

Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

NEWS-
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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the new programme, which has been put together by Martin Cresswell with the help of Viv Greenwood. Our splendid new leaflet has a list of all lectures.

As outlined at our October meeting, the AGM is upon us on Tuesday, 3rd December, start 19.45. If you are interested in joining the Committee, please let me know. A vacancy arises from the retirement of Roger Kendal after very many years' service to HA&HG. Fortunately, Roger has agreed to continue as our link to the River and Rowing Museum, which will be especially important under the new regime there. Tony Lynch was co-opted last year and is a likely candidate for election this year.

Please note that only fully paid-up members can stand or vote at the AGM. If you have not yet paid your annual subscription, which became due in October, Hilary Fisher will be glad to see you at the start of the AGM. Subscriptions not paid by the New Year will cause cancellation of receipt of future newsletters. The AGM will give us an opportunity to discuss our venue. Is the Barn still suitable or should we consider moving elsewhere, e.g. Christchurch Centre?

The speakers at the AGM will be: Ruth Gibson *'More historic roofs discovered'*
Vicky Jordan *'Jane Austen in Oxfordshire'*
John Whiting *'The Henley Branch Railway'*
Mary Hooper *'World War I'*

Both your Secretary and I have joined working groups considering the Neighbourhood Plan, part of the ongoing consultation process, to ensure that the historic environment is not overlooked.

Valerie Alasia

About our first three 2014 lecturers

7. 1. 2014 Michael Willoughby has been carrying out research for the Project: 'Lest we Forget' over the past 8 years concerning the soldiers, airmen, sailors and other volunteers, who gave their lives in the 1st World War, but who have very often left very little trace of their lives. Michael Willoughby's interest began when looking into his family history where he came across his grandfather's younger brother. He had died at the battle of the Somme, but nothing was known about him within the family, nor does he appear on a war memorial.

4. 2. 2014 Elizabeth Hazeldine will be talking to us about 'The people of St. Mary's' such as Lady Elizabeth Perriam, Mary Blandy, Richard Jennings (master mason of St.

Paul's) and others. She has researched local and ancient history for many years and is in the process of building up an archive of the life stories of local people, who have left their mark on Henley.

4.3. 2014 John Morris is a biologist and ecologist and has been working in the Chilterns for 30 years assisting and advising owners on woodland management. He is chairman of the local division of the Royal Forestry Society and has published books on the cultural heritage, the ancient woodlands and woodland archaeology; recently he surveyed and edited the comprehensive *Ancient Woodland Inventory for the Chilterns* 2012, an invaluable tool for the Forestry Commission, Natural England and planners alike to protect this important habitat.

Forthcoming Lectures

5th November 2013 'Foreigners in Roman Cities' Hella Eckard

3rd December 2013 'AGM' and Members' contributions

7th January 2014 'Lest we forget' Michael Willoughby

4th February 2014 'The people of St. Mary's' Elizabeth Hazeldine

4th March 2014 'Archaeology & History of the Chiltern Woods' John Morris

1st April 2014 'West Wycombe' Gary Marshall

6th May 2014 'The passage of tea through time' Mark Nicholls

3rd June 2014 'A virtual tour of Bisham Abbey' Ann Darracott

6th October 2014 'Jan Siberechts' paintings of Henley' Laura Wortley
N. B. this lecture will take place in the Council Chamber

4th November 2014 'The History of Wallingford' Judy Dewey

All lectures are held at 7.45 p.m. in the old 'Kings Arms' Barn with the exception of the October lecture. Entry to the Barn is from Kings Road Car Park

All welcome, members free, non-members £ 3

Our Visit to Calleva/Silchester – July 31st 2013

Excavation of this site began in 1997 under the direction of Professor Michael Fulford of Reading University. The “Dig” is an internationally acclaimed Field Training School which lasts for six weeks with 160 students camped in tents along the edge of the site and 50 tutors. In 2008 they began the Silchester Town Life Project, which does not look at the grand buildings in the centre of the town but concentrates on the occupation by ordinary people from late Iron Age until the abandonment of the town. Gradually Amanda Clarke, the Field Director and the team are gaining valuable information about life in Roman Britain.



Our group of 20 were given head-sets and from a viewing platform we were able to hear and see Amanda Clarke below as she explained and pointed out the various features. Gradually the expanse of earth became a fascinating story. We were told that to become an archaeologist you have to have good eyesight to recognize change in soil colour and sensitive hands to distinguish texture.

From what we could see of the students hard at work scraping away the soil and carrying heavy buckets other qualities are also needed, but the rain of the previous day had done us a favour as we could easily see the different colours of the soil.

This excavation is in the north west corner of the site and about 6ft below ground level One of their first finds was a Roman street running from the North gate to the South, but this was no backwater as the streets linked into the Roman road system.

However the whole site was once the “town in the woods of the Atrebates” dating back to 40BC, with wells, rubbish tips and from the finds of coriander, dill and wine goblets they obviously traded with the Continent. Even more fascinating was the site of the Iron Age street which kept to the old alignment of East/ West and the foundation of a huge hall, again aligned East/West measuring 30m long by 10m wide. Evidence of postholes has been found and the building would have been thatched. Apparently no other building of this size and age has been found. The skeleton of a small Chihuahua type dog was found in a foundation trench and thought to have been imported. Another luxury item?

It was interesting to note that while the Romans stamped their authority on the site, the people remained the same and carried on their way of life so that the town became a mix of cultures.

After visiting another site probably a bath house and examining lots of very special finds, marbled glass, Iron age and Roman coins, a toilet set with a scoop for cleaning ears, tweezers etc and a tiny delicate piece of powder blue glass, [the only other example of this is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York] and even a Neolithic polished axe head, to name a few, we said our grateful good byes, and then set off for the Calleva Arms.

Later we visited the C12th St Marys Church and very kindly Mrs Rand the wife of the Church Warden was there to greet us and show us around, certainly without her help we would have missed



many features of the history of this beautiful little church. There is a fabulous Tudor screen showing the pomegranate of Katherine of Aragon, which was taken down during the Reformation and hidden in a barn for two hundred years, a very simple Restoration pulpit and a chair made from the wooden lining of a Roman water channel, wall paintings and lots of other historic architectural features.

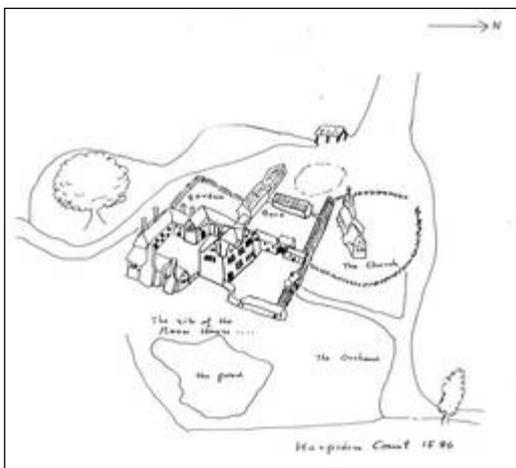
The more energetic of the group set off to walk along the walls and visit the amphitheatre, but others returned home well satisfied that it had been a fascinating and happy day, good weather, not raining or too hot, in fact just right but above all good, happy company. As we did not have time to visit Stratfield Saye perhaps that might be a future “expedition”. - Thank you to all who came.

Pam Syrett

Our Visit to Harpsden Court - August 8th 2013

About 30 members of the HA&HG visited the beautiful manor house, hidden behind its elegant gateway next to Harpsden Church. The owners were delighted to show us around and tell us about life there in the past and present, especially how the house earns its living (the large amount of maintenance and repairs it needs) through its frequent use in films and TV locations, Midsomer Murders being perhaps the best known one. Ruth Gibson explained the architectural sequences from medieval tower to Elizabethan hall and chamber range; early 18th C kitchen and Gothic revival re-fronting with grand trompe l’oeil windows replacing the more modest Tudor ones.

A further visit is planned for next spring for those members who would have liked to go, but could not manage on that particular day.



Left:
Harpsden Court
1586; bird’s
eye view by
John
Blagrave of
Reading

Right:
Harpsden
Court now:
aerial view



H.A&H.G.

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