

My personal account of the 2011 Walthamstow Memories Gathering

By Daniel J Quinn

The **2011 Walthamstow Memories Gathering** is over and I safely returned home to Florence (with a 5 hour delay on the flight – the only negative spot in our stay in UK!)

All went smoothly and perfectly in line with the programme. The atmosphere was jolly, relaxed and happy.

On Wednesday evening a dinner was organized at the "[Rose & Crown](#)" for all those who, locally, have been helping throughout the previous months in the planning of the meeting. But this was also a special occasion for my friends from Italy, Sandro & Angela Cencetti, who were celebrating their 1st anniversary: flowers were presented to Angela, together with a card, signed by all present, to wish them well.

On the following morning, entertained by "[Rhubarb the Jester](#)", we proceeded with registrations, handshakes and cheers. All participants were given a ID badge and a tote bag, containing postcards, information leaflets and several gadgets.

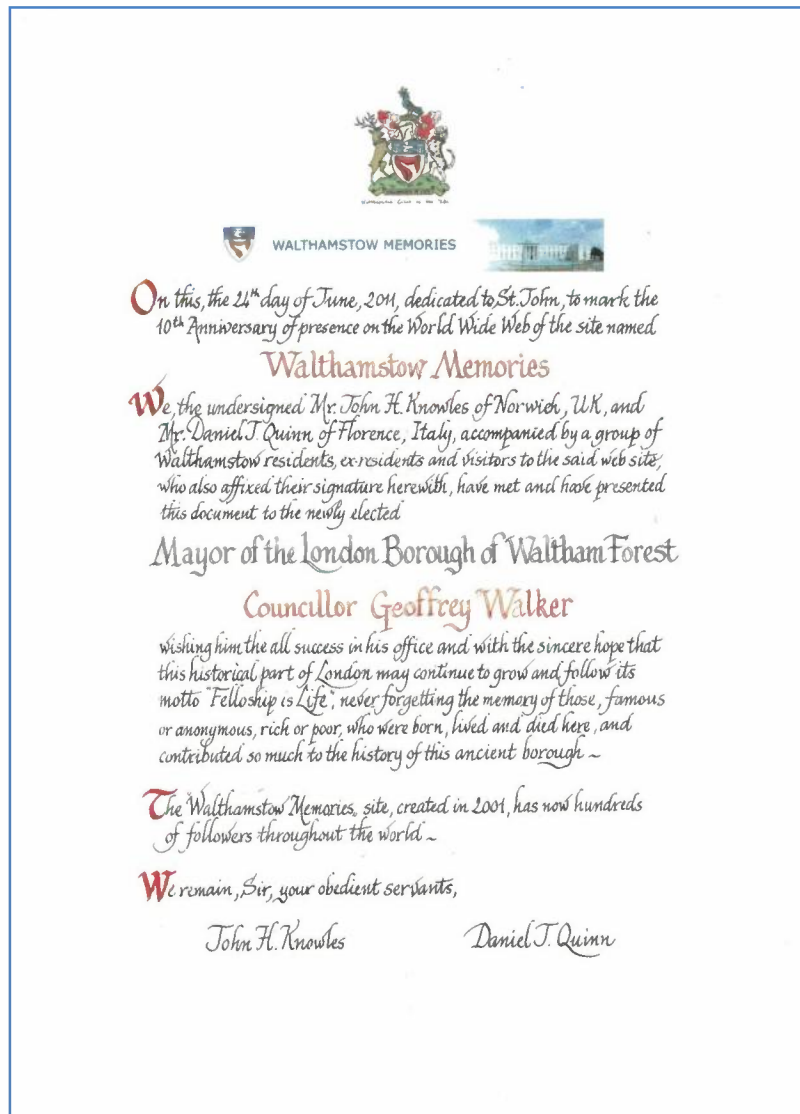


After lunch, during which Chris Hill entertained us at the piano with some evergreens, we set off to visit the [Vestry House Museum](#), where we were received by **Vicky Carroll**, (Museum, Gallery and Archive Manager for Waltham Forest). Cllr. **Geraldine Reardon** (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts & Culture) was also present, representing the WF Council. We officially handed over the donations (£750) collected through our VHM Appeal on our site, which were thankfully received. After some light refreshment, we were all conducted on a guided tour of the Museum, including a visit to the Waltham Forest Archives and Local Studies Library, which is also part of the VHM. **Jo Parker** (Archivist) had specially displayed some historical documents for us to view.

Back to the Rose & Crown, we enjoyed talks on local history & facts, narrated by **Kate Andrews**, **Ros Kane** and **Roger Huddle**, the latter being a member of the Walthamstow Historical Society. In the cozy atmosphere of the "Red Room", many memories emerged from the talks.

In the evening, after a delicious buffet, we have been entertained by **Tony Regan** with his 78 records, by **John Arthur**, composer & singer, by myself 'crooning', and **John Knowles**, with his voice & guitar. All were cheered by the public in the main room, where we mixed with locals.

On Friday morning, we were warmly welcomed by the Mayor of Waltham Forest, **Cllr. Geoff Walker**, in the Council's Chamber of the Town Hall, many pictures were taken and, in addition, Jo Brind filmed a video (a link to it is on the home page of the site). I was particularly touched to see my grandfather's name listed on a panel, amongst the Past Chairmen of the Council. The Mayor presented us with a plaque, representing the Waltham Forest Crest., after we had presented him with a hand-written parchment.



The morning continued with a “stroll in the Market”, down High Street. Our guide was Roger Huddle, who gave us a wide historical account of the various buildings (some replaced, some still there) along the road.

Friday afternoon was dedicated to a visit to the Sir George Monoux School, where Michael Higgins, secretary to the “Old Monovians”, guided us around the grounds & buildings that now form a large schooling complex, hosting over 2000 students. We were all very impressed by the highly technological structure and facilities.

The evening was some 14 performers, alternating songs & poetry. We were honoured by the presence of **Dennis J Penfold**, now in his 80s, who was very pleased to hear one of his poems read by Peter Woolf. Mr. Penfold is about to publish his latest book “Born to Struggle”, which I highly recommend.



Daniel J Quinn with Dennis J Penfold, Walthamstow writer & poet

The evening was closed by Maureen Younger, a stand-up comedian who made us roar in laughter.

On Saturday afternoon, back to the Rose & Crown for a film show presented by Jo Brind. His wonderful video on the “Stow” Stadium brought many memories back on this important venue, now sadly closed. Another video showed us a group of wild foxes living in the area.

After another delicious buffet, Rhubarb the clown, weaving his spell with mime and magic – juggling, mastering a unicycle only to be challenged by a taller and then yet taller one! And all this in the restrict size of the Red Room!

The evening was closed by a video show, specially arranged for us by the WACC ([Walthamstow Amateur Cine-Video Club](#)): scenes of 50 years of life in Walthamstow ran before our eyes! If you would like to experience this emotional journey in the past, the videos are on sale on their site.

On Sunday morning, we visited the “[Lea Valley Experience](#)”, at the old Pump House. Many old buses, some beautifully restored by volunteers, headed by Lindsay Collier, and a complete firemen’s engine are in the yard, whereas the building contains the old steam pumps (now converted to compressed air for demonstration purposes) and many other interesting items (such as old petrol pumps & bus stops). Unfortunately, the museum’s roof has suffered damages from thieves, and consequently, rain has soaked some of the parts of the museum.



Sandro, Angela & Andrea, my Italian friends, at the Lea Valley Experience

The gathering was closed with lunch at the Rose & Crown: goodbyes and wishes to meet again soon!

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