



**Abingdon Area**  
**Archaeological and Historical Society**  
*www.AAAHS.org.uk*

**NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2005**

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**GILL JACOBI – 1921-2005**

In this first Newsletter after her death on 3 January, it seems right to say a few words about Gill Jacobi, who served on the Society's Committee for many years.

As a Harwell wife, Gill belonged to a set of people who had a great impact on Abingdon. AERE, the atomic research establishment at Harwell, was not only of national but local importance. In Abingdon, a quiet, old-fashioned market town, the influx of energetic scientists and their families was an injection of new life. Many of us, including several other members of the Society, lived on two newly-built estates taking an active part in the life of the town, penetrating schools, churches, societies and even the Borough Council.

The Jacobis, living next door to us in Bath Street on the Fitzharry's Estate since 1959, were good examples of the New Abingdonians. They were active members of St Edmund's, and Roland Jacobi joined the Drama and Operatic Societies. In the 1960s the whole family became involved in the horse-world. Gill, a brilliant, eminently practical organiser, not only became an expert in organising horse-shows but her retentive memory stored so much knowledge of horses that she became a popular, knowledgeable judge.

In 1977 Roland died. Gill continued organising horse-shows but there was an enormous gap in her life. In spite of being my neighbour, she had never shown any interest in Abingdon's flourishing historical scene until she came to a Society talk about place-names. That did the trick. She joined the Society, hardly ever missed a meeting and before long joined the Committee, serving as chairman and organiser of speakers several times. Nothing was too much trouble for her. She enjoyed committee meetings at her house and made many new friends. It is good to know that our Society not only prospers on the intellectual level but also enriches people's lives.

Gill's horizons widened far beyond the local scene. She attended many study week-ends at Rewley House and a tour to Normandy, also organised by Rewley House, was the first of annual study-trips in England and abroad. In her later years Swan Hellenic cruises, mostly to the Mediterranean, became the highlight of her year.

In Autumn 2003 Gill went on her last cruise. A month later terminal cancer was diagnosed. When she was only given six months to live, her determination to keep going was admirable. Her last contact with the Society was quite original: at our successful Christmas party I forgot to bring a card for members to sign, but a friend suggested signing a paper napkin: never was a napkin received more joyfully!

By then Gill was ready to go; in fact, she was annoyed by the delay of her departure, completely organised and 'with-it' until her swift end at the JR in the early hours of 3 January. She set out on a new journey and so let us wish her Bon Voyage.

*Mieneke Cox*

## FIRST ORGAN AT ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, 1815

In June 1815, "A Psalmodic Barrel Organ," in a handsome Gothic painted mahogany case with gilt pipes and three barrels, was purchased from Messrs Flight & Robson, of 101, St Martin's Lane, London, organ builders to HRH the Prince Regent. It was purchased and installed in St Nicolas' Church, Abingdon, at a total cost of £140 and was billed on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1815.

In *St Nicholas' & Other Papers*, Arthur Preston refers briefly to a new organ, stating that it was installed at the western end of the building in the gallery and was the first organ the church had possessed. Presumably, it replaced musical accompaniment to services provided by a 'choir' accompanied by assorted Abingdon minstrels playing such instruments as the *serpent* (bassoon), *vamping horn* (trumpet) or *sackbut* (trombone). Often, despite stubborn resistance, harmoniums and organs eventually replaced many 'choirs' and musicians during the second half of the nineteenth century. When that happened the old psalm books were burned and galleries often demolished by zealous clergymen who wished to impose their own idea of liturgical respectability on their congregation. This change seems to have occurred at St Nicolas' almost half a century earlier than in many English rural churches, and then often under influence of the Oxford movement.

I have looked further at relevant documents and find the cost of the organ to have been £120. An additional payment (£20) was accounted for by the purchase of two finished barrel cases (£3), carriage of the organ to Abingdon (£7) and for Benjamin Flight's travelling expenses, including his time and charges for erecting the organ (£10). The bill (*see billhead below*) was tendered to Samuel Cripps, collector of Blacknall's Charity, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1815, and was evidently paid promptly, with a receipt issued by Flight & Robson two days later for a total payment of £140.



Ancillary work for reception and work around the organ was completed and put in the accounts for July 1<sup>st</sup> 1815: *Putting up a stage for the Organ at St Nicholas Church, with new floor and ... boarding round under the Organ and new Deal boarding up by the sides of the Organ ... making a Cupboard (sic) for the spare Barrells & hanging a Door with hinges and lock. Putting a new lock on Organ room door and putting up seats. 52 ft 4x3 ... 54 ft Irish Board for floor ... 8 lbs nails ... £2 7s 6d.*

*36ft Irish Deal boarding under Organ ... Self & man 5 days each ... 1 Iron stay and screws ... 5ft Oak ... 5x5 for standards to floor ... £3 4s 8 1/2d. 1 pair hinges for Barrell Cupboard ... 1 Cub'd Lock & screws ... 1 closed lock ... 20 Nails ... 5s 3d.* The job was therefore completed at a total cost of £145 17s 51/2d.

The new organ came during the term of office both of the Revd Lawrence Canniford, ex-officio vicar of St Nicolas' (1811-21) and the Revd William Smith, usher at Roysse's School (1793-1844) and rector of St Nicolas' (1804-45). The headmaster of Abingdon School, the Revd Edward Nicholson (headmaster 1810-27), seems to have had little involvement with St Nicolas' church: he was far too busy attending to his curacies at Hanney and Denchworth, consequently also in neglecting teaching at school. Bishop's transcripts for Hanney at the Wiltshire Record Office, Trowbridge, indicate that Nicholson was assiduous in carrying out his duty at the parish.

The barrel organ was later modified so that, instead of playing just a few hymn tunes, it could be played with a keyboard. In 1868 this instrument was replaced by another organ given by E J Trendell, a town grocer, which was re-erected on the north side of the chancel in 1881 *and destroyed by fire in 1953.*

*Nigel Hammond.*

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

This is the time of year when your Treasurer turns aside from the deplorable but fascinating creativity of seventeenth century accountants to consider the more precise (thanks to Excel) and honest (our auditors make sure of that) but altogether less sensational financial books of this Society in the present century.

At first sight, all is remarkably well. We are sitting on quite a large stock of money. That isn't right for a society such as ours, and recent Committees have been readier than in the past to finance projects within Society's interests. Thus, we have agreed to back a flight where some of our archaeologists will make aerial observations and take photographs of landscape features, and you can read about this elsewhere in this Newsletter.

The longer term is a bit less rosy. It is a major concern that we appear to be losing members. I say 'appear to be' because I still hope that some of the members who have not paid their subscriptions for 2004-5 will yet do so. Hope is, perhaps, wearing thin. There are currently 139 memberships on the books, and 42 of these are on the arrears list. The defaulters know who they are – I have written to each of them individually. *If you haven't paid up, please do!*

In general, costs are going up, and our annual surpluses are trending down. But, as the premier Abingdon society for history and archaeology, we have to be ready to expand our activities. One serious need the Committee has identified is for a room or two somewhere in central Abingdon where members can come to consult our library – currently absurdly under-used – and where we can work on our archaeological finds and store the Society's archives. We are currently talking with the people planning the revamp of the Old Gaol, and there is some hope we might get such a room there in the next few years. But that is going to mean paying rent.

What I am saying is that we can continue happily as we are for several years yet, but there will then come a time when income has to be increased. It is not too early to start thinking about this. *Anyone with ideas, please contact the Committee!*

*Manfred Brod*

## DIGGING REPORT

### *Thrupp*

The recent wet weather has once again resulted in the flooding of the Barton Lane gravel quarry. This is an expected annual occurrence because the site, which is situated in a low-lying depression, lies next to the Thames. Prior to the Christmas break we were investigating an area on the northern side of the quarry (opposite the 'Science Park' in Barton Lane) that between 1997 and 2002 produced enormous quantities of burned quartzite pebbles, superb flint tools, animal bones (see below) and worked wood which may have been part of a 'jetty' or river 'platform'/'walkway'. Previously we believed activity at this site dated to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age period (see earlier newsletters). We recovered similar artefacts of presumably the same age in November and December 2004 and the spread of burned quartzite pebbles, charcoal and ash was seen to be more extensive than we previously thought – something like half a tennis court in area. We are unsure as to the exact nature of this site that was situated on the northern bank of a now extinct branch of the river Thames and which was known until the 16<sup>th</sup> Century as 'Thrupp Water'. Burning of considerable quantities of quartzite pebbles, apparently preferentially selected for their small size, may have been associated with cooking pits (pits are present but these may be tree-throw/fall pits), human cremations or pot firing. However, the almost complete absence of cooked animal bones, charred/crushed human remains and Neolithic potsherds is unhelpful and makes interpretation of the site difficult. Wood and charcoal from the more recently investigated site have been kept for (hopeful) radiocarbon dating and sediments will be examined for any environmental clues. Similar features with burned/fire-cracked quartzite pebbles plus charcoal and ash were observed at Thrupp Farm over 20 years ago next to a north-south aligned section of what has latterly been recognised as 'Thrupp Water' – or at least that is my interpretation of the visual evidence on the slides taken by other diggers in 1984.

In the light of the more recent discoveries (see below) the dating/interpretation of the Thrupp site has become more complicated. Many of the flint tools and flint-sawn red deer antlers found during earlier digs are clearly Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. They were recovered from the spread of heat-shattered quartzite pebbles but were not themselves burned along with everything else so it is possible (though unlikely) that they were residual artefacts within a later, possibly Bronze Age or Iron Age, deposit. Extensive activity from this particular period has been found throughout the quarry area and the current site lies close to and between the northern ends of the two largest Iron Age stone-paved trackways/causeways excavated in 1997-8 and 2001-2.

Most recently a complete, burnished, Iron Age pot was recovered along with the sherds of at least two other vessels of the same age. These were present within a small pit that appears to have been dug through the deposits of burned quartzite cobbles at the same time as the Iron Age stone-paved trackways were being constructed across 'Thrupp Water'. The top of this pit contained a lump of clay containing many fossil (i.e., Jurassic) shell fragments. This lump of clay appears to have been in the process of having a shell temper added to it prior to the manufacture and firing of a pottery vessel. The mixing of the clay and shell did not proceed beyond a few folds before it was thrown into the top of the pit, above the complete pot and sherds. Opinions vary as to the nature and origin of this shelly-clay item. I (Eeles) believe it to be manmade but Jeff Wallis considers it may be natural. Work will resume in the spring if the quarry is pumped out.

John Walford has identified the metal detected objects from the field surrounding the quarry (I have summarised his coin report in Table 1). Amongst John's more interesting finds from the upper alluvial soils is a 'silver-cross' penny (Edward 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> – to be confirmed) and a, contemporary, forged gold Georgian (3<sup>rd</sup>) half Guinea still retaining traces of gilt over its copper alloy core. Most copper alloy coins are in very poor condition having been damaged by humic acids (?). We do not have to notify the authorities about these individually found coins. The recent 'Treasure Act' only obliges the finder to report two or more from a single location. John collected other metal objects such as pieces of lead amongst which were two seals originating from St Petersburg, Russia (possibly via Scotland) and dated 1749 and 1782 (these were identified by John Sullivan, an expert on lead seals). They were once attached to bundles of flax or hemp. Musket and pistol balls were found along with many miscellaneous copper items, such as buttons, dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

**TABLE 1: Coins from area surrounding quarry in Barton Lane.** Dates are when coin types were issued rather than when monarch was on the throne. Identifications by John Walford.

ARTEFACT	MONARCH	DATE
Silver penny	Edward 1,2 or 3	1279-1335
Rose farthing	Charles 1	Civil war
Copper traders token	?	1650-1670
Farthing (?)	?	c. 17 <sup>th</sup> Century

Farthing	George 2	1727-1760
Farthing	William 3 or George 3	17 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> Century
Half penny	George 3 (?)	1770-1785
Half guinea (Forgery)	George 3	1787-1800
Half penny	?	18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> Century
Penny	George 5	1936

Kate Scott and Lucia Pinto have kindly identified the bone collection from Thrupp (Table 2). These bones were concentrated within the lower peats surrounding the southern ends of stone-paved trackways 1 and 2 and were the remains of Iron Age meals, or were 'ritual depositions' in the case of the non-domesticated species. In addition there were 6 bones of probable dog (perhaps one large bone belonged to a wolf), 4 bird bones (one being from a crane, one possibly a chicken) and 4 human bones (a humerus from trackway 2 and 3 skull fragments from trackway 1). Of note are the numbers of deer and badger bones, animals not known to inhabit marshy habitats. The number of, naturally shed, red deer antlers is an under-estimate of the abundance of these items at Thrupp. We were unable (because we never knew until it was too late) to recover a huge cache of them in an area close to trackway 2. Quite why so many were collected from the wider countryside and then 'thrown' the water without having been used for any (apparent) purpose remains a mystery.

**TABLE 2: Summary descriptions of bones of probable Iron Age date (c. 400 BC) obtained from the lower peat deposits at Thrupp.** Identifications by Kate Scott, Lucia Pinto and Bob Eeles.

	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Sheep/Goat</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Red Deer</i>	<i>Roe Deer</i>	<i>Badger</i>	<i>Dog</i>	<i>Human</i>	<i>Crane</i>
<b>CRANIAL</b>										
Antlers/Horn cores		4			7	2				
Complete skull	1	1		1*						
Frontal		2								
Parietal									3	
Occipital condyle		1								
Teeth (loose)	13	9	7							
Mandible	2	11	4	1			1			
Maxilla	2	1	2							
<b>POST-CRANIAL</b>										
Scapulae	1	2	1		1					
Humerus	2	15		2	1			2	1	
Ulna	2	4			1			1		
Radius	4	6		1		3		1		
Metacarpals	1	4			1	1				
Innominate	3	3				3				
Femur	3	1				1				
Femur fragment		3								
Tibia	7	13		2	1	6		2		
Astragalus		2								
Metatarsals	7	6		1		4				
Tarso-metatarsus										1
Phalax 1st		2								
Phalax 2nd		1								
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

\* = Wild boar

The only Pleistocene mammal find of recent note from the Barton Lane quarry was the recovery of an Arctic Fox jaw (left, lower) containing all its teeth from the 90,000 – 76,000-year-old river channel lying below the main spread of gravels. This is the same river deposit that produced bison, reindeer, wolf and bear bones in previous years. It seems that we will have a final look at

the river channel deposits this spring before the quarry area is 'landscaped' and, finally, permanently flooded. Publication of this work is in progress.

### *Aerial Photography*

The AAAHS is supporting an aerial photographic survey, which will be undertaken by our members along the Thames corridor between Oxford and Little Wittenham/Dorchester. The flight path is yet to be finalised but will encompass the floodplain area and some parts further away from the river in the vicinity of and surrounding Abingdon. Gravel islands, ancient watercourses, civil war defensive features and current landscape uses/recent changes are some of the things that will be photographically recorded. It is hoped that a wider range of sites can be surveyed; subject to time constraints and the flexibility of the flight plan which will not be completely under our control. Members may wish to approach our digging secretary if they have ideas on what they would like to see photographed, particularly if it compliments their research interests (no private houses please). We anticipate flying at the end of June although the exact timing will depend on whether or not we have a wet or dry spring. A wet spring may mean that many features are not visible, in which case the flight may be deferred until the following year or take a slightly different emphasis, perhaps concentrating on local topography during winter flooding.

### *Little Wittenham Manor*

Members are assisting Tim Allen with a trench near the northern end of the garden of Little Wittenham Manor. This trench is positioned in the hope/anticipation of finding the location of an earlier manor building. Geophysical surveys undertaken by Roger Ainslie appear to show either a structure or a gas pipeline in the vicinity. This hole has only just been opened (17<sup>th</sup> January 2005) and has so far been dug down about 30 cm. This disturbed upper layer has produced finds that are mostly later than 18<sup>th</sup> Century. **Stop Press:** Roger's gas pipeline is a water pipe.

*Bob Eeles*

## **DEREK STEPTOE - 13.2.30 - 7.2.05**

Members will have been saddened to hear of the recent death of Derek, a much loved and highly respected member of this society. Derek was a founder member of the society and its first treasurer and he played an active role in the society for many years. His long-standing interest in local history and archaeology and his deep knowledge of the Abingdon area made him an invaluable source of information.

Born and brought up in Abingdon, Derek was one of a family of 10 children plus three step-brothers. He was always ready to share his memories of the Abingdon which has now vanished forever, such as the Vineyard, and the characters who inhabited it. He could be relied upon to identify Roman coins discovered in excavations and on field walking, and he was an expert photographer. He collaborated in the production of 'Abingdon in Camera' in those carefree days of the 1970s when anyone could go into the storeroom of the Oxford Central Library and make photographic copies of the collection free of charge.

Even when poor health prevented him from playing an active role and attending meetings, he was always willing to give advice and encouragement when asked. Our sympathy goes out to his wife, Pat, and family. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

## **THOMAS TRAPHAM, Surgeon, (?-1683)**

The new edition of the Dictionary of National Biography is a great improvement on the old one, but there are still a number of Abingdon and North Berks people who I think should be in and aren't, or who are in but whose local activities are crowded out by their careers elsewhere. To try to redress the balance, I propose to write occasional articles on our more under-rated local worthies.

Thomas Trapham was born in Maidstone, we don't know exactly when. He was licensed by the University of Oxford to practise surgery in March 1633, and two months later was received into the Company of

Barber-Surgeons in London. He was probably already living in Abingdon before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, because he later complained that he had lost property there during the royalist occupation. He became surgeon to John Hampden's regiment which recruited in Abingdon, and then transferred to that of Major-General Skippon. Trapham seems to have fought in the disastrous Lostwithiel campaign in 1644, and, in the following year, at the victorious battle of Naseby. In 1649, it was he who prepared the executed Charles I for burial, making a comment that became famous: 'he had sewn on the goose's head'. Later in the same year, the newly-purged University awarded honorary degrees to a number of distinguished soldiers; Trapham became a Bachelor of Physick. A doctorate would follow in 1658.

Thereafter, his career developed in two directions. He was Cromwell's personal surgeon on his Irish and Scottish campaigns, and at the decisive battle of Worcester in 1651. When the fighting was over, he was appointed surgeon of the military hospital at the Savoy in London, responsible for an average of 350 patients. During 1658, with an English army fighting in Flanders, he set up reception facilities for the sick and wounded at the ports, and, no doubt as a private venture, sent over £200-worth of medical supplies.

At the same time, and it is hard to understand how he managed, he was becoming a leading local citizen. In October 1648, he had become a principal burgess along with his friend John Hanson. He was active enough in the town, although he never became mayor, but his principal field of action was the county. Under the controversial rule of Cromwell's major-generals, Trapham was one of the county commissioners and a land-tax assessor under William Goffe. Yet always his deepest interest was in religious affairs. He was a strong and aggressive Presbyterian, supporting what was then the established church against traditional Anglicanism on the one hand and the various radical sects on the other. He was on a committee which endeavoured to re-organise the Berkshire parishes. Its decisions could always be justified in the name of efficiency, but an ideological motive could usually be discerned. Longworth was to be separated from Charney Basset, which would be merged with Lyford in a new parish. Longworth was a stronghold of Baptism. Wallingford would become a single large parish incorporating Crowmarsh on the far side of the river; Wallingford was a hotbed of all sorts of sectarianisms. St Nicholas in Abingdon, which continued using the forbidden prayer-book, was to be pulled down and its congregation transferred to St Helen's. All these changes met enormous opposition and none of them stuck.

His main claim to fame in this regard was his place on the Commission of Ejectors, which was set up in 1654 with the task of rooting out unsatisfactory clergymen. Here he was allied with John Tickell, the vicar of St Helen's. The commission was quickly captured by the Presbyterians and used as a latter-day inquisition, searching not for drunkenness but for heresy. They came badly unstuck when they tried to dismiss Edmund Pocock from his rectory at Childrey as 'ignorant and insufficient'; he was a scholar with a Europe-wide reputation and it was suggested from the top of the protectorate government that their sentence on him would make them and it an international laughing stock. They were little more successful against Francis Wyar, a Wallingford minister influenced by the notorious Dr Pordage of Bradfield; he was ejected, but simply moved a few miles to another living at Blewbury. Against Pordage himself, however, they were victorious. His disbelief in the Trinity was undeniable, and the proceedings against him were marked with anger and deadly hatred. Trapham himself drew his sword and threatened to kill Pordage with his own hands. Pordage's ejection struck what was probably a decisive blow against the radical tradition that had previously flourished in the middle Thames Valley.

Immediately after the Restoration in 1660, Trapham and Hanson were dismissed from the Abingdon Council; and when Presbyterianism was banned in its turn he appears from time to time with his wife in the court records, paying fines for attending illegal assemblies. He died in December 1683, and in spite of his record was buried at St Helen's.

*Manfred Brod*

## OUTINGS

The Woodstock History society have asked us if we would like to join them on an outing to **Kelmscot Manor** at Lechlade some time this June. This was the summer home of William Morris the founder of the arts and craft movement. If you are interested could you please ring me as soon as possible. **01235 203212**.

**The Marcham/Frilford Excavation.** Thursday 28th July. Please meet at the Noah's Ark car park for 7.00pm.

**A walk around Kennington and Sandford.** Thursday 18th August. Please meet at the Tandem car park at 7.00pm. We can have a drink afterwards to help get our strength back.

I hope many of you can join us on these dates as they should be fun evenings.

I hope to arrange a date to go to **Steventon** as we missed it last year due to bad weather.

*Jenny Devanney*

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

I would like to say how honoured I feel to be Chairman (or Chairperson, Chair or Welsh dresser, whichever is most appropriate to your way of thinking) once again and to see faces both familiar and new. One face which will certainly be missed will be that of Mrs Jacobi, who I think set the benchmark for succeeding Committee members.

Any new committee, especially one with wholesale changes such as we have now, will be endeavouring to continue the good work done by the outgoing one, but also to bring in new approaches or ideas to build on what has gone before. Since the Society exists for its members, the committee would welcome any feedback (bouquets or brickbats) from the membership; please let us know if there is anything you would like to happen, people you would like to hear talking or subjects that you would like them to talk about. There will be a suggestion box at each talk and your contributions will be welcome, even anonymous ones!

The Northcourt Hall now has a loop induction system which will be most useful for our talks, particularly as not every speaker projects to the back of the hall. Unfortunately, some speakers, in my experience from other situations, seem to fight shy of microphones for whatever reason; unfortunately, it was disappointing that the speaker could not be persuaded to use the system on its inaugural night, but I shall ensure that each one does in future.

I hope to keep seeing you all at the forthcoming talks, which, as ever, are a mix of local and wider topics – bring your friends and don't forget to stay for tea!

Regards,  
*Simon Owen*