

Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards

Local History Group

NEWSLETTER No. 7
2003/04

Chairman's Introduction

The 40th Anniversary of our Local History Group's inauguration was celebrated by a very successful year of meetings, a summer outing and other activities. Mr Brodrick's enticing talk about the history of Verulamium provided the incentive to organise this year's 'Summer Outing', reported in this Newsletter. Mr King, whose photos of furniture makers with a combined average leg count of less than two, will stick in my mind for a long time. I am also pleased to report that Mr Credland entertained us with new insights into the history of Buckingham through his collection of photographs and anecdotes will be speaking to us about photography this year. The Members' Evening included a fascinating talk about Trade Cards from Sandy Clarke which no doubt brought back pleasant memories of childhood pastimes for many of us.

I take over the reins this year from David Ridgwell who, as Chairman, steered the proceedings of the Society for the last 3 years of his term on the Committee. Penny Ridgwell has also stepped down from the Committee having shared the responsibility of being our Treasurer. I would like to record my thanks to them both on behalf of all members for their commitment to the running of the Society. My thanks also go to Paddy Thomas who, as Secretary, has ensured the Committee's work has been conducted purposefully, properly but above all with style. As the incoming Chairman, I am reassured by the fact that we will continue to benefit from Paddy's wisdom as Deputy Chairman, having handed over the Secretary's reins to Sylvia Watson. Evelyn Money, who has been Archivist since the outset of the Society some 40 years ago – some record! – has decided to pass the baton on and Shirley Blomfield has accepted the challenge to follow in Evelyn's footsteps who I am pleased to say will, as our Hon. President, continue to keep her fellow committee members on their toes.

Elsewhere in this newsletter Shirley Blomfield has written about the acquisition by the Society of a laptop computer and software to enable the archiving of the Group's collection to be developed. As Evelyn Money recalled for our benefit in last year's Newsletter, the founding members of the Group saw the object of the Society as '(a) to seek out and record all aspects of life in Hawridge, Cholesbury, Buckland Common and St Leonards from earliest

times to the present day and (b) to rouse the interest of the community in the place in which they live and the continuity of History'.

Bringing our modest but important collection and the knowledge assembled by past and present researchers in the Society to as wide an audience of both younger and older members in the wider community is as important today as it has always been. Going forward it is our aim to enable members, those undertaking research and those at school learning about the history of their surroundings to have the benefit of seeing the treasures of the 'Black Box' even more easily.

You may recall the account of childhood in Hastoe in the 1920's by Mrs Margaret Probert in last year's Newsletter. With the encouragement of her son Brian Rice, a member of our committee, we are able to learn more as Mrs Probert has kindly provided us with a further memoir, this time with her recollections of life in Buckland Common in the 1930's.

In the recent past the Society has both organised and contributed to exhibitions to further awareness of the history of the 'Hilltop Villages'. In this vein an intrepid team ventured forth to Berkhamsted Local History and Museum Society in March to give a talk on our Villages' history. (Members attending the Members' Evening last May will recall being treated to excerpts from the talk). In June, we hosted a tour of interesting sites in our villages for the same Berkhamsted Society. News of this has spread and at least one further talk is planned for next Spring to the Tring History Society.

The production of this newsletter, now in its seventh year, continues to go from strength to strength. My thanks as Editor goes to Sylvia Watson who has again smoothly achieved its production. George Cobby has, once again, ably assembled the forthcoming season's programme. Despite his 'Confessions', recorded below it promises as always to offer a wide-ranging selection of themes and speakers, to surprise, inform and hopefully amuse you, concluding with a combined AGM and Members' Evening next May.

Your Committee again looks forward to seeing all of you in October.

Chris Brown

Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Local History Group was founded in the early Sixties with the object:- 'to seek out and record all aspects of life in Hawridge, Cholesbury, Buckland Common and St Leonards from earliest times to the present day, and to rouse the interest of the community in the place in which they live and the continuity of History'.

No one who delves into history comes away without regretting a lack of documentation on some aspect or other. The Group has built up a fairly substantial archive of local documents, maps and photographs, but this can never be complete. We welcome contributions, however trivial they may seem. We are particularly keen to acquire copies of photographs and to receive recollections, written or oral, of life in previous years. Help us to record today what may not exist tomorrow.

A consistent feature has been the talks by guest speakers, be they acknowledged experts or enthusiastic amateurs, and the emphasis is naturally on subjects local to the Chilterns.

2003 – 2004 PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER 2003 8.00pm for 8.15pm Cholesbury Village Hall	TRACING YOUR ANCESTORS Mrs Eve McLaughlin
FRIDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2003 8.00pm for 8.15pm St Leonards Parish Hall	A HISTORY OF POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY Mr John Credland
FRIDAY 5 DECEMBER 2003 8.00pm for 8.15pm St Leonards Parish Hall	THE ROTHSCHILDS IN BUCKS Mrs Anne Leeper
FRIDAY 9 JANUARY 2004 * 8.00pm for 8.15pm St Leonards Parish Hall	BERKHAMSTED MARKET – A THOUSAND YEARS OF HISTORY? Mr Ken Sherwood
FRIDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2004 8.00pm for 8.15pm St Leonards Parish Hall	“FAY CE QUE VOUDRAS”: THE GARDENS OF WEST WYCOMBE PARK Mr Richard Wheeler
FRIDAY 5 MARCH 2004 8.00pm for 8.15pm St Leonards Parish Hall	ROYALTY ON OUR DOORSTEP Mrs Wendy Austin
FRIDAY 2 APRIL 2004 8.00pm for 8.15pm St Leonards Parish Hall	BOATS WITHOUT WATER – AN EXTRAORDINARY INDUSTRY IN NORTH BUCKS Mr Neil Loudon
FRIDAY 7 MAY 2004 8.00pm sharp Cholesbury Village Hall	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and MEMBERS’ EVENING Members and Visitors are welcome to a social evening when some of our members will give short talks on subjects of their choice.

*** Please note that this is the second Friday in the Month**

MEMBERSHIP £6.00 PER ANNUM – VISITORS WELCOME: £2.00 PER MEETING

Coffee and Biscuits are served and a collection is taken

About the Speakers

Mrs Eve McLaughlin: The forty-first season begins appropriately with the subject of ancestry. Our speaker is secretary of the Bucks Genealogical Society.

Mr John Credland returns to explain how the invention of roll film widened the appeal of photography.

Mrs Anne Leeper is a guide and lecturer at Waddesdon Manor.

Mr Ken Sherwood, of Berkhamsted Local History Society, is chairman of the Market Fund and has long associations with other local trusts.

Mr Richard Wheeler will undoubtedly add to what we learned last season about Wycombe: he is curator of National Trust Gardens and Parks (Southern England).

Mrs Wendy Austin: There is plenty 'on our doorstep' it seems – from royalty and merchant bankers to street traders: Mrs Austin will treat us to more of her local knowledge.

Mr Neil Loudon is a trustee of Milton Keynes Museum. His subject looks to be the most intriguing of all.

Finally, to our Annual General Meeting and Members' Evening, when it is up to us to entertain ourselves. On this occasion we do not look for expertise, but a ten-minute digest of amateurs' enthusiasm on any subject. This has always resulted in an evening exceeding expectations, so we look forward to maintaining this tradition.

George Cobby

Confessions of a Programme Secretary

I have been Programme Secretary for almost half the life of our Society, so I thought I would share a few recollections.

I soon realized that if we were not to run out of guest speakers in a year or two, then the idea of Local History had to be elastic, and I stretch it to include the Greater Chilterns area. Naturally, I try to find subjects as near to home as possible. After that, something of current general interest, such as a centenary. Finally, not always desperately anything else.

Everyone likes to remember successes, the best of which can come out of the blue, and two such were connected with anniversaries. To my amazement and delight, Dr David Starkey willingly agreed to talk to us on the quatercentenary of the birth of Henry VIII, and was both utterly charming and very amusing. His "notoriety" is over-publicized: he simply greets courtesy with courtesy and vice versa.

The other anniversary was that of the Tower of London. As someone infamous for remembering dates, I am ashamed to admit that I got the year wrong! But the Yeoman Warder came along and spun us yarns of the kind reserved for the quintessential foreign tourist: "No, madam, the White Tower used to be on Oxford Street, but we thought it would look better here" et cetera. The surprise and success came later. Our Beefeater, touched by the warm reception he had received, invited us to visit

the Tower and, on a magical May evening, some two dozen of us were treated to a personal tour, the climax of which was the Ceremony of the Keys. We were still talking about it two years on.

Most talks fall between these extremes of erudition, and there have been some flops: the speaker who should have talked about the 19th century dream of a direct Manchester – Chilterns – Paris rail link, did nothing more than list endless engine numbers. Another, formerly entertaining visitor, had built up such a list of subjects of anything and everything that he became no more than irritating. I have learned, too, that members do not like those who tape their talks to synchronize with slides. But most of the time things "work". Summer visits, too: who can forget the trip to Bletchley Park, or Mary Bradbury's guided tours at Windsor?

Sometimes I feel like the amateur who has decided to write a novel, and has no inspiration (in my case, speakers). On other occasions, things just click. Serendipity plays a large part, and I am also greatly indebted to my colleagues of the Committee, and to other programme secretaries, for ideas. Most of the time it is fun, though I keep my fingers crossed until the last moment: visitors' cars have been known to break down or even end up in a ditch! Best of all, I am always happy to broaden my own horizons, and I hope that that is what we all look to do in our membership of the Society.

George Cobby

The History Group Library

What is a 'bedellary'? When was 'uncial script' used? What are 'Bishops' Transcripts' and where can you find them?

No, this is not a Quiz. If you want to know the answers, you can find them by borrowing 'The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia' from the History Group Library. This wonderful mine of information was added to the library together with 'Sources for English Local History' and 'English Local History' using money from a small legacy from Horace Brackley, who had been an active and valued member for many years. The three books were chosen as good reliable reference books to help anyone who wanted to know how to further an interest in local history and then, it was hoped, do a little local research.

From 1980, the Records of Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society have formed the major part of the library with the regular addition of a new volume each year. Volume 43 for 2003 has already arrived and Hawridge and Cholesbury actually get a mention in the text this year. A report on the excavation and metallographical analysis of a Bronze

Age sword recovered from Ivinghoe Beacon refers briefly to a sword of the same period found at Hawridge. This sword was found near Geary's Wood, Hawridge in 1851. The original is in the Ashmolean Museum, but members may remember that the History Group commissioned a replica for the Millennium Exhibition. This is now kept as part of the archive. It has been taken to show the children at the School and recently went to Berkhamsted Local Historical Society as part of a small display of our records.

The Committee would be delighted to see all of the books in the Library borrowed much more frequently. At the moment the collection is small enough to fit in a collapsible crate and one cardboard box. It is, as yet, no rival to the 'Black Box' but there are some interesting titles as well as various booklets and leaflets gathered along the way. Members may borrow any of the books. Please contact Paddy Thomas (01494 758460). She can send you a list of titles and will also be pleased to bring a particular book to a meeting or arrange for you to collect it.

Paddy Thomas

Committee Vacancies

From the previously mentioned 'Cabinet reshuffle' you will see we have one or two vacancies on the committee. We would welcome anyone who would like to become more involved with the Society. This message usually makes everyone run for cover fearing being pounced on. However, I can reassure you that the Local History Group runs like a well-oiled machine and therefore rather than experiencing a diet of endless tasks the members of the committee have only a few responsibilities each and only four informal committee meetings per year, leaving plenty of time to enjoy the events alongside everybody else. So if you would like to become involved, please get in touch with any of the Committee (see last page).

Snippets

Founder's Prize

David Ridgwell was the deserving recipient of the Founder's Prize.

www.cholesbury.com

During the past year the website has been further developed and now contains a number of articles about the local history of the Villages as well as a diary of parish events, information about the churches and other groups and societies in the four villages. If you are connected to the internet, why not take a look and send us a message to say you have visited and what you think about the website or suggest other subjects we could cover on the site.

We continue to receive enquiries from other parts of the UK and overseas, asking for help about the history of the area and whether we have any information about their ancestors who came from these parts. Last year our visitors were from the East (a group of dignitaries from Macedonia). This year we played host to two sisters from Oregon in the USA, whose ancestor was Thomas Putnam who resided in Cholesbury during the early 1600's before emigrating to the Americas.

Parish Field Names Survey

Over the past year the field names recorded on the 1833/4 tithe maps have been collated. – You may have seen the map of names taking shape at meetings last year. Over 400 fields were identified from the five tithe schedules, one for each of the older ecclesiastical parishes contributing land now lying within the current parish boundary. Often words lost to modern English usage are retained in such field names. Such names reveal a picture of our community as it was during the early part of the 19th Century, and may also provide clues to land use and ownership back to the much earlier medieval period. Sorting a small selection of these field names into their various types tells a story about the social history of our Villages.

Not unsurprisingly for an area dominated by woodland, where trees have played a crucial part in the local economy, there are fields called **Ashen Grove, Crab Tree Field, Further Nut Hazel, Great Oak, Furzen Wood** (*i.e. gorse*) **Willow Close** and **Sawpit Close**. Other names describe features related to this woodland, such as **Folly Field** - *a wooded outcrop*, **Hedgefield, Hays Hill** and **Haylands** – *all fields enclosed by hedges*, **Readings** (*from Old English ryding*) and meaning ‘a clearing in a wood’, **Grovers Meadow** – *land provided in return for managing woodland* and **Stockings** and **Stocked Field** – *a field full of tree stumps*. The importance of fruit trees, particularly cherries, is indicated in names such as **Crabtree Field, Cherry Platt** and **Cherry Walk** as well as numerous orchards attached to homesteads.

Unsurprisingly, many names have associations with farming. For example, **Flexmans** and **Hempass** indicate the importance of Flax in the 18th and early 19th centuries. **Calves Plat, Carthorse Close, Pound Field** and **Hog Field** are obvious. The size of fields has been a functional, if uninspiring, way to identify fields. All the following acreages can be found: - **one, two, four, five, six, seven, eight, ten and twelve**. In not untypical humour for earlier times, there is even one called **Thousand Acre Field**, indicating a very small field! Names such as **Starveacre, Stoney Field, White Hawridge** and **Little Peppers** suggest that the quality of the soil is poor. In contrast, **Long Malm** and **Green Meadow** suggest fertility. The availability of water, particularly in the summer, also limited the utility of land for grazing as well as for human use. Sources of water were valued and illustrated in fields such as **Horse Pond, Well Close, Pond Meadow, Slough Pond** and **Great Fishpond**.

As you might expect animals also figure: - **Badgers Hill, Larking Meadow** and **Peacocks Meadow**.

Well known family names occur, for example, fields named after two of the most influential farming dynasties of the 1600's, the **Baldwins** and **Putnams**. Other families that get a mention include **Dwight** and **Gearys**. The Church owned much land and this link is seen in **Parsons Wick** and **Chapel Croft** at St Leonards, and a **Church Meadow** in Hawridge and Cholesbury. Local trades and industries have also left their mark with such names as, **Shop Field, Chalk Pit, Gravel Pit, Pit Close, Buckland Kiln Field, Kiln Piece, Lime Kiln Meadow, Pottery Road Piece**, and **Clay Acre**. Fields associated with pubs include **Lion Hill** (The White Lion) and **Black Horse Meadow**.

The shape or topography of the field can often dictate its name as in the eponymous **Three Corner Piece** – now known simply as ‘The Triangle’ or, somewhat exaggerated, **The Mountain** as well as **Great Slipe**, - *a long thin field*, **The Pightle** – *a small piece of land*, two fields by the name **The Lager** – *a narrow strip of land* and **Winding Piece** – *a curved field*.

Three of the most interesting named fields are **Little Sanfoin** – indicating the presence of a red plant related to clover valued for making good quality hay, **Honey Pot Meadow** – maybe because bees were particularly attracted to flowers or possibly due to the stickiness of the soil and **Deal Bank** derived from the word ‘Dial’ and indicating that a sundial was once located there possibly by the cutting of turf.

Several of the names still used today indicate that land in this locality has been under agricultural management for many hundreds of years. Such names as **Park Furlong** – *an enclosed division of a larger common field*, **Broad Baulk** – *an unploughed gap between furrows originally part of a former common field*, **Pinnocks Leath** – *field near the ridge of a hill* and **Great Lince** – *ploughed terraces on sloping fields* have connections with the large common fields where individually allocated strips of land were farmed collectively from medieval times.

If you are interested in the fields close to you, or have any relevant documents, please get in touch. We are hoping to make the research information more widely available to members over the coming year.

Chris Brown

Early Memories of Buckland Common

This memoir has been contributed by Mrs Margaret Probert (formerly Rice, née Eggleton), who was born at Browns Lane, Hastoe, where she lived from 1923 to 1933, when the family moved to Buckland Common.

I first came to live in Buckland Common when the first 8 council houses, which formed the original Chiltern Cottages, were built by George Collier and son, the son being the late Ernie Collier. This was 1938 and I was aged 15. Of the houses No.1 was occupied by Rupert Bunce –he only had one eye and he smoked a ‘nose warmer’ (clay pipe with a 5” stem). In No.2 lived Mr and Mrs Will Hart. These two families had been moved out of Kiln Cottages, which had been condemned. That place is now taken by a substantial dwelling, Kiln Cottage, with added land. In No.3 lived Connie Collins. I cannot recall the name of the family at No.4. At No.5 lived the James family. They had moved from 6 Row Cottage. At No.6 lived the Mitchel family. At No.7 lived the Baldwin family who had moved from Little Twye. At No.8 lived the Eggleton family. We moved from one of the four council houses at Bellingdon – there were only four houses there then that were built sideways to the rest down the lane.

Of the houses and buildings in Buckland Common at that time, (1938), Dorriens Farm was owned by Mrs Bosenquet, later by her niece Mrs Miller and her husband John. Along on the right hand side on the corner of Cholesbury Lane/Bottom Road was the Rose and Crown (later to become the Horse and Hounds), owned by Chesham Brewery; the landlord was Harold Penn and wife. The Penn family also had the garage in Cholesbury Lane. I remember the pump. It was hand cranked. One complete turn for a gallon of petrol. Wind it back, then forward again for a second gallon. Next to the Rose and Crown were 2 or 3 cottages, the gardens of which were on the corner of Springhall Hill/Bottom Road, where today stands a chalet bungalow. On from the cottages was ‘The Great House’, which consisted of four dwellings. At No.1 lived Jimmy Langston, at No.2 the Newman family, at No.3 John Gerber and at No.4 ‘Cherry’ Gomm. He was the blacksmith and owned the forge. He also rode a motorcycle with a sidecar.

On Chapel Hill the thatch cottage was owned by Mrs Brackley. If you had an old half penny you could buy sweets that were sold from tall glass jars.

Snippet

Book Sale

Do you have any books on local history? We are planning to have another book sale at the next Members’ Evening so if you have any books to spare, please bring them to the meeting.

On past Kiln Cottage on the right where the road forks, is Stone Cottage, which was occupied by the Dunton family. Of the ‘Ciders’, as the houses leading down to the dead end were then known, I can only remember Ruby Sills who lived in the far end house on the right. Lord Rothschild originally built the four Horseshoe Cottages for the estate workers. Of the four families that lived there, I can remember the Hardings, Seabrooks and Dan and Jinny Raynor (Dan being my great uncle).

Coming back down to the Chapel, the then cherry orchard was part of the chapel property. The lay preacher was Mr Charles Brown, later followed by his son-in-law, Hugh Faulkes. Moving on past the next few cottages lived in by the Horns and another by Vera Dunton, on the corner of The Street (the name of the lane running alongside the common) was a pair of semi-detached houses, one named Molasba and the other Renrut, named after Absalom Turner who had them built. The Browns lived in Renrut and Hugh Faulkes and his wife (daughter of the Browns) in the other. Mrs Faulkes at one time was a teacher at St. Leonards School.

Up Boot and Slipper Hill, the house off the common was owned by the Butcher family, as was the orchard that ran from the back of the house to Horseshoe Cottages, and from behind the pub up to Russet Barn, which was the packing and store house for the fruit. Little Twye Cottages were also a legacy from the Rothschilds. The house at the bottom of the hill at the junction of Bottom Road was owned by ‘Pop’ Nethercott and was a general shop.

I can remember the Common, Buckland Common that is, as a wild and natural place with hills and dales from the test pits dug for clay for brick making. Ferns grew in abundance, as did blackthorn, dog roses and elderberry, and there were plenty of rabbits!

Margaret Probert

Nicknames

The teaching of history around monarchs is out of fashion, though television seems to be making up for it. However, there is a case for restoring royals to our lessons: try tackling the 16th century, for example, without leaning heavily on Henry VIII or Elizabeth I. No harm is done, so long as we do not envelop royalty in gold-tinted legends, for clearly not all sobriquets were complimentary!

The answers to the questions below will tell you quite a lot about the person, but if you take the trouble to dig a little deeper into the reasons, you will learn much about other people and events of the day.

Who were they?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Rufus | 2. Lionheart | 3. Softsword |
| 4. Wisest Fool in Christendom | 5. Silly Billy | 6. Bastard |
| 7. Ironside | 8. Unready | 9. Queen Log / Mrs Morley |
| 10. Beauclerc | 11. The Sun King | 12. Sweet William / Stinking Billy |

Answers and explanations at the Members' Evening, so you have plenty of time for your research!

George Cobby

The Chilterns Historic Environment Conference

On 28 June 2003 I attended a conference at the New Elgiva Theatre in Chesham on new perspectives on the historic landscapes of the Chilterns, organised by the Chilterns Conservation Board, with support from The National Trust and Buckinghamshire County Council.

Sir John Johnson, Chairman of the Chilterns Conservation Board, chaired the meeting, and the topics covered were: The Ancient Countryside; Country Houses and Designed Landscapes in the Chilterns; Traditional Buildings and Settlements; and Current Issues, and it was an interesting and thought-provoking day.

The overview on the first topic was given by Leslie Hepple (Bristol University), co-author of "The Chilterns" with Alison Doggett, who came as a speaker to us a couple of years ago. Gill Hey from Oxford Archaeology then spoke on The Whiteleaf Restoration, a major project of survey, investigation, conservation and improvement of the site at Princes Risborough. Designed Landscapes in the Chilterns was a lively presentation by Tom Williamson from the Centre of East Anglian Studies, and we then looked at West Wycombe Park and Greys Court with speakers from The National Trust and English Heritage.

The afternoon session covered the Chiltern Open Air Museum initiative linked to the Building Design Guide, looking at an integrated buildings strategy in the Chilterns, with Mildmay Cottage at Hawridge used in the illustrations. David McOmish from English Heritage then spoke on new work on Chiltern Hill Fort Surveys, in particular Ivinghoe Beacon, Pulpit Hill (above Great Kimble) and Church Hill, West Wycombe.

He particularly noted the pairing pattern of hillfort distribution which would appear to link Cholesbury with either Boddington Camp or Whelpley Hill, and suggested that the hillforts were not a purely defensive site, but could have been residences of magistrates as part of tribal political developments or centres where politically controlled ceremonies were carried out.

We concluded with Current Issues presented by Sandy Kidd, Buckinghamshire County Archaeologist, looking at the present and future for the Chilterns, followed by Ros Tyrrell from Buckinghamshire County Museum talking about the Treasure Act and Portable Antiquities (a Bronze Age sword was illegally excavated at Ivinghoe Beacon), and Dr Stewart Bryant (Hertfordshire County Archaeologist) explained Historic Landscape Characterisation, a desk-based analysis of the countryside combining new digital map technology with evidence from old maps to create a new map of the landscape. This is an ongoing project covering the Chilterns AONB region, due for completion in 2004, when the information should become available to local parishes and historical groups.

The papers presented have been produced in book form which was provided as part of the cost of the day, and I will be pleased to lend this to anyone who is interested.

I also purchased a booklet written by John Morris of the Chiltern Woodlands Project, who spoke on Woodland Surveys. The booklet is a History in Chiltern Woods, a Guide to the Identification and Management of Woodland Archaeological Features, and again I will lend this out.

Shirley Blomfield

Local History Group Project

The committee of the Local History Group has felt for some time that the collection of items in The Black Box deserves wider recognition, and after undertaking a number of activities in recent years, such as the Parish Map for the Year 2000 and the Millennium Exhibition, we have become aware of various funds being made available for other projects. Therefore, in September 2002 an application was made by the Local History Group to Chiltern District Council under their Grant Aid Scheme, which offers grants up to £2000.00 for projects proposed to be undertaken by voluntary organisations and community groups within Chiltern District which will bring benefits to the local community.

The committee felt that a project could be worked upon to catalogue and conserve the collection of documents, photographs and artefacts which are in the Black Box, to enable access for research and educational purposes and to encourage wider use of the information to be found there, by both local residents and those from further afield.

The application for funding was successful and a grant of £2000.00 was received in October 2002, together with matched funding of £500.00 from the Millennium Residuary Group. This money has been used to purchase a lap-top computer and scanner together with specialist software known as Catalist, and also conservation materials to ensure that the collection in the Black Box is preserved and protected.

At the moment, a small team is working on archiving the materials used in the making of the Parish Map and the Millennium Exhibition (24th September 2000), including a number of photographs of this event. The next stage will be to get to grips with using the Catalist software and setting up the database to record the information.

A word about this software – Catalist for Windows is a database software program specially designed for recording and retrieving information about museum collections.

Snippet

Walk Leaflets

The 5th in the series leaflets of *Jubilee Walks in the Hilltop Villages* to commemorate the 50th year of the Queen's reign and the 40th Anniversary of the inauguration of the Local History Group has just been produced. This walk, which features Dundridge and Braziers End completes the project and was funded from part of a grant from the Millennium Festival for all. Copies of this walk, and the previous walks:- 1. Cholesbury Hillfort, 2. Hawridge Common and Heath End, 3. St Leonards and Grim's Ditch, 4. Hawridge Mountain and The Vale will be available at Local History Group Meetings and other events in the villages.

It is specifically aimed for small museums and local history groups and should be a really useful tool for enabling the Black Box items to be made available for use by anyone wishing to gather information, as once it is put onto the computer, the laptop will be available and can be taken out and about, for example for personal research, to a History Group meeting or into the school.

Two applications of the software have been purchased. One relates to Social History, to cover the information held in document and paper form, and the second is a Photography Application, where photographs will be scanned into the computer together with the information relating to them. Members who visited the Dacorum Heritage Store in the summer of 2001 will recall seeing the fuller version of Catalist in operation there, and I have been using this version in my volunteer work at the Technical Centre of the Buckinghamshire County Museum at Halton. I hope that my knowledge of this will help when we come to set up the database for ourselves!

The major task will be to input the information held in the Black Box which is at present indexed in a very basic form. Are there any volunteers who might be interested in being involved in seeing through this project?

Meanwhile we are keen to receive any photographs of events, local scenes, buildings and people who have lived in the area or documents you may have that you would be willing for us to scan and include in the archive. The process of copying will not damage any materials and we hope to be able to add to the Local History Group collection.

I should be very pleased to hear from you if you would like to be involved in the project or if you have any documents we can borrow to copy for the collection.

Shirley Blomfield

Summer Outing to Verulamium

Although there were only 10 members for this year's Summer Outing, the weather was on our side and it was a warm June morning when we assembled outside the Verulamium Museum to meet John Brodrick, our guide for the day. After a brief introduction to the area, we turned our backs on the nice day and went inside to watch television. Actually it was to watch a very good introductory video in the Museum which explained the history of Verulamium.

Prior to the Roman invasion of 43AD, there was an established agricultural settlement on the site thought to be called Verlamion, which the Romans (probably after having difficulty with the local dialect) changed to Verulamium. In the early years after the invasion the Romans ruled by leaving the local leaders to continue to run things, albeit in the Roman way of doing things. The area grew steadily in size until a "difference of opinion" with the locals led by Boudicca in 60AD resulted in Verulamium being destroyed. After this uprising was quashed, Verulamium was re-built and continued to grow and expand for the next few hundred years.

Although Verulamium was the third largest town in Roman Britain, few of the remains that have been discovered are military. This has led to the belief that Verulamium was a centre for trade, culture and religion, it being located on one of the major roads out of London which was later to become Watling Street.

The Museum itself was opened in 1998 and was built using specially made thin bricks to replicate the Roman style of building. Inside, there are several different exhibition areas titled Rites and Recreation, Merchants and Markets, Food and Farming and Making a Living. Each area uses examples of local finds to explain the way of life during Verulamium's few centuries of existence. In the main central area of the Museum there are several excellent displays of floor mosaics which were discovered during the many excavations in the 1900s.

One of the challenges set by John was to spot a mistake in one of the mosaics - it was the belief at the time that nothing made by man should be perfect, so minor flaws were deliberately introduced by the artists. Having allowed us time to explore the Museum (and identify the deliberate mistake), John led us out into Verulamium Park and then up to St Albans Cathedral. St Albans is named after Alban, a resident of Verulamium in the 3rd Century. Although a worshipper of Roman gods, Alban gave shelter to a Christian priest who was fleeing persecution by the Romans. He was so deeply impressed by what the priest said about Jesus that he became a Christian himself. As Alban had thwarted the Romans in their search for the priest and, as he declared himself to have become a Christian, he was taken to a hill outside Verulamium and beheaded, thus becoming Britain's first Christian martyr. In the middle ages, as the story of Alban grew and spread, he was made a saint and an Abbey was built on the site of his demise and to house his remains which were discovered during the building of the Abbey. This Abbey then became a centre of pilgrimage for many believers for several hundred years.

The current Cathedral building was commenced by the Normans in 1077 and has been enlarged many times during its life. This has resulted in the interior reflecting the building styles of the times at each stage of enlargement or re-building. This is typified by the Norman pillars on the northern side of the Nave and the English style of the replacements for the southern pillars which collapsed and had to be re-built. There is a large modern tapestry as well as an exhibition area depicting the history of the Abbey and Cathedral. There is also a shrine containing the remains of St Alban mounted on a pedestal which had to be reconstructed after having been demolished during the period of the dissolution of the Abbey.

John left us to explore the Cathedral at our own pace and the day's outing ended for us with a gentle stroll back through Verulamium Park by the lake enjoying the typical British delicacy of an ice-cream on a sunny afternoon.

Brian and Lyn Horridge

Snippet

Place Names

Last year George Cobby discovered a reference in John Field's *Place Names of Greater London*: of a 'St Leonards Road, N.W.10, named from a Buckinghamshire village, near which the owners of the Harlesden land also had property'. We have now discovered a Cholesbury Grange in Headington, Oxford. As yet the connection with the village has not been established. We would be keen to hear from anyone with ideas about the origin or examples of other associations with the Hilltop Villages in other locations.



Has anyone seen this postcard before? Perhaps you've got one. But do you know who took the photographs and commissioned the postcard? Presumably it was sold from the Post Office in Gilberts Hill. Are there any others? Any information will be gratefully received by your Treasurer, Sandy Clarke, who has the original. Can you guess when it was posted?

Sandy Clarke

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