

The Aveland History Group Annual Report 2025-26 by the Chair



Since the last AGM in early April 2025, AHG members were heavily involved in bringing the Worth200 celebration to life in the town of Bourne. To build momentum towards the celebration weekend in October, AHG ran a series of adult and childrens workshops that took the handicrafts and design flair of Charles Frederick Worth to participants, who created lace, embroidery, beadwork, Dorset buttons, embellishments, papercraft, mosaics and artwork. 107 adults took part in the craft workshops through the year and 45 children attended workshops run by AHG, as well as various primary school art clubs, Cubs and Scouts, where we were invited to take sessions with local groups.

Worth200 was intended as a collaborative venture and we were joined in this endeavour by The Len Pick Trust, Bourne Old Town Hall, Bourne Town Council, Bourne United Charities, Bourne U3A, Wake House and the students of Lincoln University.

From the start of 2025, our art leader Lucie Lawson worked with primary schools in and around Bourne, to deliver both a logo for Worth 200 as well as mood boards and decorated silhouettes that were displayed at the bicentenary event in October at Red Hall.

Legacy artworks were created with the sponsorship provided by Bourne Town Council. A local willow artist produced a life size willow figure in a dress shape introduced by Worth, which was displayed at Red Hall; Lucie Lawson and Ben Connell worked with Roadphone to produce a series of full-size silhouettes that were placed around town in the weeks leading up to the celebration weekend, to elicit curiosity from residents. Bourne Old Town Hall members worked with local mosaic artist Cecca Jay to create two mosaics – one created by adults and the other by children – that are now on display at Worth's birthplace, in Wake House.

A team of fashion students, both undergraduates and post-grads studying at Lincoln University, embraced the challenge to create garments to haute couture standards. They exhibited these in an immersive catwalk event and on mannequins in Red Hall over the October celebration weekend, whilst Dementia Support South Lincs and Billingborough Cubs created decorative paper flowers that were used to great effect, to decorate the show.

Also on display at Red Hall were the U3A curated slide show where their members had contributed photographs of fashions through the ages, from the early part of the 20th Century to the modern day; the creations from the various craft workshops that participants loaned for the weekend; a wonderful poetry slam organised with Bourne Old Town Hall and a series of live craft exhibitors showing blacksmithing, spinning, weaving, embroidery, buttons and papercraft. On both days, we also had a Victorian revue of readings from popular writers of the period enacted by Stamford Shoestring Theatre and on the Sunday, Grantham Danserye joined us to get people dancing in the Victorian manner. On the ground floor, we were delighted to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of the railways and resurrect the history of Red Hall with a ticket office display, loaned to us by Rippingale Station volunteers.

On Saturday 20th September, as part of Heritage Open Days, we hosted a series of talks linked to the fashion theme from the former V&A expert on Worth, Amy de la Haye, and four lecturers from Lincoln with specialist knowledge on figures from the area who had contributed in their own ways to

textiles and fashion over the centuries. On Saturday 11th October, we hosted four inspiring speakers who used the haute couture world and the period of the Gilded Age when the House of Worth was at its zenith to deliver a series of engaging lectures on corsetry; high fashion; the Dollar Duchesses and the founders of the RSPB. All the talks were made available at no charge to the public, thanks to a generous grant from The Len Pick Trust which enabled us to hire the Abbey Church Hall and pay the fees for our speakers.

More traditional talks were delivered by members of the AHG to Bourne U3A, Wood Grange Home, Bourne WI and Hougham & Marston WI. A new talk is in production that will cover celebrities of the Aveland and this will be available in May at the Bourne WI meeting. All proceeds from these talks and any donations that we receive are paid to the Aveland History Group, in order to meet maintenance costs for the Archive and History Group websites.

Donations have also enabled AHG to pay back the loan that was given in order to acquire the historic Land Tax records which are a unique element of Aveland Archive. During the Spring of 2025, a series of Archive Afternoons were held at St James' Church, Aslackby, so that the public could view records and those who contribute to the Archive could bring along memories for us to incorporate into the online platform. Members have been active in collecting oral history recordings of some of our local notable people, including the centenarian Les Budding, who is a D-Day veteran and John Lloyd, a magistrate who once served at Bourne Old Town Hall.

The Group has acquired assets such as a projector stand, a collapsible screen and a quantity of archive material, including books and papers.

The Group was invited to contribute to a report initiated by SKDC and Harlaxton College called "Strengthening the Social Economy of South Kesteven". As a result, we were invited to attend an Impact event with other organisations from across the district, to discuss how we can build on what we do to collaborate and grow the social economy. A useful workshop was held via Zoom on sources of funds and how to create great bids.

Our membership of the Social History Society was renewed and we have also joined the British Association for Local History, membership of which gives us public liability insurance. The Chair and Secretary recently attended a meeting of the Lincolnshire Heritage Forum in Horncastle. This has been established as a means for groups and historic places to share ways to work together.

As part of a gift of archive material, a delicate historic document, the 1825 Tithe Map of Bourne came into our domain for safekeeping. The document has suffered damage through some early conservation work, but is a marvellous record that would be advantageous to have on display and to have a scanned copy on Aveland Archive for historians to analyse. AHG has compiled a clear set of costings and identified specialists who are able to conserve and enhance the document and has approached Bourne Town Council for funding and a location to display the map. They are assessing what can be funded and a suitable venue for display, once restoration work is completed.

The Aveland History Group has submitted a proposal for Seedcorn funding to The National Archives for a project grant of £5k that will be used under the aegis of their "Spaces, Places and Belonging" initiative. Our goal is to research ways to create an interactive and engaging means of bringing our area and its history to life both on the ground and for remote visitors, to help build a sense of place and to attract visitors to this area. This will be a significant piece of work through the Summer and Autumn and more news will be released about this when we know if we have been successful in securing funds for our "discovery phase".

The Group are planning a curated visit for up to 25 individuals to Rippingale Station on Sunday 19th July. Tickets will be made available in May. We are also building a History Exploration programme that will link visits to historic places with lectures and creative, hands-on activities that set our group apart from a traditional history group.

Later in 2026, we will commence planning for Heritage Open Days in 2027 with a planned focus on the Car Dyke and the people that initiated this major engineering work that has affected our environment since Roman times (that's a big clue to the theme)!

Thank you to everyone for your continued enthusiasm and support for the history of our area. We look forward to delivering more engaging and interesting ways for us all to get to know more about these villages and their impact on world history.

Ali Ray - Chair

Email address: theavelandhg@gmail.com

18th April 2026

APPENDIX – DETAILS RELATING TO THE AVELAND HISTORY GROUP

Membership

Although there is no requirement for interested parties to pledge funds or subscriptions to the Aveland History Group, we maintain a list of individuals who have given their consent for us to send them emails regarding our events and news items, as these occur. We consider these people, as well as our followers on Facebook, to count as “members”.

Currently the number of individuals on our mailing list stands at: 260 and our followers on Facebook at 605 members.

Finances

Whilst the Constitution expressly states that there will be no subscriptions for membership of the Aveland History Group, the Group will accept donations via our online presence as well as by donation at events.

During 2025-26, donations totalled: £316.39

Please refer to the Financial Statement to review the detailed finances of The Aveland History Group

Appointment of Account Examiner: Joanne Dolby examined the Group's accounts for the year to January 31st 2026