

Welford and Weston Local History Society

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Newsletter 57 – November 4th 2019

The second meeting of this our 50th season, will be on **Friday, 29th November** at 7.30 pm in the Memorial Hall, when the subject is **“Nelly Erichsen”, A Hidden Life**. This illustrated talk will be given by **Sarah Harkness**.

Have you ever heard of Nelly Erichsen? No, neither had I until December 2016, when I received an email from a lady called Sarah Harkness. She had contacted the Local History Society to see whether we could help her with some research she was doing as part of a long term (15 years) project, to write a biography of a very talented Victorian artist called Nelly Erichsen. She had discovered a reference in one of Nelly's letters to time spent in Welford, probably in 1891, and wondered whether we could help her work out where Nelly had been staying whilst working on her paintings. Anne & I were so impressed by Sarah's enthusiasm for her subject, that we decided to do everything in our power to help fill in the gaps in Sarah's information.



This painting of Welford by Nelly Erichsen was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1892. It's a very substantial canvas. You might recognise the ancient Lych Gate outside the church of St. Peter's in Welford. The painting which depicts the return of the horses and people at the end of the working day, as the light begins to fade, is called "Going Home".

Nelly Erichsen was born of Danish parents, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in 1862, and became an illustrator and painter. She trained at the Royal Academy, and in spite of the difficulties faced by women students, had 4 paintings exhibited in the Summer Exhibition, at the age of just 22, and exhibited regularly thereafter. At a time when the odds were heavily stacked against a woman forging an independent professional career, she did just that. The photograph is one of only two surviving photographs of Nelly Erichsen. It shows Nelly sitting at a table with Ida Suhr, a distant relative, standing behind her. It was taken in 1889 when Nelly would have been 27.



Sarah Harkness graduated from Oxford University in 1983, and had a twenty year career in corporate finance in the City, but has always been fascinated by Victorian art and literature. Her first book, the biography “Nelly Erichsen – A hidden Life” was published in July 2018. Copies of this book will be on sale at the Memorial Hall should you want to buy one.

Sarah is a great speaker, who is passionate about her subject. I've already heard this presentation at a Chipping Campden History Society meeting in September, and feel sure you'll enjoy it.

*I do hope that you can come along on **Friday 29th November** to hear more about Nelly Erichsen, who had been largely forgotten, but has been brought back to life in this thoroughly engaging biography.*

Kind regards,

Brad Plimmer