



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

www.AAAHS.org.uk

NEWSLETTER - AUTUMN 2009

Meetings Programme

All at the Northcourt Centre starting at 7.45pm. Members free. Visitors welcome (£2.00 entry)

Thurs 17th Sept - AAAHS AGM followed by lecture Anthony Poulton-Smith - *"Place Names"*

Thurs 15th October – Maureen Mellor: *"Up in the gallery; insights from the new Medieval display at the British Museum"*

Thurs 19th November – Pat Minns: *"RAF Abingdon"*

Thurs 10th December - The Christmas Social with the Mummers (NOTE EARLY DATE!)

Thurs 21st January 2010 - Clark Friend: *"An answer to the problem of vitrified forts from Moidart, northwest Scotland"*

Thurs 18th February – Alex Smith: Subject to be confirmed

Thurs 18th March – Julian Munby: *"Edward The 3rd's Round table at Windsor"*

Thurs 15th April - tba

Thurs 20th May – Tim Allen: Subject to be confirmed (Lambrick Lecture)

Thurs 17th June - Open Evening presented by members.



It's 80 years since Burford Bridge was rebuilt and widened in 1929. It forms the southern section of Abingdon Bridge.

Chairman's Report

As the rain lashes down – in what should be the heart of the digging season – it's hard to believe that it is Summer. This does, though, make it easier to stay in and get on with writing the Chairman's Report.

The Society has had a good few months. Our April lecture was by Bill King on 'The Thames at War', giving us a fascinating overview of the role which the Thames played in preparing for the defence of Britain in World War 2. In May (the Lambrick Lecture), Simon Townley of the Oxfordshire VCH talked to us about Henley as an inland port, and we learnt much about the importance of the Thames for trade. Also in May, the Local History Group had an interesting talk from Paul Sayers on the Abingdon Riots of 1327. At the Members' Evening in June, we had a rich diet of talks – David Clark on building recording in Abingdon, Dick Barnes on St Nicholas Church, Bob Eeles on the Society's Abbey Fishponds excavation and David Rayner on traces of MG in Abingdon. Drinks and tasty refreshments in the interval gave us a chance to look at exhibitions on the Abingdon Branch Railway (Judy Thomas and Liz Drury) and historical information about Abingdon buildings (Jackie Smith).

The Society has also arranged several outings. In May, we visited Ditchley House in north Oxfordshire. In June, the Local History Group organised a guided walk of Sutton Courtenay. In July, we went to the Pendon Museum in Long Wittenham (where we were given an excellent guided tour of the models and of the extraordinary attention to detail which goes into making them). Most recently, on a slightly damp Thursday evening, we were shown round the Wallingford 'Burh to Borough' project excavations by Dr Matt Edgeworth of the University of Leicester. The project is shedding new light on the development of Wallingford. Our trip was enlivened by some commando-style clambering over gates, through hedges and, finally across the huge defensive ditch and rampart of the Saxon town.

The Society's Abbey Fishponds excavation has continued, and members of the Society are also making contributions to the Lottery-funded 'Lost Abbey' project, which is due to lead to a new publication on the Abbey.

Finally, a strong plea! All of the activities the Society offers – the lecture programme, our outings and social activities – are organised by the Committee for the enjoyment of everyone. This requires a certain amount of effort (not that much, actually). It is also good fun, but it *does* require the Committee to be at full strength. Several Committee members are retiring this year, and we badly need to replace them! Please let any member of the Committee know if you are interested. Without a full Committee, we won't be able to do all the things we do at the moment. *Your Society needs you!*

The AGM is on Thursday 17 September. Until then, enjoy the rest of the summer!

Roger Thomas, Chairman

Digging Secretary's Report

In spring 2009, under the directorship of Dr Bob Eeles, we started to excavate a trench up one side of the dam/causeway on the Daisy Bank nature reserve. A separate account of this dig written by Bob appeared in the last newsletter.

We have also continued our annual summer dig under the directorship of Victor Pocock at the fantastic Neolithic/Roman site at Beedon.

We may carry on digging at both these sites at the same time, or we may go backwards and forwards between the two sites. Either way, anyone wishing to come along and join in is most welcome. No experience is necessary; we will teach you the basics of digging on site. You can do as much or as little as you want to. You will not be expected to wade right in and act like an Irish navvy digging the Panama Canal, but can help us tremendously by drawing sections or plans, surveying (under guidance) or trowelling etc. Of course if you want to push wheelbarrows around you are more than welcome. Most of us, myself included did just this, turned up, were made to feel very welcome and have stayed digging ever since and made some very good friends in the process. Some of us have been digging for 20 years (so far) and some of us for much longer.

Over the 20 years that I have enjoyed digging, it has surprised me how few AAHS members we have seen on site. Everyone is more than welcome to turn up and we will always give you a guided tour of our excavations with as much information as possible. No-one expects you to take your coat off and start throwing soil around! Just come and chat and see what we do and hopefully sit in the sunshine and watch. Most of our sites seem to be beautiful locations, like Daisy Bank, where you can sit and listen to the birds sing overhead and the archaeologists scrape away down a hole.

It is the 16th June and I am driving down the road between Milton and Drayton and am very surprised to see Time Team digging in the field on the left hand side of the road. They are very close to the road and I stopped to see what they are doing. There they all are Mick, Phil, etc but no sign of Baldrick (asleep in the grass?) This area we know has been a target for Nighthawks (illegal metal detectorists) for years. Being a Drayton resident now for over six years, of course I am intrigued. I have been looking into the history of the village for years. I have a beautiful aerial photograph from English Heritage of this very field and know that it contains at least four round barrows and the Drayton Cursus. I think straight away that the Cursus must be the target because one of the three excavations seems to be right over one of the long sides of the Cursus. I was not able to stop and ask what they had found. However on Thursday (the last day) Bob Eeles, Jeff Wallis and I made our way there late in the afternoon. We know the long hours that they put in from the time that we worked with them at Radcot last year and so hoped that they would still be working. But no, the "stars" had all packed up and gone but there were still some of the diggers there recording. They happily let us in and showed us what they had found and told us that the trenches would be filled in the next

day. We were very surprised to see the unmistakable foundations of what they told us was the largest Saxon hall ever found in England. It was a fantastic sight, it also seemed to have been built over an older "grub hut". There were many other pits and post holes, but we, like you, will have to wait until next year to see the programme on TV for the full report.

Did you know?

Some of the Medieval sites the Society has been involved in over the years:-

Fairlawn Wharf, West St Helens St Abingdon, Stratton Way Abingdon, Old Gaol Bridge St Abingdon, Lombard St Abingdon, St Helens Wharf Abingdon, Old Clothing Factory site West St Helens St Abingdon, Stert St Abingdon, Sadlers field Abingdon, Spring Road Abingdon, Checker Walk Abingdon, 35 St Helens St Abingdon, 159 Oxford Road Cowley Oxford, 18 The Green Sutton Courtney, Bayworth, White Horse pub Abingdon, Enoch's coal yard Ock St Abingdon, St Helens church Abingdon, Drayton St Leonard, Hathaways High St Abingdon.

Some of the Roman sites:-

Tithe farm, 3 Stert St Abingdon, Stratton Way, Corporation Farm, Thrupp House Farm Radley, Spring Rd Cemetery Abingdon, Barton Court Farm Abingdon, Old Gaol Bridge St Abingdon, Lombard St/West St Helens St Abingdon, Goose Acre Farm, Abingdon By-pass, 38, 40, 42, & 44 Stert St Abingdon, 30 East St Helens St Abingdon, Barrow Hills Abingdon, 64 Bath St Abingdon, the field opposite Sutton Wick Drayton, Alchester, Frilford, Beedon.

Some of the Neolithic sites:-

Thrupp Radley, Berinsfield, Shippon, Tuckwells Radley, Drayton Cursus, Besselsleigh, Lower Radley, Sutton Courtney, Peep-O-Day Lane Abingdon, Spring Road cemetery Abingdon, Sutton Wick Drayton, Bladen Heath, Grimes Ditch.

Some of the Mesolithic sites:-

Thrupp Farm, Radley, Peep-O-Day Lane, Abingdon.

Terry Stopps, Digging Sec.

Anyone Know?

Does anyone know the history of the grassed area on the corner of Radley Road and Daisy Bank, in front of Saffron Court? It appears to be owned by Oxford City Council and apparently used to have a 19C cottage on it. Any information please to newsletter@aaahs.org.uk

Local History Group

The meeting on 12th May was a good and well-attended one. Paul Sayers presented the interim conclusions of his current work on the 1327 riots of town versus abbey, which were that they had less to do with national politics than with long-running local grievances in a time of economic stress. We have the names of some two hundred alleged rioters, and the presentation included an exercise on their trades and places of origin. These were substantial people trying to protect their interests, not hooligans wanting a punch-up. And was the abbey really storing 100 beef and 1000 sheep carcasses, as well as 300 sides of bacon, or was it inflating its restitution claim?

Also, John Dunleavy briefly described his paper in the current Local Historian on the Victorian custom of giving distinguished citizens illuminated addresses, and about some of the people who received them. This will be well worth reading.

On 23 June, Ron Dell showed a dozen or so group members around Sutton Courtenay, about which he had given us a presentation in February. It's a fascinating village, with many of the buildings successfully hiding their great age. The highlight was a detailed inspection of the church, including the old schoolroom over the south door which is not usually accessible, and a conducted tour of the graveyard where a remarkable number of notable people are buried.

The next meeting will be on 27 October, and the main presenter will be Anne Smithson, on 'Staceys, Humfreys, and St. Helen's'.

Manfred Brod

Abingdon Joint Environmental Trust (JET)

Elizabeth Drury is the Society's co-opted member on the Abingdon JET. Recent discussions by the JET which might be of interest to our members include:-

- Discussion of a possible contribution to the cost of a plaque or interpretation board for the Albert Memorial
- Alternative sites for a blue plaque commemorating Arthur Preston as the owners of the preferred site had not responded to approaches.
- Possible grant aid for the County Hall improvements

If you have any suggestions that you wish to be put forward to the JET, please let Elizabeth know on 01235 553636.

Try these!

A couple more websites of interest:-

Details and reviews of places to visit and archaeological digs:

<http://www.ilovethepast.com/>

A user-friendly guide to British architectural styles through the ages:

<http://www.britainexpress.com/architecture/index.htm>

New site with an eclectic collection of articles – Summer Solstice, Henry VIII and the Speaking Clock, to name a few.

www.britishlocalhistory.com

Digital library containing secondary and primary sources for the medieval and modern history of the British Isles.

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/Default.aspx>

Dates for Your Diary

Heritage Open Day – 12th September

Buildings in Abingdon open to the public include the Abbey buildings, County Hall, the Guildhall, Christ's Hospital hall and almshouses, the Merchant's House, and Saint Ethelwold's House. A heritage walk (3 miles) of the town's 1556 boundaries starts at the market place at 11.00am on Sunday 13th September.

<http://www.heritageopendays.org/>

Oxford Open Doors – 12th and 13th September:

Many interesting buildings and spaces open to the public. Pre-booking required. Details:

http://www.openingdoorsopeningminds.org.uk/ODOM_leaflet.pdf

Vale of the White Horse Branch, Berkshire Family History Society

Long Furlong Community Centre, Boulter Drive, Abingdon. 7.15pm for 7.30pm.

19th Oct - Dr Gillian White: *Bess of Hardwicke*

16th Nov – Michael Hambleton: *A sweet and hopeful people: Early Baptists in Abingdon*

Wallingford Historical & Archaeological Society

Fridays in Wallingford Town Hall (in the Market Place)

11th Sept - Professor Greg Stores: *The Maladies of Medieval Monks*

9th Oct - Martin Andrews: *Information Explosion and the 19th Century Printing Industry*

13th Nov - Jill Greenaway: *Secrets from The Depths - The River Thames Collection*

11th Dec – Dr Steve Head: *Oxfordshire Fossils*

8th Jan 2010 - Paul Smith: *A Roundup of Oxfordshire Archaeology*.

12th March - Jane Macdonald: *The Cook, the Scullion and the Turnspit boy: the History of the 18th C Kitchen*.

Oxfordshire Family History Society

Open Day Sat 26th Sept 2008 10am to 4pm. – Marlborough Enterprise Centre, just outside Woodstock.

The ups and downs of an Abingdon academic: Henry Langley (1610-1679)

Henry Langley was born in 1610, the son of an Abingdon shoemaker. The family seems to have been a large one, and the Henry Langley who was a churchwarden of St Helen's in 1627 and several times mayor in the 1640s and 1650s was presumably a cousin. The younger Henry was sent to Roysse's school, and matriculated at the newly-founded, or refounded, Pembroke College in 1629 although somewhat above the usual age. He took his BA degree in 1632, and remained in Oxford as a preacher and college tutor.

He seems to have found favour in high places, because during the Civil War, when Oxford was the Royalist capital, a resolution of Parliament gave him the London living of St Mary Newington, where the previous incumbent had been driven out for his political views. But his chance to return to Oxford came in 1647.

During the war, academic supporters of Parliament had left the university, which was now heavily compromised. High on Parliament's agenda after the end of fighting in 1646 was the urgent need to purge the university and get it back to work as a centre of proper godly learning. In April 1647, while plans were being developed, a group of seven 'godly preachers' was sent to expose students and staff to what would now be the only acceptable ideology. Langley was one of them.

In July, Dr Thomas Clayton, the Master of Pembroke College, died. The fellows resolved to pre-empt whatever changes were in store by a rapid election, and within three days had chosen Henry Whitewicke, a kinsman of the co-founder. Langley alerted his contacts. The fourth Earl of Pembroke, whose late brother was commemorated in the college's name, had now been re-instituted as chancellor of the university, and it was no doubt he who on 18 August placed before the House of Lords the following missive 'from the inhabitants of Abingdon':

The election to the place of master of Pembroke College is of great importance to them, as above twenty fellows and scholars are supplied to the college from Abingdon freeschool; the fellows intend suddenly to elect a new Master now that Dr Clayton is dead, whose virtues may not, perhaps be answerable to that place. The petitioners therefore pray that Mr Henry Langley, M.A., born in Abingdon and indulgent tutor to many gentlemen's sons, an ancient member of the College, pious in his religion, excellent in learning and judgement, and of honest and blameless conversation, may be appointed master.

Others had a poorer opinion of him. A Royalist newspaper gave a personal description:

He hath a bowsing nose, standing somewhat awry, with a wert at the end of it, and little peeping eies: an infallible note of an envious and malicious person. He walks with his shoulders as other men do with their legges, one before another. He loves a whore as well as his country-man Martin [Henry Marten of Longworth, currently MP for Berkshire]. His belly is his God; he is a second Marriot [William (or John) Marriot, 'the great eater of Gray's Inn', about whom extravagant tales were told]: where he is, there is always famine, and a plague. From which curses good Lord deliver Pembroke Colledge.

Langley had a successful, if brief, career as Master. He took his advanced degrees, and added to his emoluments by becoming a canon of Christ Church. Under his rule, Pembroke became as godly as anyone could wish, and even the undergraduates are recorded as spending their spare time in religious exercises. In the wider world, with his friends Henry Cornish and Tobias Garbrand, he was a member of the intellectual circle of Samuel Hartlib, much concerned with social and educational reform. He preached, as would be expected, although opinions of his ability as a preacher tended to be uncomplimentary. At the Restoration in 1660, he was unceremoniously expelled and Wightwicke was restored.

A staunch Presbyterian, Langley fell foul of the laws the Cavalier Parliament introduced against non-conformism, and especially of the Five-Mile Act, which forbade former preachers from residing within five miles of any town. He made his home in Tubney and opened a school there for the sons of dissenting families. His career as a schoolmaster will no doubt have taken off in 1671 when Dr Jennings, the head of Roysse's, expelled his dissenting pupils.

Langley died in 1679, and, in spite of his religious deviance, was buried in St Helen's.

Manfred Brod

Editor's Notes

Thanks to all members for their contributions and feedback – all gratefully received.

Please note that the views contained in the articles are those of the contributors rather than the society itself, and contributions may be edited for content.

Tim Barnett, Newsletter Editor

Membership Form 1st Sept 2009 – 31st August 2010

I/we would like to join/rejoin AAAHS for 2009/2010

Membership type (please tick)	Individual £10
	Family £15
	Unwaged/student £7
	Distant £3
Full name	
Address	
Post code	
Telephone	
E mail address	
Newsletter by e mail? Please note that in order to receive N/L by e mail please join the Yahoo group on the AAAHS website – www.AAAHS.org.uk	Yes No I have joined/will join the group on the website

Please send completed forms and cheque payable to AAAHS to

Membership Secretary
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Oxon OX14 1ER

or bring form with cheque/cash to lecture meetings