some bells. Terry himself had some bells...

JH: I had some bells - you go into houses around the village and you will find probably at least 10% of them have at least one bell that was cast here in the village. But actually the very first thing that we took into our ownership, and is item number one in our inventory, it's behind me here and it's a collection of about 8,000 photographs which have been collected partly by the village Photographic Society which has existed through until about 1990, and partly by the Civic Society that we mentioned before, and they were all of the custody of a lady who was a member of both, or had

been a member of both. And she had this enormous collection a photographs, so the very first thing we got was about 8000 photographs to sort out.

TG: So John was in his element putting them all in order and cataloguing them from random.

JH: So they are all scanned and mostly catalogued but since then we have probably got another 4000 waiting to be; because we keep getting tranches of these collections which people have made from time to time.

TB: Are these coming in from organisations, or from individuals in the village?

JH: One individual in particular was a member of both of those organisations and ended up effectively being the archivist of the organization. And the records they sent to the record office in Chippenham, when they became defunct, but they didn't do the same as a photographic collection, and I say the first thing we got was 8000, but then this lady started searching in her attic, and after she died her family sex in the attic, and more and more of them have come to light. And then we have received collections like that from other places around the village. So we have a huge collection of photographs. But then more and more people come and offer us bells, people come and offers pottery that they have, chairs that were made in the village, items of willow weaving, which everybody thinks means basketware, but it doesn't it means the beautiful willow material, cloth, which was used for instance for the Salvation Army ladies bonnets. It would go out to London and be used in the Hat making industry. All kinds of things that were done in the village, people keep offering us, and things that they have found. A couple of days ago somebody arrived with a heavy bag that is full of things they just dug up in their garden which is on the site of an old barn, and it is the fittings that they used to put the barn together in the 18th century probably. Just all manner of things. You've got a clock down there that was made by the village clockmaker. You've got a pump down there that was used, a stirrup pump that was used by the local fire brigade. Stuff like the documentation, documents.

AH: The parish news which preceded the the Dabchick, you must take one of these with you. So we have got Parish News's going back to the early 1970s, and some older versions, so we have got quite a few documents.

JH: And we also had a gift a few months ago, a box which contains the parish, meeting the church, magazine going back from 1897, through until the 1970s which we are looking through trying to glean information from those, so they will be here by the time we open next year.

[00:45:12]

TB: So is there a local area archive, there is no library in the village?

JH: There is a library in the village but it is now volunteer run. But the local archive would be cheap on them, The Wiltshire and Swindon history centre which is the county record office, I Have spent some time there.

TB: You have, as a researcher?

JH: Lots of time as a researcher, there and at the national archives up in Kew. Behind you and over on the wall and maps that of come from Kew.

TB: So do you have a relationship with them given that you are starting to get quite substantial collections, are they useful, can they advise you?

JH: Yes Chippenham definitely.

AH: Skills and conservation, they have give us advice on that we have attended training courses. John particularly, how to pack and catalogue things, ensure that we don't have too many insects and other things, those sorts of housekeeping rules and regulations. As well as copyright regulations, all sorts of things. So they have been very helpful for that the Wiltshire group.

JH: Actually that's one of the things you spoke about before we started recording, about why things are so blooming here in Wiltshire. And I think one of the reasons that things are so good and museums are flourishing in Wiltshire is because of, we have a museums officer who works at Chippenham in the history Centre and her job is to liaise with all of the County museums, of which there are over 50. And you may well want to go and talk to her about why

AH: And none of the museums are actually owned by the county are they, they're all independent

JH: They are all independent; you have the Wiltshire Museum which holds a nationally important collection at Salisbury, the two of them; all of the Stonehenge and Avebury collections and so forth. Down to people like us and Pewsey and Warminster and Amesbury, and Purton, Market Lavington, there are dozens and dozens of this little village museums around and it's lovely down to the work that our museums officer, Heather Perry, and her predecessor Tim Burge(?). As well as being in that organisation we are also members of the South Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries. And that also offers us a lot of training opportunities and the ability to go to conferences and network with other museum officers. [00:48:41]

TB: That's interesting I've heard some complaints about the museums Association, what events are very expensive to go to.

JH: That's why we're not members. Neither are we members of the museums, there is a computing in museums [group], but it's expensive to join so we don't. This south west Federation is £15 a year.

AH: For our sort of small group. If you are a slightly bigger museum you might pay a little bit more pro-rata. The only disadvantage is that it's the south west of England, we are right up in the top northeast corner. And lots of the things take place around Exeter, Taunton, Plymouth because they're catering for Cornwall. So there are travel costs involved.

JH: There are two courses that I want to go to in February. When is it Bodmin and the other one is in which is at Wheal Martyn which is near St Austell. And they are a week apart so I might go and stay with my sister down in Cornwall.

AH: You might detect from Johns accent that that is where he comes from.

TB: That's handy, yes.

TG: One of the key things probably that we think has made a successful is the fact that most of us are retired. Had we been in full-time work we may have done it, I don't know, who knows but it may

not have been so, as good as it is now as we say. I think that is one of the keys to it because we have spent so much time, personal time.

AH: I'm sure you have found that, that most of the groups are senior citizens who have found the time to do it. Younger people are still working, they might come to an evening meeting. One of our committee members is still working, and she does what she can, and she comes to the evening meetings, but obviously it is harder. So it is very much a thing, that when you become part of history, you become interested in history.

TB: That's an interesting thought about that, yes.

JH: Of course there is a con that set against the pro, but we haven't got young people coming on, and eventually one by one we are going to drop off our perch, and we would like to see people coming along who may be those who have retired early, and or perhaps a little more sprightly than we are.

[00:51:09]

JH: But then when I was younger I wouldn't have had the opportunity to help in a museum, and now I have so, hopefully people will come when they retire at the age of 50 or 60.

TG: We have to rely on that because people do live longer which is great for us. But 25 or 30 or 40 years ago, we may not have been as active as we are now, today. So you know, times have changed, and so we are hoping obviously that people who it in the early 60s now, will be energetic aged 75, but time will tell.

TB: Do you have any volunteers apart from yourselves and the trustees, is there anyone outside of that that volunteers and helps out?

JH: Yes. We are looking at doing something for them over the winter, as a sort of thank you. And we have volunteers who come in and act as stewards when the museum is open. And there's probably about 30 of them. And then there were people who give us talks and help with the tours. Sometimes we have 100 Americans here, two coaches arrive for the hundred of them, and so we need at least 8 people to take 8 separate tours around, because he can't deal with more than about a dozen people in tour group. It worked out that there's about 50 people that we need to say thank you to.

TB: That's a fair few isn't it?

TG: We have 110 members, plus, but they are not all volunteers, they just like to come to our meetings and be involved.

TB: So what does it give those people do you think, clearly don't be a lot of different motivations but what is this museum doing for the community, can you tell me?

JH: Well I can tell you about one pair of stewards that we put together this year, who were a completely odd couple. One was a lady with really quite limited mobility, and the other is a 93 or 94 year old army veteran, and they were put together one morning and decided that they enjoyed talking to each other, because they were both really fairly isolated in their day to day life, but please could they take the first Saturday morning of every month, they will come and sit here and talk to

one another, and look after. So for those people we have really improve their life, it adds something extra to their social life.

AH: Quite a few others who are stewards like meeting the visitors who come here by chance.

JH: That's the other thing, yes.

AH: So it's a social interaction for them. We haven't mentioned much about the work that John and Terry and Liz have all done for the school here, we have a very good quality Primary School here, and regularly the teachers asked if we can go and help out with a talk about history and they have given them walks around the village as well, on a couple of themes. So actually improving the knowledge of the children in the village, as well, too history.

[00:54:55]

JH: And these generally are the youngest one's, the five, six seven year olds. The national curriculum, they teach the two lower years together, on a two year curriculum; so every 2 years it comes round to the Great Fire of London - what was a Great Fire of Aldbourne, so we so we go in and talk about the fire here in the village, and we walk around and show them the places that were affected by the fire. We go in to talk about when they are doing the Romans or the Saxons, we go and talk about what was going on at that time. If we are doing pre history we go in with the Aldbourne cup and get them making replicas of the Aldbourne Cup.

TG: We've had a field Walk looking for flints.

JH: I've even taken them out fieldwalking looking for worked flints, and the joy on their faces when they found two pieces of Flint that we could prove have been worked.

TG: That was in the pouring rain as well.

JH: That wasn't the pouring rain, my god, was the school muddy when we got back!

TG: It was the only time that we could get into the fields unfortunately. The designated field and the walk was actually covered in dung on the day that we went to it, so we had to go to another field, which is luckily just across the way, but the farmer thought we had already done it. He laid dung in his field, but he actually did it on the day before we went.

AH: And for the adults and a community, I mean it's not only other people like ourselves who are perhaps new the village, who are interested to learn a bit about its history. Even those who have lived here all their life have not realised perhaps the importance of Aldbourne 200 years ago, as a town rather than just a little village. It wasn't really until the Industrial Revolution that took away a lot of the cottage industries, and it fell onto less-well times; and they probably didn't realise how important it was as a centre for manufacturing materials and nails and all sorts of things in the past. So it does serve the two purposes, the youngsters and the more senior members of The Village.

TB: So in terms of the adults, you have got newcomers who clearly will get a sense finding roots, I suppose, finding stories about places as a really important way of feeling connected to somewhere I think. Terry, I'm just wondering, for those families who have lived here Born and Bred, lived here all



their lives and so on; as has been mentioned there might be bits that they didn't know, but do you think the museum gives them anything in particular.

[00:57:34]

TG: What, sorry?

TB: I'm just saying that perhaps the families that have lived here over generations, do you think having a museum, what does it offer them do you think, given that they might know all of it already.

TG: The same that offers anyone coming into the village new really. Because we know even now, not everyone in the village has visited this place, even though they may have lived in all their lives. Maybe because they are not interested. But we know that when families in the village have visitors they do like to come in here with them, because they are very proud of it and the parish council, they love us now. They weren't sure when we started, but they think we're brilliant and some of our members are members of the parish council. But I think generally the village thinks that we are a fantastic asset.

AH: There are some of the older members of The Village whose memories are still good, and we are able to show them that what they can remember it's very useful to us. So they enjoy coming to a meetings, because they can throw in bits of information that are not written down anywhere, they are just sort of memories, insert makes them feel more worthy perhaps, that they are contributing something to the village even in their later life.

JH: I think the native villagers, the native Village families are all very proud of the village. And I think this place gives them, as Terry says, when their relatives or friends come they have actually got a Focus where they can bring them, and say look it really is an important and interesting place and a place to be proud of.

TG: We often open up out of season, if someone said can you do it tomorrow then one of us probably would.

JH: I am I opening it up tomorrow!

TG: We have tried to make use of some of the oral history.

AH: That was not done by us, strictly, but we are hoping to repeat similar things, and also have a video history, of some of the older members.

JH: We just had somebody coming on our Facebook page, asking if she can have a copy of one of the talks which is on there, one of the pieces of oral history which was her great aunt talking about 20 years ago..

TB: Fantastic so will you be collecting yourselves, are you going to start to record or...

JH: That is one of the projects.

AH: It was very interesting seeing you setup actually, we need to acquire recording equipment; we would prefer that; other people have offered to loan us, and we can borrow from Chippenham history centre, they will lend us recording equipment if we so wish but for a little bit extra we could

probably get our own, so we are actively considering that at the moment. Somebody in the village is very enthusiastic to help us out.

TB: Fantastic yes. I think it is a free accessible method to get people engaged, and as you say with the older generation it is really quite interesting, crossing generations and backgrounds.

TG: Going into old people's home with books of photographs. And using those to sort of spark off memories. The skill is trying to avoid the interview, it's just getting them to talk isn't it; you have got us to talk and that's one of the skills isn't it, otherwise you'll end up with a rather dead recording.

JH: One of the things you find from there, there are one or two where, the subject was obviously written out an essay about their lives, and the interview consists of them reading it. Which is not quite the same thing.

TB: One thing I wanted to go back to was the importance of the local authority museums officer and how that might have an effect on things, could you just tell me a little bit more about the work they have done that the support that they give, because I can see it to supporting things that are happening already, but it seems like it's more than that

JH: Well when this was little more than an empty shell, they came and inspected us and told us what we would need to do, and gave us advice, if you want us to do it perfectly this would be acceptable, but we ought to aim to get this sort of standard, checking out the environment and to a shame it's only at the last few months that we have done something about really sorting out the humidity. Being an old building it's quite difficult. But from that point of view, from training point of view, from point of view of the fact that we get emails weekly, sometimes 3 or 4 a week, telling us about possibilities for grants, telling us about possibilities about events, putting us in touch with offices in other museums, we have fantastic relationships with the museums in Chippenham and Trowbridge and Devizes and Pewsey and Market Lavington, and all these, and the focus of that is Heather as a facilitator for all of us.

[01:02:59]

AH: I've done mentioned earlier but still aiming for accreditation, she has been able to offer practical advice on how to actually write the application, a few tricks of the trade, so to speak, and see if they're willing to read it through, come back to us comments, so it is a very useful professional sounding board, this people are professional; librarians, archivists, whatever, we are not, we are volunteers and although John has got a lot of knowledge on that, we are all volunteers. That makes a big difference. She has got more time, although it's spread very thinly, to help.

TB: That's fascinating. There was another thing which you mentioned which was about isolation, and this might be because I live in market town, Tonbridge in Kent, so I travel out into the countryside but they look around thinking how the hell do people live out here, it looks so lonely and isolated, as I know that that's not necessarily the case, but do you think all of these museums in all of these villages, do you think there are spaces perhaps, like you were saying that talks really popular, it's something where people can come to, and chat that is not the pub.

AH: There are 70 organisations in this Village, so there are lots of opportunities to come together.

TB: Crikey!

AH: So we were number 71, so to speak, we weren't alone, there's the WI, the church, the Scouts, the guides, and all of those other things. Even so there was an opportunity for us to do that as well, to bring people who are more interested in the history site, where there wasn't a history group.

TB: Put me right Terry, I've made a terrible assumption.

AH: I was going to say about isolation, that actually is, in itself, one of the reasons why do we have all of these maybe, because years ago, we are 10 miles from the nearest town here, you have to be really self supporting or self-sufficient or whatever, that has carried through today, really. We're still 10 miles from most places, OK people travel to work and everything, but you have still got a nucleus of people. And we have got a heart to the village, we have got a lovely pond, we have got a village green, we are really get together Village, and we've got enthusiasm for everything..

[01:05:10]

JH: An example of that; we run Meals on Wheels, here in the village, but that is usually run using food that is prepared, factory made in some big kitchen somewhere and sent out. No here it is organised by ladies in the village, and men, in the village who do the cooking I think it is 3 days a week that Meals on Wheels goes out. And one of the ladies in the village does a load of whatever is the food of the day and various drivers come around and collect it and take it around. It is purely a village operation. With no support from outside.

TG: A fortnightly luncheon club for elderly people as well, by different people - usually the same actually.

AH: There is lots of community spirit.

JH: and you do the link which is taking people to the doctor of the hospital or anywhere that I need to go, acting as a free taxi service.

TG: we do have a bus service but it's pretty limited and therefore it needs private cars to take people to appointments.

TB: So hang on nail turning my whole theory on its head, so in fact what you've got is an incredibly successful civic society, you might call it, and so this is just one of dozens and dozens of other kind of things, it's yet another kind of excuse for people to come together and contemplate things.

JH: It's a living example of the match derided David Cameron idea of the big Society.

TG: After the bell Founding industry was sold off in 1825; in 1826 a historian by the name of William Cobbett who you might have heard off who wrote a book called 'rural rides', he came through Aldbourne and he said this is a decaying Village. Everything was shut, closing down. And here we are today, a phoenix if you like, out of the ashes.

[01:07:15]

TB: The village has got a big population right, at 1500 people or whatever that's not unsubstantial. I'm just wondering in terms of the local economy, there's a bit of industry around and it's not too far away from some nearby towns but geographically how come it's doing so well.

AH: Often Americans asked the same question, yes people to go to Swindon which is reasonably important financially and the Honda Motor Works. People go to Newbury and even perhaps up to Reading from here on a daily basis. But since the advent of internet access there are a lot of people who work in the village and do professional jobs from home, as I'm sure you do at times. And there were lots of local businesses, the electricians, the plumbers, the builders the thatchers, all those sorts of people. We have got a garage, we've got a hairdressers, we've got shots, small shots, a Post Office. We have still got all those little bits which teams keep the community alive, so people don't necessarily all have to disappear on a Monday and come back on a Friday. It's not that sort of village.

TB: It's not a dormitory town, I see.

JH: I think there's a lot of young people who do as I did for 10 years, and commute up to London every day. So we are not entirely devoid of commuters, there was quite a lot of that.

AH: There is the cost of houses here for younger people, they have to go away perhaps to make fame and fortune, and then wants to come back to the village. That's another aspect as well.

TB: I see yes, so the life is all coming perhaps from people in their 40s 50s and 60s, in a way that's a bit different to perhaps the 1920s or 30s when you have lots of people labouring locally.

AH: Yes they may have started their careers elsewhere, but they can now carry them on from here, perhaps remotely, by using internet facilities.

TB: Right, let me just look at this and see if I've covered any of it! A small question about the displays, they are beautifully made, it's just something that you did yourself or did you go to the professional involved?

JH: To be honest when we set this place up at it was still a shell, we might not have even got in yet, my wife and I went to Athelstan Museum in Malmesbury, that's a small town but that's another similar Museum, and we noticed that this is what they were doing, but they have this material with their display stuck on it using velcro, easily take them off and rearrange it and we thought this is brilliant.

TB: It comes off as well so it's just very flexible.

AH: Yes we just put a batten around the walls and then we can hang them and take them down, and after Christmas we will be replacing about 1/3 of them with a different display. Some of the popular ones we will keep, because they are very important to the village, the bells will stay but we will try and change the theme; we will find another big house in the village perhaps, we will change the subject matter of some of the boards over there. So we will do that just ready for opening again in late March.

[01:11:05]

TB: OK on the idea behind that is that hopefully people will come back again.

JH: It's for local people, we have got so much to tell, you can see from the timeline around the top we have got a lot to tell, stories, one of the things I want to do is to spend more time with the National Archives looking at I think it's Kings college in Cambridge looking at the manorial records from the 14th and 15th and 16th centuries, and start to tell some of that story of the village which has never been told in print before.

TB: So is your primary audience really local people?

JH: It's local people have visitors most of whom have some sort of interest.

TG: It's not on the tourist route, Aldbourne, but we get question people who come here passing through, they will stop for dinner and hopefully they'll find us.

JH: We get people looking for the Band of Brothers, we get people coming in looking for Doctor Who. And occasionally we get people coming through looking at bells. So there are groups of people who come here for something specific. But otherwise what we dealing with is people who are interested in the village. If you look in there you'll find people from all over.

TB: Some may have some family connections.

JH: They may die but they may not.

AH: New Zealand, Australia, where they have had family

JH: One thing I didn't say wayback about family history is that like all other agricultural villages at the 19th century there was an enormous outflux of villages in the agricultural depression. And we seem to have had quite an adventurous lot who went off to Australia, New Zealand and so forth. But some of those families still have very close ties with one another. Either through Facebook or over the internet or whatever. So one of the families the Liddiards two years ago organised a worldwide reunion here in the village. There was a lady in Australia who spent 30 years researching the family. And she is the sort of centre of all of that. Her family came from the village. And so we had 150 Liddiards here in 2016, and Easter 2019 we are going to have another 150 Liddiards, because they are going to have another reunion. They will base it in Swindon because there are too many to actually hold it here in the village, but they will be here over the weekend.

TG: John facilitates a lot of that, but obviously the Heritage Group will help some way.

[01:14:14]

JH: So that will be more Village tours and so forth.

TB: So just through genealogy this has become a sort of international hub in some way.

AH: Because we can't be much more in here, in the sense we do go out as much and the walkabouts are very popular.

JH: Another three well-known family is the Goddard family. The Lord chief justice at one time was Lord Goddard of Aldbourne. But we have had two families come over from the States this year, wanting to follow in the footsteps of their Goddard ancestors. So that's the Liddiards, the Goddards,

there is half a dozen family is with this enormous diaspora, he want to come back and see where their forebears came from.

TB: I think we've covered everything is there anything I haven't mentioned that you would like to get on the record? It is pretty amazing with Johnny that you've had in just 3 or 4 years.

TG: When we get home they will be [laughs].

JH: One of the things that we realised actually, and it has taken a surprising time to realise it, but we have realised that we also ought to be the repository of today's information, that becomes the future's history. So we have started putting in train the idea of having all our village groups deposit copies of the amateur dramatics programmes, the order of service for our commemoration service back on November the 11th, publicity material, all of that we should have one copy of, and all of that should be put away for posterity.

TB: So you are evolving a collecting policy now, right, very good!

JH: Well we have a collecting policy; the bells for instance, one of the things that came up earlier this year was a not quite unique, but a most unusual bell became available at auction, that we wanted to buy. It's the big one at the top; but that came up at auction and I thought that that was going to rather blow our budget, so we put out on Facebook and by email to all our members, an appeal. And that raised £2,000 which enabled us to buy that and left us with £1,200 over. So we now have an acquisition fund.

TG: A serious acquisition fund.

AH; Unfortunately the bells do you have a value, commercial is not the right word, but a financial value to collect, so we find ourselves perhaps competing on eBay, or an open auction as John was, so they may have to pay a little more to get something so that we have got an example of most of the manufacturers that have been here. All the manufacturers. And each of the sort of bells that they made. So it's going to take a little while, but we are slowly getting there. We'll beg borrow or buy, whichever way it may be. Terry has written about bells in his own book; there is only one authoritative account!

TG: I wrote that in 2013 before we started, but since having this I've learnt more things, but I wouldn't print another book. You've got to know that there's a market for it, I've had a market for that, but I don't think I have a market for a follow up. Not yet anyway.

TB: This is lovely it's beautifully illustrated. Great, thank you so much.

[ENDS]