

# Cholesburg-cum-St Leonards Local history Group

1998/99 NEWSLETTER

## **Chairman's Introduction**

A year ago our first newsletter appeared and, following its success, we welcome this second number. The Group had a good year with a buzz of enthusiasm, good attendance at meetings and several new initiatives leading to interesting results.

This year we have not only our programme of Friday meetings but also our involvement with plans for the Millennium - it should be quite exciting with many opportunities for individual participation. We recognise the good work of those who make the wheels turn and look forward to meeting again in the Autumn.

*Evelyn Money*

## **Summer Outing 1998 - The Big Secret**

Think of 12,000 people working in Buckinghamshire during the Second World War, and 25 years later, virtually no-one knew anything about what they had been doing! This, despite the fact that they were instrumental in saving thousands of lives.

Even in the 1970s GCHQ at Cheltenham was anxious to reveal nothing about their highly successful code-breaking activities at Bletchley Park. As George Cobby reminds us, to understand the activities of an organisation it is necessary to know something of its history.

On Saturday 27th. June, 38 members and friends of the Group visited the Park, which is

now run by a trust dedicated to ensuring that the achievements of these 12,000 people are remembered.

After the interesting tour of the main buildings conducted by John Pether, we had time to explore the exhibits under our own steam: after five hours, some stalwarts were still going strong. 'Colossus', a reconstruction of the world's first computer, takes a whole room to itself yet the memory of the original could now be contained on a chip the size of your thumbnail.

Our thanks are due to Shirley Blomfield for her impeccable arrangements for an excellent visit.

*George Lilley*

## **Parish Map Project**

Members of the group who formed the working party for the Parish Map project have held three meetings and a questionnaire has been sent to everyone in the parish and to near-neighbours. The medium, style and format of the map will very much depend upon the skills and talents offered in response. Funding for the project has been sought through Bucks Community Action and I hope that by early Autumn and the start of our new season we shall be able to report that the Parish Map is in production.

*Shirley Blomfield*

## **Snippet**

A recently embroidered panel reconstructing the missing eight feet of the **Bayeux Tapestry** will be on display at Berkhamsted Civic Centre from Monday 5th. October to Saturday 10th. October 1998 between 10.00am and 5.00pm. Paddy Thomas has further details on 01494 758460.

**Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Local History Group** is an amateur society founded in the early Sixties to stimulate interest in the Hilltop Villages. A regular 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.

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, and additions from any source are welcome, however trivial they may seem. Help us to record today what may not exist tomorrow, whether it be a building or a bus-service!

### 1998 - 1999 PROGRAMME

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| <b>FRIDAY 2 OCTOBER 1998</b><br>8.00 pm for 8.15 pm<br>Cholesbury Village Hall  | <b>WINDSOR - The World's Most Romantic Castle</b><br><br>Mrs Mary Bradbury   |
| <b>FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER 1998</b><br>8.00 pm for 8.15 pm<br>St Leonards Parish Hall | <b>THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN HAMPDEN</b><br><br>Mr Roy Bailey   |
| <b>FRIDAY 4 DECEMBER 1998</b><br>8.00 pm for 8.15 pm<br>St Leonards Parish Hall | <b>THE V2 ROCKET PROJECT</b><br><br>Mr Hugh Granger  |
| <b>FRIDAY 8 JANUARY 1999*</b><br>8.00 pm for 8.15 pm<br>St Leonards Parish Hall | <b>THE CHESHAM SHUTTLE</b><br><br>Dr Clive Foxell  |
| <b>FRIDAY 5 FEBRUARY 1999</b><br>8.00 pm for 8.15 pm<br>St Leonards Parish Hall | <b>MEMBERS' EVENING</b><br>Members and visitors are all welcome ; some of our members will give short talks on subjects of their choosing. |
| <b>FRIDAY 5 MARCH 1999</b><br>8.00 pm for 8.15 pm<br>St Leonards Parish Hall    | <b>RIOTOUS BERKHAMSTED</b><br><br>Mrs Heather Falvey   |
| <b>FRIDAY 9 APRIL 1999*</b><br>8.00 pm for 8.15 pm<br>St Leonards Parish Hall   | <b>RAF HALTON MILITARY RAILWAY</b><br><br>Mr Tony Coldwell   |
| <b>FRIDAY 7 MAY 1999</b><br>8.00 pm SHARP<br>Cholesbury Village Hall            | <b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and THE 'KINGS HEAD' AYLESBURY RESTORATION</b><br>Miss Mary Craig  |

**MEMBERSHIP: £4.00 PER ANNUM VISITORS WELCOME: £1.00 PER MEETING**  
*Coffee and Biscuits are served and a collection is taken*

\* Please note that the January and April meetings are on the second Friday in the month

## About the Programme

If strife seems to be the major theme of the season's programme, it is purely coincidental. The talk on **John Hampden** arose from my trying to find a historical connection with a house I knew as a boy; the **V2** talk is a link with our summer excursion to **Bletchley Park**; and **Riotous Berkhamsted** concerns not the scramble for the last seat on the Euston train but disaffection with the Enclosures. **Windsor Castle** was a strategically-sited fortification within the purlieu of the Chilterns; the '**King's Head**' dates back to and commemorates a monarch who should have abdicated early and thereby shortened the Wars of the Roses by some two decades; and the **Halton Military Railway** links our other main theme of local transport with the **Chesham Shuttle**.

Some of our speakers are 'old friends'. **Mrs Heather Falvey** has done much research into late medieval history, has recently updated 'A Beginner's Guide to Research' for the Richard III Society and will be remembered for her previous talk that enabled us to picture the fabulous and long-disappeared Manor of the More.

**Mr Hugh Granger** has entertained us on several occasions, notably on subjects ranging from our language to our ancestors.

**Mrs Mary Bradbury** is our 'guide of guides'. She is a Blue Badge Guide at Windsor Castle and has not only been a guest speaker but has also led two of our most successful summer outings: St George's Chapel and a Windsor Town Walk.

Of our newcomers, **Mr Roy Bailey** is Honorary Secretary of the prestigious John Hampden Society and **Mr Tony Coldwell** is a well-known local speaker and writer on a number of subjects relating to Wendover and its environs.

**Dr Clive Foxell** is the author of what may be the definitive book on his subject, which he knows literally from the inside, his boyhood enthusiasm for trainspotting becoming harsh reality when he cleaned locomotives at Neasden.

**Miss Mary Craig** is Assistant Regional Buildings Officer at the National Trust Regional Office at Hughendon Manor and was associated with the restoration of the 'King's Head' at Aylesbury.

*George Cobby*

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## Memories

A wealth of fascinating information lies in the memories of older villagers and sadly much of it is already lost.

A few years ago I asked Harry Humphries about **Post Office Cottages**, where he was born, and when the Post Office closed. He recalled that there were originally two cottages. No. 3 was added before 1914 and enlarged by taking half of no. 2 and a well in the garden of no. 2 supplied water for all three. Mrs Darvell (née Humphries) kept the Post Office during the Great War and had to collect letters from all the post boxes, the farthest being at Swan Bottom! Harry's grandfather and brother Charlie worked in the garden of the 'big house' at Braziers End, where lived the Lord of the Manor, Mr Turner. When Mr Turner's estate was sold, all three Post Office Cottages were bought by Mrs Church (also née Humphries) from Tring.

A Mr Saltow, who had three children called George, Alfie and Freda, ran the Post Office in the 1920s, followed in about 1930 by Mr Roberts. However the Post Office was closed before the Second World War. In the Group's Black Box we have two stamps franked with Cholesbury postmarks on 26th. March 1917 and 21st. April 1926.

*Evelyn Money*

## A Choice of Conveyance

After Mrs Everett's April talk about the Lowndes family, a questioner asked why such an eminent family should have found it necessary to hire a chaise to go to the Amersham ball.

In her book 'The Elegant Carriage' Mrs Watney tells us that post-chaises were usually gentlemen's discarded travelling chariots, owned by innkeepers who hired them out with horses and postboys. The charge was 1s 6d a mile for a pair of horses and double for four horses. The post-chaises were painted yellow, hence their nickname of 'yellow bounders'.

The travelling chariot itself, a closed coach, was the private vehicle of the nobility and had the owner's crest or monogram painted on the doors and a swordcase built into the rear of the body. The interior was upholstered in satin or petit-point and there were seats for servants at the back.

With postillions, grooms and two good horses, quite an expensive equipage, then, and possibly one which it was considered not worthwhile retaining at a second home. Then, of course, there was the Road Tax! In the nineteenth century the tax even for a two-wheeled vehicle was £3 17s a year.

Perhaps the Lowndes kept a fairly modest vehicle at their Chesham home and hired the rather grander chaise when dressed in their finery for special events. Or maybe they had a coach but held house-parties around the ball, requiring an extra conveyance to avoid the ladies' ballgowns being crushed.

There were other considerations - as early as 1650 there were over 300 coaches in London and its first recorded traffic jam occurred. Plus ça change...

*Sandra Freeman*

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## The Library

Additions to the Library this year were the latest volume of the **Records of Buckinghamshire**, Volume 38 for 1996 published 1998, and an HMSO publication, **Chapels and Meeting Houses**, an inventory of nonconformist places of worship in Buckinghamshire.

Members may borrow from the small collection of books belonging to the Group. If you would like to know what is available, please contact Paddy Thomas on 01494 758460.

## The Buckinghamshire Quiz - part one

- ☞ 'Elegy written in a country churchyard' - which one?
- ☞ Which town claims the origin of the 'Cock and Bull Story'?
- ☞ Where was the home of the Earl of Beaconsfield?
- ☞ What connects Berkeley Square with Claydon House?
- ☞ Which Roman road passes through Waddesdon?

*Answers on a postcard to be handed to the Chairman, please. Winning entry to be drawn and announced at the Member's Evening.*

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### CHOLESBURY-CUM-ST LEONARDS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP COMMITTEE

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- Chairman and Archivist: Mrs E. Money, The Old Manor House, Cholesbury (01494 758235)
  - General Secretary: Mrs P Thomas, Cherry Orchards, Cholesbury Common (01494 758460)
  - Treasurer: Mrs B Gomm, 71 Berkeley Avenue, Chesham (01494 785930)
  - Programme Secretary: Mr G Cobby, Dundridge Cottage, Gilberts Hill, St Leonards (01494 758224)
  - Committee Members: Mrs S Blomfield (01494 758314), Miss C Coates (01494 758102), Mrs S Jones (01494 837245), Mr D Ridgwell (01442 825746).
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