

Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

**NEWS-
LETTER
NO. 130**

March 2014

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Our January 2014 speaker certainly put Henley into the history books with his account of those 72 Henley men who are not currently recorded on a war memorial. Since January the project has gone nationwide with the involvement of Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the National Army Museum. Mike Willoughby is still fund raising for the additional £3000 needed for the new memorial in Henley: The HA&HG donation was given on the night from the proceeds of the many additional visitors who came to the talk, held for this occasion in the large top floor room of the Town Hall.

Speaking of money, with the retirement of Allen Jones as Inspector of Accounts, we are in need of a volunteer to check through our Treasurer's books to October 2014 for presentation at our AGM in December. Could members please ask around to find a willing person, not necessarily an accountant, but someone who will vouch for Peter Anderson's accounts.

Numerous outings are planned for this summer; please see page 6 for details. Early interest and bookings are essential, as for some of the outings the numbers have to be limited.

Lectures Season 2014 continued:

1 st April 2014	Gary Marshall	'West Wycombe & the National Trust'
6 th May 2014	Mark Nicholls	'The passage of tea through time'
3 rd June 2014	Ann Darracott	'A virtual tour of Bisham Abbey'

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

About our next three lecturers

Gary Marshall: Gary is the N.T. archaeologist for the London and South East Region and has been working for the Trust for 27 years. He provides advice on the preservation, management and interpretation of archaeological features and buildings with a particular interest in building recording. Working with Oxford Archaeology the Trust has been examining, recording and interpreting the 50 or so historic buildings in West Wycombe. Evidence for the origins and development of the village, from pre-historic up to the present day is discussed and approaches to the conservation of the buildings, since they were acquired by the NT from the Royal Society of Arts in 1933, is considered.

Mark Nicholls: Mark is the ‘Tea Ambassador’ for Twinings, managing the 307 year old flagship teas store on the Strand in London. He will tell us about the journey of tea from plant to cup, and its first discovery and uses by different Chinese dynasties until it reached Europe. Mark will describe the role Thomas Twining played in Georgian England, when tea was becoming a fashionable drink, and how he first began selling it from his London premises. Word of this exotic new drink had quickly spread in the C18th and it was drunk from the by now mostly Europe manufactured, elegantly decorated china cups of the period, in circles such of those frequented and described by Jane Austen. Tastings of different teas will be on offer as part of the evening’s programme.

Ann Darracott: Ann is a retired marine biologist, but since her retirement has joined the Green Way Working Group as well as studying historic sites and buildings such as Ockwells Manor, Shottesbrook Church and Bisham Abbey. Her recent talk and subsequent visit to Ockwells were truly enlightening (see Pam Syrett’s write up below, P. 4).

Ann’s talk to us on Bisham which is now owned by Sport England, will start with its early beginnings as a Knights Templar Preceptory in the C13th to the ownership of the Hoby family in the C16th and that of the Vansittarts, who restored and embellished the ancient house. – A visit for interested HA&HG members to Bisham following Ann’s talk has been arranged for 29th June (see P. 6).

News from SOAG

Those who are also members of the South Oxon Archaeology Group will be aware that a little more is now known about the High Wood Roman villa than was at the time in the 1970s & early 80s when members from HA&HG carried out the dig of a small mound – thought originally that it was a windmill site – adjoining this villa. Although Roman pottery, plaster and some coins were found, no building remains were excavated (nor was a windmill found), as the mound seems to have been just an un-stratified dump of materials. The adjoining densely wooded area of the villa site itself was not excavated.

Now, thanks to Google Earth and initial field surveys the outlines of a villa and adjoining road are appearing. Please contact: SOAG member **David Nicholls** – 01491 0118 947 4903 highwood@soagarch.org.uk or talk to committee members Peter Anderson or Viv Greenwood, if you are interested in getting involved with helping to survey, clearing the undergrowth and hopefully assisting with excavations after this preliminary work has been carried out.

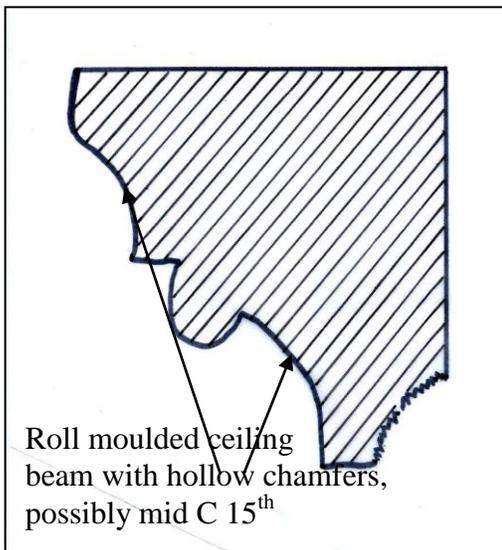
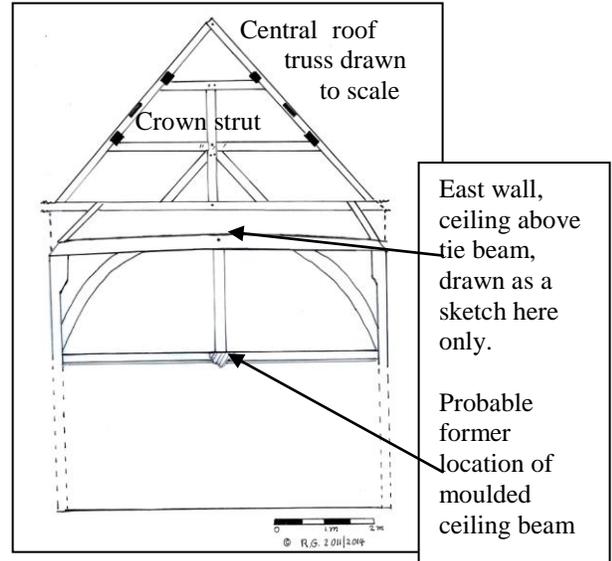
Discovering a further medieval house in Henley

There are still more medieval buildings waiting to be discovered in Henley behind the many rather bland 18th and early 19th C facades. At the last AGM you were shown evidence of timber framing behind the stucco facades of 73 Bell Street and 7 Hart Street; the latter being the Tudor part of the CATHARINE WHEEL, whilst the house in Bell Street retains a medieval, smoke blackened hall roof, complete with arch braced central truss.

Now another medieval timber frame has come to light, this time at 19 Hart Street, in the flat above Venue and Phase Eight, two small shops, which adjoin the wide carriage arch of the former OLD WHITE HART. The blocked door in the carriageway has always shown that there had been a connection with the inn; a similar door exists at first floor level. Now medieval wall framing as well as beautifully carved ceiling beams have been discovered. – The roof trusses had already been recorded in 2011 and the recent evidence from the timbers, which are now visible on the first floor, suggests that this quite spectacular, very steep crown-strut roof was not part of the original structure, but built above raised stud walls and replaced the lower, medieval roof. This may have been a crown post structure, similar to that found in the Old White Hart front roof.



No 19 is the building in the centre with the tall roof and large Tudor-brick stack. Next to it is the former Old White Hart with its carriage arch way in which the blocked connecting door can be seen on the left hand side to what is now 'Phase Eight'. A similar connecting door to the OWH exists in the back room of the first floor flat.



Preliminary conclusion:

We now seem to have a building of three distinct phases; the earliest about mid to late 15th C with probably a crown post roof originally, supported by the extant tie beam. This was replaced by the present very tall crown strut roof, shown in the composite drawing above. The timber framing was later concealed behind a circa late 18th or early C 19th plain rendered façade with its Georgian sash windows.

© Ruth Gibson

Ockwells Manor House near Maidenhead. Lecture & visit Jan 16th & 17th 2014



Several Group members joined Marlow Archaeology to hear Ann Darracott describe Ockwells Manor. The house is not open to the public so we were very fortunate to join Ann the following morning for a guided tour there.

John Norreys, keeper of the Wardrobe for Henry VI, Treasurer of the Queen's Chamber and Keeper of the Queen's Jewels, a prominent Lancastrian, built Ockwells c. 1450. The house is important as one of the earliest and most refined brick and timber mansions in England and is also famous for its armorial glass, still in its original setting in the Great Hall.

The courtyard is bounded by the east front of the house, tithe barn, stables, dovecot, gateway with priests chamber over and chapel. By 1800 the farm and buildings were in a ruinous state and owner Charles Pascoe Grenfell removed the armorial glass for safe keeping to Taplow Court, as he feared the roof of the Great Hall would collapse. It was Stephen Leech who undertook the main restoration and brought back the armorial glass [1890] and Sir Edward Barry who completed it and removed some of Leech's additions [1936] and planted the yew hedges. William Morris, Co-Founder of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) had recognized the importance of Ockwells and by campaigning, managed to preserve it.

The best-known façade of Ockwells Manor is the East Front with its herringbone brickwork, richly carved gables and oriel windows. The porch has been altered and widened but the huge oak door with its massive key is original to c1450. From there the stone flagged cross passage gives access to the Great Hall on the right and buttery & pantry doors on the left. Other rooms, such as the former kitchen and a massive Jacobean oak staircase, which has been moved to different positions over the years, adjoin the inner courtyard. However it is the Great Hall, which is so amazing with its wide floorboards and wall panels made from oaks of Windsor Forest, its original stone fire place, minstrels gallery and richly moulded, arch braced roof trusses. The light streaming through the armorial windows make Ockwells a special place; these show the arms of Henry VI and Queen Margaret of Anjou as well as those of important Lancastrians of the time, the Mortimers, Norrys, de la Poles, Beauforts and Nevilles just before the conflict of the Wars of the Roses, which many of them did not survive.



In the gardens we found the medieval fishpond, which is now the family swimming pool, hidden behind the yew hedges, but not just a pool, more Villa d'Este with statues, fountains and large flower urns. Beyond is the restored huge tithe barn with peacocks flying from rafter to rafter. - We will all have the opportunity to meet Ann when she talks to us about Bisham Abbey on June 3rd; members having the chance to visit Bisham Abbey afterwards.

© Pam Syrett

NEWS FROM THE PROBATE GROUP

INITIALS in the brickwork at the rear of No 32 BELL STREET

In the Henley Standard of 24th January the Diary questioned the significance of a set of initials cut into the brickwork of a wall at Simmons & Sons in Bell Street. The Standard photo showed these:

SN 1763 FN 1763
EN 1763 MN 1763 IN 1763 FN 1763



[NB: the letters “I” and “J” could be used interchangeably]

This is our close-up of three of them

The C18th Wills currently being transcribed by our Probate Group offer a likely answer. In 1792 Samuel Norman made his will in which, amongst other property, he bequeathed to his wife for life then for the benefit of his two daughters, “the dwelling house in which I now live situate on the East side of Bell Street with the buildings, yards, gardens”

Samuel and his wife Frances had four daughters christened in the Rotherfield Greys Independent Chapel [now Christ Church]: Frances, born 1754, Elizabeth, born 1755, Mary, born 1756 and Jane, born 1760. Samuel’s father, William Norman, had died in 1758; leaving, after provision for Samuel’s sister Mary, the bulk of his estate to Samuel. It seems likely that Samuel Norman, with his recently acquired wealth, purchased the Bell Street property in the early 1760s and the family were newly living there in 1763.

Jane died in 1766; Frances married Thomas Hall the younger of Harpsden Court in 1778 and died just a year later; Mary and Elizabeth, both married, were beneficiaries of the Will, as was Samuel’s widow, Frances who lived on until 1820. There was a Norman family vault in St Mary’s Church.

© Hilary Fisher

N.B. The precision and uniformity of letters and numbers on the different bricks shows that these were very probably formed by templates pressed into the wet clay prior to firing, not incised after the bricks were in situ. The 1763 date may commemorate the construction of the rear wing of the 18th C house by the Norman family.

Ruth Gibson

HENLEY PROBATE PROJECT – An update

Many of you will be aware that since the autumn of 2012, a small group of enthusiastic volunteers have been transcribing copies of C18th Wills relating to Henley residents and transferring the transcripts together with summary information on to a new website.

To date, over 400 Wills have been transcribed and the checking process is currently underway. In terms of the detail – there are over 2,000 bequests and almost 3,000 names of persons (excluding legatees) recorded from the Wills such as executors, witnesses and court officials.

These documents provide an interesting insight into the status of individuals and their family relationships during the C18th in terms of their personal wealth including their property interests and investments which in some instances were substantial. In terms of bequests, these range from household items such as furniture and silver, as well as jewellery and personal effects such as gold watches, to more unusual bequests such as a gun or horse. In some cases the bequests were very specific in identifying the property of the bequest, referring to ‘my second best pair of sheets’ or ‘my worst clothes’ (generally bequeathed to a servant !). In situations where an individual was

prosperous complex series of trusts were established dealing with both property and other investments. One interesting Will is that of Thomas Skinner, a silkman, originally from Coventry whose Will runs to 18 (A3) pages; a widower and childless, his many investments were shared amongst both his business partners and friends. Also amongst the Wills is that of Richard Jennings, the master carpenter of St. Paul's, about whom we heard during Elizabeth Hazeldine's talk to our Group in February.

The poor were not overlooked and there are many examples of gifts of either money or bread. - The occupations include a wide range of jobs, as you would expect to find in a thriving town such as Henley in the C18th, ranging from grocers and butchers to maltsters and farmers. One of the more unusual trades was held by John Gray in the 1760's who was a gingerbread maker.

Once the checking process has been completed in the next few months, the website will be published and be available for viewing. © Cynthia Robinson

OUTINGS

The Brunel Experience, London summer outing. 21st June, 2014

Saturday, 21st June, for details see attached flyer. Please put your name on the list on Pam Syrett's table; or contact Pam by telephone or by E-mail – see below.

Bisham Abbey, 29th June, 2014, 2 pm

Following the talk by Ann Darracott on BISHAM ABBEY on 3rd June a conducted tour by Ann is planned to the house and near-by church on 29th June limited to a group of 20. Cost £ 2.50 each. For those who can't make this date there is another chance on **11th September** from 10 am to 4 pm under the Heritage Open Days scheme – no booking required for this event. Contact Pam Syrett

Harpden Court, date in the summer, yet to be confirmed – probably July or August.

All members who were not able to make our visit last summer are kindly invited this year by the owners Barbara and Laurence Gerrard. An exact date will have to be decided a little further down the line to ensure the house is not being used as an 'extra' for one of its many TV and film appearances. Places are limited, so please, let us know by putting your name on the list displayed on Pam Syrett's table at the coming meetings, or E-mail/ telephone me if you are interested. Contact Ruth Gibson

Hardwick House, Visit on 17th June, 2014, 2. p.m.

A number of members attended the talk by Michael Redley on the connection between the owners, the Rose family, and the Boer War. Whilst becoming better acquainted with the reasons for and consequences of this war, our appetite grew to see more of this beautiful Tudor and Jacobean house. We are therefore planning to take up the invitation to participate in a conducted tour of the house. There is a limit of 20 people for the tour; cost £ 8 p.p to include light refreshments
Please, book with Elizabeth Toms: E-mail elizabeth_toms@hotmail.com, or tel. 01491 576150

Walk with the RAMBLERS, 1st June, 2014, 10 a.m.

An archaeological and historical interest walk from Bix Common to Bix Bottom of c. 4.5 miles is planned for **1st June**. We will be looking at the mystery of the three churches of Bix, consider a possible Roman road and farmstead excavations undertaken in the 1960s and visit the site of the very recent archaeological dig of the medieval graveyard of St. Michael's church at Bix Bottom. Start 10 am at the car park of Bix Village Hall, next to the church. Everybody welcome, but good walking boots are essential for this hilly walk. Contact Ruth Gibson

Visit to Chalgrove Manor and Church, on 26th April 2014 by invitation of the Oxfordshire VCH Trust to attend a fund raising day

For those who have never visited this quite wonderful, privately owned, 1460s manor house or the seen the exceptionally well preserved medieval wall paintings in the church of St. Mary's this day is an opportunity not to be missed. Talks by VCH historians Dr Simon Townley and Dr. Mark Page interspersed with coffees, lunches and teas will make this a very informative as well as really enjoyable day out. Cost p.p £ 35.

If you are interested please see the VCH website for all details:
www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/Oxfordshire



News about the HA&HG Web Site

Website: www.henleycensus.info

This website has been developed over the winter.

The name, age and birth place data for an individual are often inconsistent and the [nameindex](#) feature which tries to bring together the possible matches has been extended to include:

- "Soundex" and "Metaphone" matches for surnames.
- Selection by street.
- Selection by County of birth.

A general [search](#) facility has been included allowing selection by:

- Last name(s) with exact, partial, "Soundex" or "Metaphone" matching.
- First name(s) with exact, partial, "Soundex" or "Metaphone" matching.
- Birth year or range of years.
- Sex.
- Relationship to head of household.
- Marital status.
- Occupation category.
- Street.
- Birth county.

Occupations have been categorized into Classes, groups and sub-groups allowing the "butchers, bakers and candlestick makers" in the town to be identified.

Some studies based on census data are included and more are in preparation.

Click on any link to view the website.

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H.A. & H.G.

President

Ann Cottingham 01189 403276

Officers and Committee members:

Chairman & Journal Editor

Valerie Alasia 01491 575679

Hon Secretary & Buildings Recording
Newsletter Editor

Ruth Gibson 01491 572271
ruthgibson@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Peter Anderson 01491 412531

Web master

Graham Jones 01491 576102
jgtjones@o2.co.uk

Archaeology Liaison

Viv Greenwood 01491 413544
vivgreenwood@gmail.com

Outings Secretary

Pam Syrett 01491 574983
pamsyrett@btinternet.com

Information Leaflet

Derek Toms 01491 576150
derekt@gotadsl.co.uk

Tony Lynch

tony@greatown.freeseve.c.uk
01491 574093

Probate Group Leader

Cynthia Robinson 01491 572445
mrscar@sky.com

Membership Secretary

Hilary Fisher 01491 575216
kpfisher@compuserve.com

Lecture Secretary

Martin Cresswell 01491 572640
m.cresswell780@btinternet.com

Co-opted member

John Whiting 01491 410963
johnwhiting75@yahoo.co.uk

<http://www.henley-on-thamesarchaeologicalandhistoricalgroup.org.uk/index.php>

THE BRUNEL EXPERIENCE

Date: Saturday June 21st.

Time 10.45 a.m. in London

Travel Independently from Henley Station 8.20am, change at Twyford for London train and travel to Ealing Broadway or Paddington, then District Line to the Embankment

Arranger Pam Syrett. 01491574983
Mobile: 07901875572

Email: pamsyrett@btinternet.com

Leader: London Walks Guide: Curator of Brunel Museum.

Meeting: Outside **Embankment Underground Station**. The Embankment Café is a short walk along the Embankment with good coffee, food and toilets.

The Plan: This is a voyage and a walk, involving 3 Brunel Bridges, 2 tunnels and a descent into London's best kept secret. You will stand by a broken slipway that tells of a monster ship once built on the bank of the river Thames. See the Mayflower, the Pilgrim Father's pub, a gibbet and the world's first tunnel under a river. Go down into one of the Wonders of the Modern World, an underground cathedral, normally locked and closed to the public. You will be in the place where men died and one Brunel was lucky to escape with his life. { steps down are very narrow and there is a small low tunnel to get through, so you need to be reasonably agile }
Afterwards lunch at one of the riverside pubs and then the afternoon is yours to return home or go where you like.

COST . £7 for the walk and entry into museum and Casson. The river trip costs £4.50. The Day travel card to London – is approx £14, cheaper if you have a railcard, a group of 3 people can travel for the price of 2.

So it is not cheap but it is special.

Limit 20 people. It will be possible to bring a friend.

Closing date : April 15th . Once you have booked you can assume you have a place unless contacted.

I / We would like to reserve a place on the Brunel Experience and enclose a cheque for £7 pp payable to HAHG

Name/s.....
.....

Tel.....**Mobile**
No.....

Email.....

Please return to Pam Syrett, 54 Makins Road, Henley on Thames. RG9 1PR or bring to HAHG meeting on April 1st.