



Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

NEWS-
LETTER
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Chairman's Introduction:

One big item for your consideration: It is now nearly three years since the Committee was formed and the Constitution then agreed states that the Chairman, Hon Treasurer and Hon Secretary will normally serve for a period of three years but may stand for re-election after their first three-year term.

The Secretary has already given notice of her intention to resign and the Chairman wishes to follow suit. Ruth will however remain Newsletter Editor for the time being. Peter Anderson is willing to stand again as Hon Treasurer (although we still need someone to audit the accounts).

Therefore, it is important that you, the members, find new officers/members of Committee to continue the good work that this Committee has been involved with. Nomination papers will go out in due course but please, for the continuation of a lively and innovative HA&HG, rally round and seek new, not necessarily young, blood.

Valerie Alasia

Remaining Lecture Programme in 2014

7th October 2014 Simon Townley: 'A thousand years of Ewelme History'
Please note change of date, venue and lecturer from that published previously

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

2nd December AGM and members' contributions

NB: The new Season starts in October and everyone's subscriptions are due for renewal. Single members £12; Family of two or more people at the same address £20. Cheques to H.A.H.G. Please let us know of any changes with regard to contact information.

**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 two lecturers

Dr Simon Townley is well known to us through his research for the Victoria County History volume XVI on Henley and Four surrounding parishes as well as the paperback on Henley. This included the setting up research groups, which kept many Group members very busy over many years. He has given several illuminating talks on the subject and has since moved on to researching several other Oxfordshire parishes. The work on the Ewelme Hundred, recently finished, has produced a huge amount of fascinating information on historic Ewelme itself and its surrounding parishes. This is the subject of Dr. Townley's talk to us on 7th October.

Judy Dewey gave us a fascinating talk on Wallingford Castle a couple of years ago, based on her extensive research into this Norman stronghold and on its impact on the medieval town. We followed this up with a walk of the extensive earthwork remains of the castle, again led by Judy Dewey. This time the talk will concentrate on the town itself, no doubt informed by more recent excavations as well as research into its rich history. Excavations have taken place in numerous rear gardens, the burgrave plots of the ancient town, with the kind help of their modern owners and many volunteer diggers. We are looking forward to hearing more about this during Judy Dewey's talk on 4th November.

Lecture Programme for 2015

6.1.2015	Hazel Williams	'Gatehampton Roman Villa'
3.2.2015	Ruth Gibson	'Henley and its changing relationship with the Thames'
3.3.2015	Alastair Lack	'The History of Oxford University'
7.4.2015	David Moon	'The Prehistoric Guide to Oxfordshire'
5.5.2015	Rosemary Jury	'The medieval to 18 th C. landscape'
2.6.2015	Deborah Hayter	'The Poor Law in the 18 th C. – the crisis in the parishes'
6.10.2015
3.11.2015	Gary Lock	'Excavations at Marcham, Oxon – a big Roman & Iron Age site'

Other Events in 2014

Visiting Bisham Abbey - 11th September Open Day; from 10 am to 4 pm.

The planned HA&HG Group visit to Bisham Abbey in June had to be cancelled, but there is another opportunity to visit the house, grounds with dovecote and church under the national Heritage Open Day Scheme.

The Heritage Open Day scheme runs from 11th - 14th September.

There will be many houses and gardens welcoming visitors in our area. Please consult local media on more details of venues open to the public.

Oxford Town Hall, 5th September, 7.30 – 9.30 pm. Topic : The Spanish Civil War and Oxfordshire's part in it, a public meeting with a panel of speakers and open discussion. FREE entrance.

The Brunel Experience

Saturday June 21st was a day planned as a magical Brunel Experience, so 23 of us travelled independently to the Embankment to meet our Guide who was to take us on a gentle boat ride, short walk, a tube ride through the first tunnel under a river and then a descent into Marc Brunel's Caisson at Rotherhithe.

It was a beautiful Saturday morning but unfortunately, call it what you will, lady luck, the gods, or even the best-laid plans of mice and men, we hit 'trouble.'

The Henley Twyford train was not in service, the east lane of the Hammersmith flyover was closed, there was a large 'demo' crossing London to Parliament Square, the exit from the Embankment underground was confusing, the line from Wapping to Rotherhithe was closed. It took us over 3 hrs to walk the Thames path, cross through the Greenwich pedestrian tunnel then walk past the Cutty Sark and find a 188 bus and clamber on. While waiting at the bus stop we heard that we had left 3 people at the Greenwich lift shaft so they had to hurry to join us. We were told at first that we couldn't go into the Caisson because a 'pop up' opera was practising and finally the trains from Paddington were cancelled so some people had extra trouble and expense on the homeward journey.

However, London from the river was beautiful, we saw Mast Head and the huge chains where the Great Eastern was built and the walk along the Thames path with Greenwich ahead was stunning.



Our guide explaining the views. A traditional London barge in front of the Cutty Sark at Greenwich.

Finally, in the depth of Brunel's caisson with Mozart's music filling the great space.

Our guide was very knowledgeable, the opera sounded glorious and the Caisson really is one of the Wonders of the Modern World. Eventually we sank with relief into the 'Mayflower PH', and one person even went mud larking and found a piece of clay pipe and others even had the energy to go onto the London Eye.

The best part of the day, however, was the way everybody pulled together, nobody grumbled, and it was a great way to get to know each other and make new friends. It was a good day and definitely one we will remember for a long time.

Thank you all !

Pam Syrett

P.S Museum Director Robert Hulse expressed his pleasure that we had all made the effort to visit but sorry that things did not go smoothly. In recompense he offered the individual members of the group free entry and descent into the caisson. Just mention his name, say that you are from the Henley A&H Group, and you get in free.

Outing to Hardwick House

Our visit to Hardwick House. 17th June 2014

Hardwick House is a fine Elizabethan/Jacobean Manor House, situated between Mapledurham and Whitchurch, close to the Thames.

Following an interesting earlier evening lecture about the Rose family, who have owned Hardwick House since the end of the nineteenth century, and their participation in the Boer War, members had asked if it would be possible to have a visit to the house. This took place on 17th June on a perfect summer's day.



The house is now owned by Sir Julian Rose whose daughter Miriam took our party of 18 round the house. In 1066, at the time of the Battle of Hastings, Hardwick and its lands were owned by Wigod the Saxon Lord of Wallingford. In the early 16th Century all traces of this Saxon building vanished when a Tudor mansion, now known as Hardwick, was built over it.

We began our tour with a look at the garden and the outside of the house. The grounds extend to the river bank which can be seen from the back of the house. While we were in the garden Miriam told us of the house's connection with *The Wind in the Willows* and *Mr Toad of Toad Hall*. The house was rented from 1870 by Charles Day Rose who was very interested in horse racing, real tennis, cars and planes and under his wife Eliza's influence Hardwick became a magnet for the literary community of the day.



Jacobean Staircase & plaster ceiling



Jacobean doorways

Among the regular visitors to the house were Henry James and Kenneth Grahame. It is likely that the ebullient character of Toad was an affectionate pen portrait of Graham's friend Charles. Like Toad, Charles was a larger than life personality and Toad Hall is described as "A handsome and dignified old house of mellowed red brick with well kept lawns reaching down to the water's edge." In 1913, after going for a flight in an aeroplane at Hendon aerodrome, Charles Rose suffered a fatal heart attack, possibly brought on by the excitement of the flight.

From the garden we entered the vaulted cellar, cold and dark, useful for storage. Also in the garden we came to the Real Tennis court, one of two built here by Charles, still regularly used by the local community. - We were led round the inside of the house where many of the rooms are not in regular use any more. We mounted the splendid Jacobean timber staircase in the central hall to find family portraits on the walls and a magnificent plaster ceiling. An impressive reception room with a charming view of the surrounding land was off the landing. Miriam told us that Hardwick Estate is now organically managed and run by her father, Sir Julian Rose. She and her brother are very interested in conserving the estate and hope that this can be achieved through using the house and grounds for various activities and by a fund-raising trust in the future.

Elizabeth Toms

About our Websites

A special meeting of the Group was held in the Stable Barn of the former Kings Arms pub on Monday 9th June, 2014 to introduce two new websites to members. These both contain searchable databases and will be useful to family and social historians interested in former residents of Henley.

www.henleyprobate.org.uk

This contains over 400 probate documents, mainly C18th wills. Search facilities are provided using:

- Surname of testator, including Metaphone matching
- Occupation and location of testator
- Names of benefactors, witnesses and others mentioned in a will
- Type of bequest, e.g. property, money, gold ring etc.

www.henleycensus.info

This contains a complete transcription of the census returns 1841 - 1901 for Henley-on-Thames and the eastern part of Rotherfield Greys parish.

A general search facility is available allowing selection by : Last name(s) with exact, partial, Soundex or Metaphone matching.

- First name(s) with similar matching
- Birth year or range of years
- Occupation
- Street
- Birth County
- Relationship to head of household
- Martial Status
- Sex

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

Graham Jones

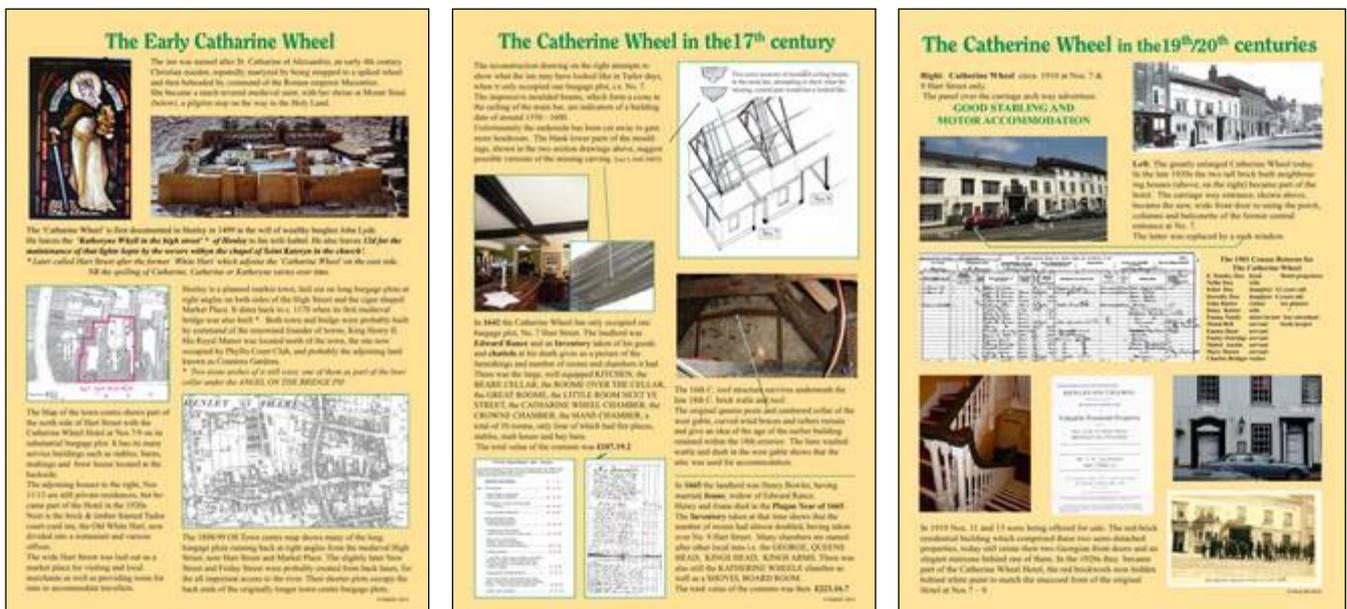
News about SOAG's digs: Gatehampton and Highwood

Excavations of the Roman villa site continue at **Gatehampton/Goring** every Sunday, where an exciting new part of the villa have been found. If you are interested to help please contact Hazel Williams directly for details on 0118 947 7397 or via: villa@soagarch.org.uk .

Work at the **Highwood Roman** site started with a great deal of clearance of the woodland undergrowth. This has confirmed that much damage to the site was done by unauthorized metal detectorists over many decades; however the flint foundations of a very substantial 4.5 m square building have been located and excavations are planned for the new year, probably early February. Contact David Nicholls on 0118 947 49903 or via E-mail: highwood@soagarch.org.uk

We will let you have more information on SOAG's plans in due course; or you might like to become a member of the 'South Oxon Archaeological Group' if you are interested in hands-on archaeology as well as SOAG's lecture programme and summer outings. If so please contact Mike Vincent, hon. secretary on 01491-614854.

Katheryne/Catharine/Catherine Wheel Panels



It is a little while ago now that Wetherspoon's have asked us to help with informing their staff, visitors and customers a little about the history of the Catharine Wheel.

Following the talk by Barbara Allison in April last year on this as well as two other major Henley inns, Hilary Fisher, Ruth Gibson and John Whiting have been preparing three panels which illustrate some aspects of the long history of the Catharine Wheel and its growth from occupying a single burgage plot at No. 7 Hart Street to the long frontage we are familiar with today, including the archway to the back yard, of the former private house at No.15.

The above is a sneak pre-view of the panels – rather too small in this format to see much – however, we hope that they will soon be up in the entrance passage of the inn in their final, framed, larger format for all to read and hopefully enjoy.

Our Group's Archive in the Town Hall

Just a reminder that our Group's Archive is available for members to look at, consult and make most of for any research they may be doing or just for simply finding out how much knowledge and information has been accumulated by Group members over the years.

Among other things there is a large collection of books and pamphlets on history and archaeology, which may be borrowed. There are the entire Henley Parish Registers transcribed, typed up and indexed; there are photocopies, a good proportion of which has been transcribed, of probate material (wills, inventories etc) from the 15th – 18th C of hundreds of Henley inhabitants telling us about their lives, their families and professions. There are also photocopies of the Henley pages of some street directories, a collection of more modern cuttings on Henley streets, some maps and last by not least we have the entire John Crocker collection - his original research and his books about Henley, which include many rare and early editions, as well as his research papers. These are kept securely locked away, but can be viewed on request. Please, contact Hilary Fisher to arrange a convenient time for access to the Archive.

Harpsden Court - has lost its greatest admirer and dedicated carer

After more than 40 years of looking after this hidden beauty in the Harpsden Valley Lawrence Gerrard died after a brief illness on 28th June in his beloved home. Those of you who experienced the pleasure of the Gerrards' hospitality either at our Group's visit last August or during recording sessions of the medieval and Tudor parts of the building over many years, will have fond memories of being given the grand tour by Laury and of exploring the house and grounds at leisure. I am very sad to lose a dear friend and fellow historic buildings enthusiast, who never tired of sharing in the pleasure of exploring the many hidden nooks and crannies of his home and always finding out more about its past in the process.

Much to the Gerrards' delight the house became the backdrop for much filming such as ' Midsomer Murders', 'The Last Parade', 'The Invisible Woman', 'Molly Moon', 'Dorian Grey' to name but a very few. For the last one 'The Great Fire of London' some scenes were being filmed only this June. - Thanks to the tenure of the Gerrards the house found a new role in the 20th C. and glimpses of it in its many guises will no doubt continue to delight us.



Tudor north front of Harpsden Court, seen through the 'Jacobean' gateway built by the Nobles in the early 20th C.

Ruth Gibson

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