

In Memoriam Wally Wright 1924 – 2022

Wally Wright, the well-known historian, passed away last week. He will be sorely missed. For many years he was the 'eminence grise' of East Herts Local History, a prolific contributor to and recorder of the history of both Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford. In the 1980s, together with his late wife Doreen, he was the curator of the Bishop's Stortford Museum, then located in a building in the cemetery there.

Born in Croydon in 1924 he trained as an engineer and came to Harlow in the late 40s to work for Cossor in development. After getting involved with digs along the new M11 route he developed an interest in archaeology. Through it all his enthusiasm and dedication was shared with, encouraged and co-led by his wife Doreen. In the early 80s their membership of the Bishop's Stortford Historical Society then resulted in the setting up of Stortford Museum in a lodge near the Cemetery. Wally and Doreen were the curators there.

Liz Waugh, a recent arrival in Sawbridgeworth then, visited the Museum and found a lively place well organised with shelves for objects and papers and with volunteers cataloguing and doing other jobs necessary. Wally had been visiting sites to be cleared such as new roadworks or refurbished houses such as pubs or buildings in both Bishops Stortford and Sawbridgeworth and perhaps other nearby locations. Doreen seemed to organise and catalogue as she was less mobile whilst Wally went out and about, but both were dedicated. Wright's found artefacts still forms part of the collection at the Museum now based at the Mills Art Centre.

Wally wrote and co-wrote many articles and contributed to several books, and leaflets, including the recently reprinted and updated Explore Sawbridgeworth town walk leaflet. He was generous with his time, help and vocal in his support for others. He was instrumental in setting up the Millennium Walk boards, with accompanying leaflet, a project which was recently brought up to date through the introduction of QR codes linked to the Local History website. In 2005 he re-edited The Story of Sawbridgeworth, still the standard work on the history of our town.

When the Sawbridgeworth Local History Society was set up in 2016 there was no doubt who should be our president: Wally! By then age had started to slow him down but he still attended many of our meetings and asked pertinent questions. Phone conversations with him were never short and always contained a few of those "never knew that moments". In the last few months the Sawbridgeworth Local History Society was the driving force behind a new Town Council initiative to honour residents who have made a major contribution to the town as Honorary Freemen and Freewomen with Wally as the first recipient. Unfortunately Wally Wright did not live to attend the ceremony.

5-5-2022

