

Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

**NEWS-
LETTER**

**NO. 125
Sept. 2012**

Chairman's Report

Heritage Weekend will be Sept 6-9. For details of local open days visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk or Henley Library.

Open House London is the annual opportunity for visiting over 750 buildings, neighbourhood walks etc throughout London in order to see great architecture and urban design. This year the doors will be open on Saturday, 22 September and Sunday the 23rd. Details from openhouse.org.uk or telephone, 02030067008

Meanwhile, your Committee have been actively participating in reviewing planning applications for Henley. These include the proposed works at Red Lion Lawn. We are stressing the importance of brick as the prevalent building material along Thameside, rather than the horizontal timber cladding over metal sheeting proposed by the Town Council in place of the crumbling river walling.

Secondly, the Old White Horse PH on Fair Mile has been sold by Brakspear. We have asked the County Archaeologist to put in an archaeological condition if the tarmac is taken up in order to look for the possible line of a Roman road bordering the Fawley Court Estate wall.

Thirdly, we were represented at the Public Inquiry into the proposed stopping-up at Northfield End. Inspector's decision expected by Christmas.

A folio of 12 aquatints of the River Thames from Oxford to Staines dating from 1818 has been acquired by River & Rowing Museum.

We were saddened to learn of the death of one of our members, Dave Teasdale in August and we send our condolences to Glen and family.

Lectures Season 2012

Date	who	Description
2 nd October 2012	Dr. Malcolm Airs	'Survival of the Country House in the C20 th '
Dr Airs was SODC 's first conservation officer, safeguarding many of our historical buildings and conservation areas. His doctoral research was published as 'The Making of the English Country House, 1500-1640' in 1975 and he has subsequently published widely on architectural history and historical conservation.		
6 th November 2012	Jill Greenaway	'Thames Water Collection, based on Reading Museum's exhibits'
Jill Greenway is Collection Care Curator at Reading Museum. She looks after the archaeology collection and will explain why and how over 500 items were dredged from the Thames. The large and important Palaeolithic flint tools found at Highlands Farm in the 1960's are also in her care.		
4 th December 2012	A.G.M.	Refreshments and short talks by members

All lectures are held at 7.45 p.m. in the old 'Kings Arms' Barn; entry from Kings Road Car Park. Members free, non-members £3.

The June Lecture by Dr. Mary Lewis [University of Reading]

Death of a Traitor? The case of a hanged, drawn and quartered skeleton from Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire.

Contributed by V. Alasia; excerpt from the write-up by Rebecca Morrison in SOAG Messenger No 323

The last lecture of our season was mesmerising if rather gruesome. Dr Mary Lewis provided us with fascinating detail and historical drawings, which showed us a closer glimpse into what medieval executions were like. The skeleton, which was the focus of the lecture, was one of a group found at Hulton Abbey during the 1970's

and 80s. Hulton Abbey was a Cistercian Monastery built in 1219 by the Audleys who, later, were advisors to Edward I. The skeleton was disarticulated and looked like a bone dump that had been moved and reburied. Initial analysis showed there were lots of cuts made at the time of death on the skeleton, cuts, which make the bone glisten as if it is wet. The skeleton was from a mature male 5 foot 8 inches in height, who probably died between 1219 and 1385.



Dr Lewis set out to prove in her lecture that the cause of death was not battle trauma, but hanging, drawing or quartering, followed by the body being boiled as part of a ritual to de-flesh the bones so they could be easily returned home for burial. She has examined the cuts and marks on the bones in great detail and strongly believes that this was the first case of a person being subjected to this form of execution. She provided convincing proof of the skeleton being hung [by hanging off a ladder], drawn [pulled along by a horse on a pallet] and quartered.

Dr. Lewis has also tried to name the skeleton by studying written and pictorial historical research. It was initially suggested that it belonged to Sir William Audley who died in the Welsh Rebellion on November 6th 1282. However the skeleton was too young and it was subsequently thought to belong to Hugh Audley, although he had not actually been executed and was 65 when he died.

Later research has shown that the skeleton probably belongs to Sir Hugh Despencer the Younger, the brother-in-law of Hugh Audley. Despencer was a deeply unpopular and brutal man who had been an advisor to Edward II. He fell from power when Edward was deposed, was tried for treason and executed at the age of 40. He is said to be buried with the rest of the Despenchers in Tewskbury Abbey. Archivists have said that there is a skull, a few small bones, parts of the spine and a thigh bone inside the family monument. Interestingly these bones are missing from the skeleton found at Hulton Abbey, but Dr Lewis cannot be absolutely sure that the skeleton does belong to Hugh Despencer, until and unless the bones are studied together.



Dr Lewis has deservedly received publicity for her exciting deductions from an academic's "dream find".

Oxpast Conference. June 9th. Henley-on-Thames.

The recently extended Baptist Church was the venue for this all-day conference on matters of research into Oxfordshire's archaeology and history. It was ably organized by Shaun Morley for the OAHS with HA&HG as local co-organizers. The speakers were either professionals working in these fields or dedicated amateurs; all illuminating surprisingly large areas of work and knowledge which exist in our county.

Alan Simpson from the Oxon Family History Society gave a quite breathtaking account of how to record large numbers of gravestones and to put the names, dates, locations etc onto a fully searchable data base. This is a gift to anybody intent on finding Oxfordshire ancestors! If you want to find out more or wish to do some recording of grave stones contact Alan directly on mis@ofhs.org.uk.

Susan Lisk from the Archaeology Dept of OCC looks after the Historic Environment Record; which logs all archaeological work in the County. To find out about a particular site log into their Heritage Search Home Page; or contact Ms. Lisk on susan.lisk@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Tony Hadland from OLHA (Oxon Local History Association) referred to their research, publications of newsletters, journals and activities such as study days. This year's topics included *William Morris, Garden History and the Civil War*.

On their display table I noticed Joan Dils' publication on Dame Lady Perriam's school (it occupied the middle floor of the Old School House, now called the Chantry House, before merging with King James School and becoming the Henley Grammar School). We are affiliated to OLHA and get their newsletters. Tony Hadland can be contacted on tony.hadland@gmail.com.

Valerie Alasia's talk on the Henley Workhouse demonstrated our chair's deep knowledge on this social subject. For all those who have had to miss the talk there is the prospect of being able to read up about it as Valerie is intending to publish her years of research into this rather sad aspect of the social history of our town. Particularly shocking was to hear how families were completely separated; men, women, boys and girls all lived – and often died – alone in different wings behind tall walls in prison conditions. However, there was a school for 100 children, offering them a chance of education and a better life.

Carol Anderson from the Oxfordshire Museums Service told us about the savage 40% cuts they are experiencing. Cogges Manor Farm is now being operated by an 'independent body', i.e. no longer in the C.C's ownership? Despite the cuts they have been able to expand their storage facilities for archaeological finds, but will have to be increasingly critical of what they can take in. The message was loud and clear: *'don't bring boxes of poor quality tiles, sherds and plaster, especially if of indeterminate provenance'*. *Contact us first!* She ended with the very fine Anglo-Saxon West Hanney brooch. This is on show in West Hanney, will then go to the Vale & Downland Museum and later be on loan to the Ashmolean. carol.anderson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Ruth Gibson has continued to look out for medieval roofs. At the start of the VCH research not a single medieval roof had been mentioned in the Henley Listing entries; now we are aware of four crown post roofs, one scissor brace roof truss and some 10 houses with crown strut roofs. The latter type seems to be an experiment by carpenters in the first half of the C15th to get away from the timber hungry crown post roof type. Good quality examples of these crown struts were also shown from other locations, such as Abingdon Abbey, Ewelme Almshouses and The George in Dorchester – all locally important buildings.

David Radford from Oxford City Archaeology gave an account of the huge amount of work carried out there. Starting with the many layered archaeology of the Christ Church quad, he rushed from site to site ending with Magdalen College and its origins as a St. John the Baptist hospital. For details please contact David directly on DRADFORD@oxford.gov.uk

Simon Townley gave an account of the work of the VCH since Vol. XVI, the Big Red Book on Henley and surrounding parishes, had been launched in October 2011. Vol. XVII on Kelmscott & Langford is in the final proof reading stages and work is continuing apace on Vol. XVIII, which covers the Ewelme Hundred. Ewelme's medieval history is closely connected with the Chaucers and the de la Poles, Dukes of Suffolk. Most of their magnificent mid 15th C. buildings survive and archaeological work is going to be carried out on the site of the former palace. The Hundred covers an area as far as Nettlebed and it will be interesting to find out more about the medieval pottery, tile and later brick production there and the influence of this local industry on Henley. simon.townley@history.ox.ac.uk

Heather Horner from the Oxon Buildings Record gave details of measured, photographic as well as oral recordings of Mill Farm, Church Enstone. It is located on the river Glyne and retains much of its machinery in the form of bearings, cast iron wheels, some with wooden teeth, as well as the mill pond and mill race. OBR members had advice from a SPAB mill specialist who helped to identify the various parts and their uses in the milling process. The building itself is of many phases from the C17th to the C19th. Heather ended with the welcome mention that at Abingdon Abbey's Long Gallery dendro work has been commissioned; a chance to get some definitive dating of the crown strut and scissor brace roof structures there. hahwindrush@aol.com



The HA&HG stall

The mayor visits and meets Peter Anderson, her cousin, thrice removed! Pam Syrett and Cynthia Robinson looking after the stall and conference members during a coffee break.

Contributed by: Ruth Gibson, June 2012

Ewelme Hundred VCH Archaeology Project

*Project Director: **Stephen Miles** (VCH and SOAG) email: stephen.miles@history.ox.ac.uk*

*SOAG Dig Leader: **Roelie Reed** (SOAG) email: roeliebom@hotmail.com, tel: 01844 353914*

HAHG Archaeology Liaison Viv Greenwood (HAHG and SOAG) email: vivgreenwood@gmail.com,

A further three test pits were excavated in June, bringing the total to eighteen. Test pit 16 was located in a vacant plot of land at the top of Borrows Hill, and pits 17 and 18 in the large garden of Mead House. Pit 17 was next to the road to the church (Parson's Lane) and pit 18 on ground above King's Pool. The test pit teams enjoyed good weather with some sunshine. Pit 18 produced a number of sherds of medieval pottery, including some stamped glazed ware, which will be examined by experts at Oxford Archaeology.

A decision has been taken to finish the test pit programme at this point. The eighteen pits, which are spread across the village, have yielded a good deal of information which will be used in Stephen Miles's 'South Oxfordshire Project' and for the VCH research on Ewelme for the forthcoming 'big red book' on Ewelme hundred, currently being researched by Simon Townley and his team. The star individual find was a previously unknown medieval wall in the garden of Ewelme school, which apparently formed part of a stone building predating the 15th-century school/almshouse complex. Was this one of Ewelme's several medieval manor houses? Just as significantly, the pottery finds will form a reference collection which can be used to help identify local pottery from the late prehistoric to modern periods. This will be very useful if further excavations take place as part of the 'South Oxfordshire Project', possibly in nearby Cuxham (close to Watlington)

Contributed by: Viv Greenwood from an article by Roelie Reed for SOAG Messenger No 331

Local Maps

The merger of Oxfordshire Archives with the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies has formed the Oxfordshire History Centre, based at Cowley in the former Archives' building. Amalgamation of their holdings produced some duplication and pressure on space. Therefore, a number of duplicates of Ordnance Survey 1:2500 old series maps [mostly C20th] have been offered to Local History Societies, with the aim of making them as widely available as possible.

HAHG were pleased to accept the offer of 56 maps covering the greater part of our area. Our Committee looked at options for appropriate and accessible storage and decided that they would be best kept and most widely available if they were offered on permanent loan to Henley Library.

Henley Library gladly accepted these maps, which will be indexed and kept in a map cabinet for local history reference use by the public. Do take a look – old maps are fascinating! Since libraries in Oxfordshire are under tremendous pressures from financial constraints, the best support you can give is to make use of them, particularly the specialist “collections” like Local History. **Contributed by Hilary Fisher**

SOAG Programme of Lectures 2012-13

Thursday Sept 27 2012 Dr Martin Bell (University of Reading) 'Footsteps in the past: prehistoric intertidal archaeology in the Severn Estuary'.

Thursday Oct 25 2012 Helen Winton (English Heritage) .'A bird's eye view: archaeological aerial survey'

Thursday Nov 22 2012 Dr Katie Meheux (University College London) 'Saxon Reading: new discoveries and interpretations'

**All lectures held at Goring Heath Parish Hall Whitchurch Hill
7-30 for 7-45pm. Members free. Visitors £3**

Lost Henley Heritage Trail

In our March Newsletter members were asked to look out for the missing Heritage Trail clues. The note in the Henley Standard's Diary of 6th April on this brought a call from Edna Large of West Street; she still had a copy of the leaflet produced many years ago by the Town Council with a map indicating where the 11 clues were to be found. Although a huge help, the placing of the numbers on the map and the actual locations still presented considerable challenges.

Roger Kendal knew that No.11 is located at the corner of Duke Street next to Tudor House Antiques. Ruth Gibson found No 8 just outside Longlands in Hart Street.

The others were more difficult still. First a trip to Mill Meadows revealed no stone slab, so the next stop was the bottom of New Street. At this point, after studying the Tourist Information board, I spotted letters at the bottom saying '*Henley Heritage Trail No. 3*'. Not a stone slab at all, but incorporated in the notice board! - So back to Mill Meadows and its Tourist Information board, where, sure enough, it says '*Henley Heritage Trail No.1*'. Two down, one to go. This proved rather elusive until one wet day Starbucks in Market Place was not using the Al Fresco facilities. There, in the middle of the paved area, usually hidden under coffee tables and customers' feet was No. 9. - Job done! **Contributed by: Peter Anderson**



P.S. You can find a new map of the heritage trail and updated texts describing the story and significance of the 11 town locations on our web site. Why not print it out and take a stroll next time you have visitors staying or grandchildren in need of entertainment ?

<http://www.henley-on-thamesarchaeologicalandhistoricalgroup.org.uk/articles.php?file-name=15630806.htm>.

News from Dorchester

Dorchester's documented history, as the chester element in the name suggests, goes back to Roman times when a settlement existed near the river crossing of the north-south Roman road. However, Iron Age settlements are known to the south at nearby Wittenham Clumps and also down by the river within the large enclosure made by the still impressive Dyke Hills and the confluence of the Thame and Thames.

From previous excavations outside the town it is known that the Anglo-Saxons came here early too, perhaps as Roman legionaries, and in 634 the Frank St. Birinus founded the Minster church, for a few decades the seat of the West Saxon's bishopric. *To find out more about its past the 'Discovering Dorchester' Community Archaeological Project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery (see Roger Kendal's article in our Newsletter No 123]*

Two outings to Dorchester were organized this year; the first on 22nd April by the OBR (Oxfordshire Buildings Record), which several members of HA&HG attended. Dr. Malcolm Airs took us on a very enjoyable walk through the town. He has lived in one of Dorchester's medieval houses for many decades and so got to know the interior of many other buildings well through his work as SODC's first full-time conservation officer.



Carriage arch entrance to the courtyard of **The George** with galleried accommodation range (like those of the Old White Hart in Henley), here still reached by an external stair from the yard.



At Northgate House the double jetties and most of the original fenestration survive well after careful removal of later render. This revealed the building date of 1610 carved into one of the upright posts. The enigma of a missing front door was solved when it was realized that direct access was from the **Bull Inn**, next door, as it was apparently built as an extension to the inn when more as well as better lodging accommodation was required. – The large central stack heats many rooms and the row of glazed, front windows make for well-lit, draught free chambers.



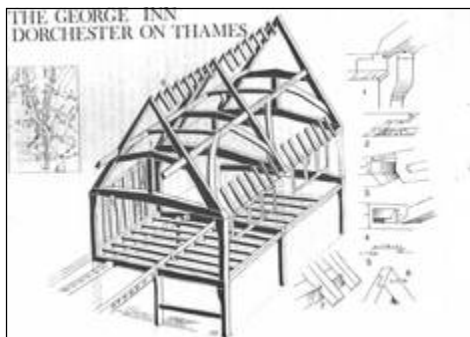
The 1610 expansion at the **Bull Inn** is an interesting indicator for the thriving travel trade in the town, thanks to its location on a busy through route.

Finding the exact line of the Roman road (the present High Street appears to have been the north boundary of the Roman town) is one of the aims of the archaeological excavations currently taking place in the town and these excavations were the reason for the second visit to Dorchester. The other aim is to determine the level, if

any, of continuity of occupation of this settlement, once the Roman Empire had stopped defending and administrating this distant province in the C 5th.

This second visit on 13th July was organized by SOAG (South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group) and several members of HA&HG took advantage of it. The excavations are being carried out on the present allotment site, an apparently empty part of the medieval town, but within the Roman town defences. Paul Booth from Oxford Archaeology is leading the excavations by a group of students. The principal aim is to find the elusive continuity between the Roman and Anglo Saxon periods, i.e the difficult late 5th/6th centuries, before Christianity and with it the written word returned. A large amount of Roman potsherds are present (40.000 so far), but only some 50 of early Anglo-Saxon ware have been found. Although it shows that mass production and distribution of pottery had ceased, it does not tell us how many people continued to use Roman pottery and how long for, nor whether they were Saxons or Romano-Brits.

We enjoyed lunches at the George and White Hart respectively, both historic inns with medieval timber framing. Although the **White Hart** has the date 1691 picked out in burnt headers in its front brickwork panels, this just tells us about a modernization, when the wattle & daub was replaced; the early 18th C. windows are another update. The building itself is probably considerably older.



Mid C15th court yard wing of 'The George'



Front entrance of the 'White Hart'



Above left: The excavation on the allotments within Roman Dorchester (picture by John White).

Centre: South-East wall of Dorchester Abbey with a 'barrow' hole; this is an opening left in the wall whilst the church was being extended and allowed the builders access from the outside without disturbing the ongoing religious life in the existing part. – Amazing what you can learn !

Right: The first floor of the former Abbot's Lodgings, later the school, now the museum and also a very good tea room.

The afternoons were spent with guided tours of the Abbey Church and a visit to the museum. Both absolutely fascinating thanks to our very knowledgeable guides. If you only have an hour to spare at Dorchester the museum will give you a very good idea of its history from well before the arrival of the Romans, via St. Birinus to the reasons for the existence and survival of its many medieval inns **Contributed by R Gibson**

H.A.&H.G.

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Reminder

With the beginning of the new season of lectures in October, membership subscriptions are all due. As agreed at the AGM last December the amounts were raised to:

Single members £12

Families [2 or more people at the same address] £20

If possible, please be ready with cheque or cash at the October Meeting.

**Cheques can be made payable to “H.A.H.G.” or “Henley Archaeological & Historical Group”
Let us know if any of your details have changed**

Invitation to Members

**Members are invited to an Open Day at SOAG's Roman Villa dig near Goring-on-Thames
Sunday Sept 16th at 1-30 to 3-30pm. Join them for “Afternoon Tea at the Villa”
Please email villa@soagarch.org.uk or phone 01491 682016**