

Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Local history Group

NEWSLETTER No. 3
1999/2000

Chairman's Introduction

With the appearance of our third newsletter we can look forward to another successful year. Some 30 years ago our founder envisaged a group of people not only interested in hearing talks but anxious to take some active part in building up a picture of what life was like in our villages years ago. Some members worked on old wills in the Record Office teaching themselves to decipher not only the old script but the strange legal Latin. Others sought information about older houses, occupations, village families etc. and of course collected old photos, sale catalogues, programmes, parish records etc. A vague hope existed that this work would be used one day for a book as indeed happened, if not perhaps as had been envisaged. Today we see a revival of this enterprise in the talks given at Members' Evening and the contributions made to the Newsletter. Our founder would have been gratified!

We congratulate the many members who have worked so devotedly in the team producing the Parish Map and those who have co-operated with the Chiltern Countryside Project in the clearing of holly from the banks of our Iron Age Fort and the creation of an information board.

Our gratitude to all who make our group successful, which means above all our members. We meet again in October.

Evelyn Money

Summer Outing 1999 ~ John Kedermister's Library

An evening between Slough and Heathrow did not sound promising but the Group's annual visit was to the ancient heart of Langley, properly known as Langley Marisco. This contains the gem of John Kedermister's Library.

The Kedermister family restored royal lands in the Langley area for the Tudors and in 1626 John Kedermister was granted Langley Park. He was a great benefactor and refurbished the church and established almshouses. He also founded a Library and built a small square room on to the side of the church to house it.

On entering the Library no books are visible as they are on shelves inside cupboards. The cupboard doors are colourfully painted from floor to ceiling creating a calm, peaceful atmosphere. Some of the paintings have delicate detail and include local scenes that no longer exist as Langley has grown.

The doors are opened to reveal massive, leather-bound volumes mainly of religious

content including Bibles and works of Augustine, Luther and Calvin. The collection includes an early printed volume from 1483. The Library also caters for our more physical needs with a book of natural medicines, although there were no volunteers from the Group to test any of these remedies.

The Library is unique as it was entirely assembled by John Kedermister and his widow in a short period of the seventeenth century. The preservation of the books is in large part due to the diligence of Almshouse residents who for centuries held the key and stood guard when a reader was present in the Library. It is in our own century that some dereliction occurred. Fortunately, Bucks County Council accepted responsibility, became the Lord of the Manor and carried out restoration. The future should be secure judging by the enthusiasm of the two well-informed hosts who kindly guided us around the Library and Church.

John & Brigid Farmer

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!

1999 - 2000 PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 1 OCTOBER 1999

8.00 pm for 8.15 pm

Cholesbury Village Hall

THE ROMAN CHILTERN

Mrs Bambi Stainton

FRIDAY 5 NOVEMBER 1999

8.00 pm for 8.15 pm

St Leonards Parish Hall

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

Mr John Woolley

FRIDAY 3 DECEMBER 1999

8.00 pm for 8.15 pm

St Leonards Parish Hall

THE ROMANCE OF THE STRAW HAT?

Mrs Veronica Main

FRIDAY 7 JANUARY 2000

8.00 pm for 8.15 pm

St Leonards Parish Hall

ECHOES OF OLD VILLAGE LIFE

Mr Stuart King

FRIDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2000

8.00 pm for 8.15 pm

St Leonards Parish Hall

MEMBERS' EVENING

Members and visitors are all welcome; some of our members will give short talks on subjects of their choosing.

FRIDAY 3 MARCH 2000

8.00 pm for 8.15 pm

St Leonards Parish Hall

**THE LIFE OF DR GEORGE LIPSCOMB,
BUCKS HISTORIAN**

Mr Roger Bettridge

FRIDAY 7 APRIL 2000

8.00 pm for 8.15 pm

St Leonards Parish Hall

**THE ROLE OF BLETCHLEY PARK
IN WORLD WAR 2**

Dr Peter Jarvis

FRIDAY 5 MAY 2000

8.00 pm SHARP

Cholesbury Village Hall

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and
THE RISE & FALL OF THE LOCAL CINEMAS**

Mrs Jill Fowler & Mr Michael Bass

MEMBERSHIP: £4.00 PER ANNUM VISITORS WELCOME: £1.00 PER MEETING

Coffee and Biscuits are served and a collection is taken

About the Speakers

We are again pleased to have a mixture of "old friends" and speakers new, who we hope will become old friends.

Mrs Bambi Stainton is a member of the Chess Valley Archaeological Society. This season she moves on several centuries from her previous subject: Early Man in the Chilterns .

Mr John Woolley. In 1963, as a newly-appointed village bobby at Brill, he was sent to Leatherslade Farm, and found himself at the hideout of the train robbers...

Mrs Veronica Main has for many years been a volunteer at Luton Museum and Art Gallery. She has worked at several Continental museums and has written a book on the Swiss straw hat industry.

Mr Stuart King is a craft worker in another medium - wood - and has produced a history of the Windsor chair.

Mr Roger Bettridge is County Archivist, which seems appropriate for a talk on a famous Bucks historian.

Dr Peter Jarvis is a man of many interests and it is our loss that he has not been back since 1984. Long-standing members may recall his very interesting and well-illustrated talks on Castles and Bridges.

Mrs Jill Fowler and Mr Michael Bass really need no introduction, well-known as they are for their rich collections of the pictorial side of local history.

George Cobby



Cholesbury Camp ~ National Monument no. 27161

We reproduce in the centre-pages the new Information Board which it is hoped will be in position in the centre of Cholesbury Camp by the time this Newsletter is published.

The Local History Group made its first enquires about the provision of information for visitors to the Camp back in 1997. By the end of the year some progress had been made with the Chilterns Project, which had been responsible for a number of boards and signs in sites of similar historical interest. Help, advice and action finally came in the form of the two Chiltern Rangers, Julia Carey and Andy McVeigh, who walked the site with representatives of the Group and one of the owners. Plans were made to have notices at the entrances to the Camp and a large information board fixed, with the owner's permission, to a gate in a central position in the Camp. The Group's representatives researched text and illustrations for the notices and liaised with owners and residents.

The Information Board finally went to press in March 1999 and by June was ready to be put in place. A valuable part of the project has been the clearing of holly, arranged by the Chilterns Project, which has made the ditches more visible and improved the site generally.

The Local History Group is most grateful to Julia Carey and Andy McVeigh for their help over the last two years. Recently they were given new titles, so we hope they now enjoy being Countryside Officers on the Strategic Initiative Team! Our thanks also go to the Countryside Commission, Chiltern District Council, Bucks County Council and the Chilterns AONB Office, all of whom have supported the project.

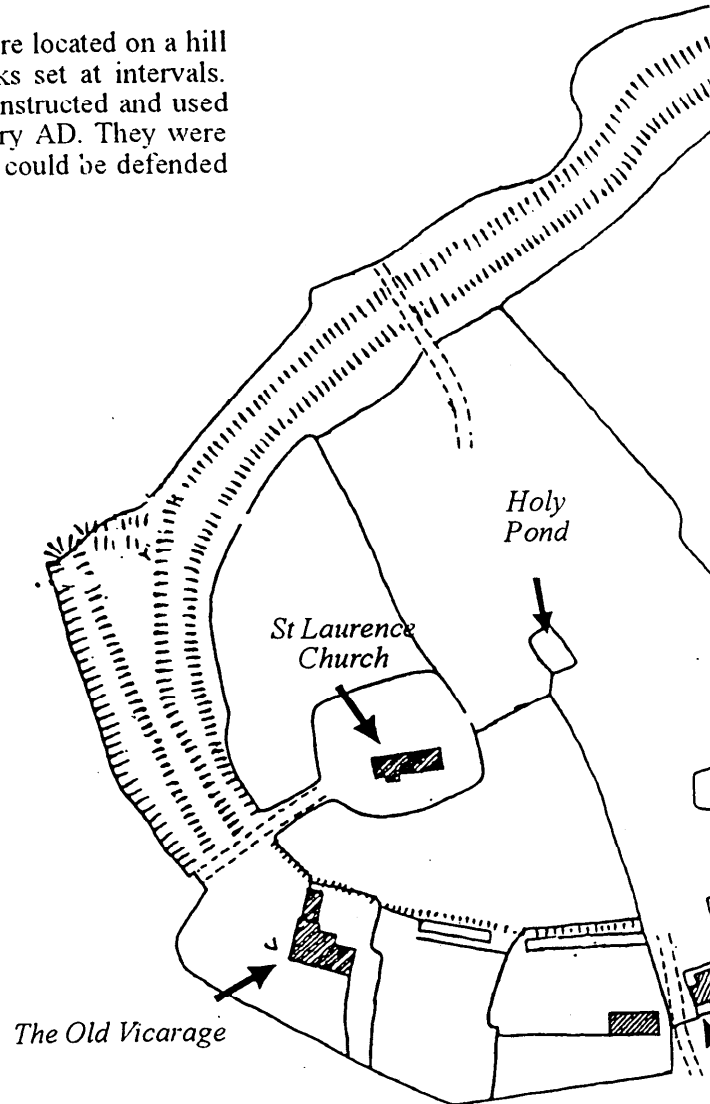
Paddy Thomas

Cholesbury Camp

known locally and mistakenly as "The Danish Camp", is a large and multivallate hillfort on the borders of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

The site is approximately oval measuring approximately 310m north-west to south-east, with a l

A multivallate hillfort is defined as a fortified enclosure located on a hill and with two or more lines of concentric earthworks set at intervals. Such hillforts date to the Iron Age period, mostly constructed and used between the 6th Century BC and the mid-first century AD. They were mainly used as centres of permanent occupation, and could be defended in response to increasing warfare.



Earthworks usually consist of a rampart and ditch, with access provided by two entrances. Here, the earthen ramparts lie within the wooded belt which encircles all but the southern quarter, where banks and ditches have been obscured by houses and gardens.

Two banks (internal and external) enclose a large ditch, which is the only defensive boundary to the north-east and north-west, but there are further banks and ditches to the west and south-east.

Of the present four main entrances to the site, only one (to the north-west) is thought to be original. Within the Camp, there is a pond, sometimes referred to as "Holy Pond" which is reputed never to run dry.

Cholesbury Camp is one of the prehistoric settlements of the Chiltern Hill sites at Bodding Hill (Chesham) and Ivinghoe, dating from the late Bronze Age and Iron Age.

Kindly supported by

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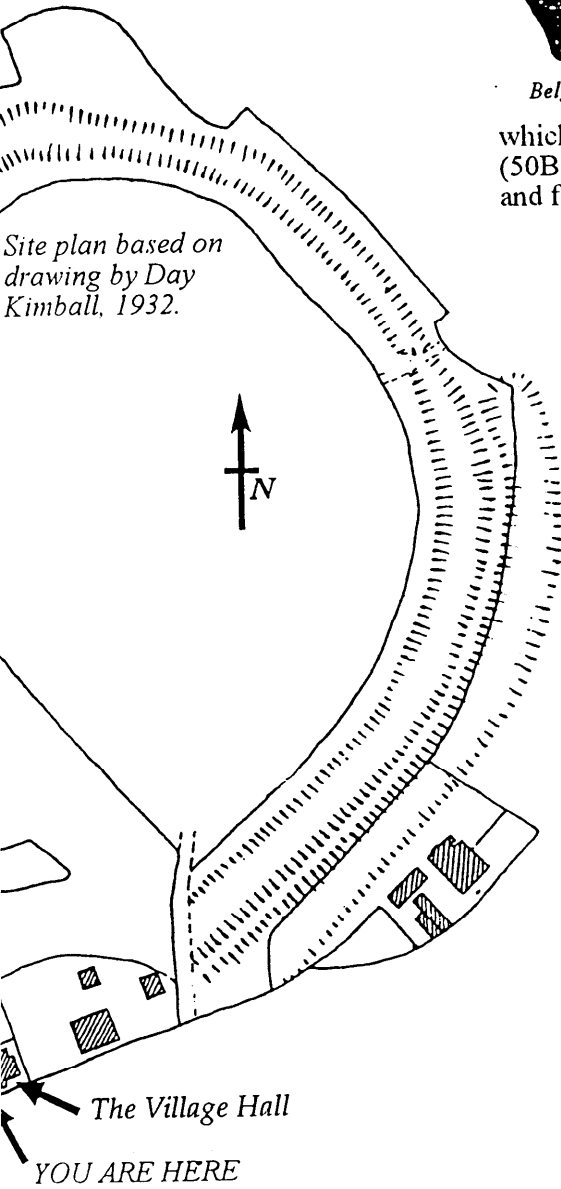
Chiltern District
Council

in plan, covering 10 acres, and north-east to south-west by 230m level interior.



Belgic Beaker

Excavations in 1932 in the interior of the hillfort uncovered well-preserved remains of prehistoric occupation including seven hearths or fire-sites, and the remains of a clay-lined oven. Three of the hearths showed evidence of iron smelting, and one associated with fragments of pottery forming part of a single jar which was re-constructed, and dated from the late Iron Age (50BC-50AD). There were also numerous pottery sherds from this period and from the Middle Iron Age (c.300 - 100BC).



However, from the excavation evidence, it appears that Cholesbury was a sparse and possibly intermittent settlement, occupied in times of danger only, and there was no evidence for occupation later than the time of the Roman conquest in the mid-first century AD.



Quantities of tile and Medieval pottery were found in the topsoil of the middle section. These are thought to represent the manuring of fields within the interior, using domestic waste from the settlement outside the hillfort, served by the 13th and 14th century church. The present church was extensively renovated during the 1870's.

of the most visually impressive the Chilterns. There are otherington Hill (Wendover), Whelpley e Beacon - all established during Age.

Acknowledgements / Sources

English Heritage - Report Ref: AA60555/1 10/01/1997

Cholesbury Camp - Day Kimball (site plan and belgic beaker (restored))

(Journal of the British Archaeological Association Vol.39 pt. 1 1933)

Parish Map Project

Twelve months have passed since I wrote that the working party had been formed to begin work on the Parish Map Project and a questionnaire sent out to everyone in the parish and near-neighbours. Since that time, a number of local people have been involved in the creation of our Parish Map and a great deal of effort and voluntary time have been spent in seeing it through.

There has been at times lively debate as to how we feel about where we live and our perceptions of the parish. We have learned new skills and awareness, and we hope that we have caught the essence of the four villages as we go into the next Millennium.

The Map evolved through a number of stages and has been built up in layers, with illustrations of features and activities shown through computer enhanced work, drawings, photography and stitchcraft and we have included comments from children from Hawridge and Cholesbury C of E School in the narrative. We enlisted the help of Anne Read from Wendover and Roland Carlin from Chesham for specialist design work.

Thanks are due to everyone involved, in whatever way, and with the map being printed by The Print Centre in Chesham as I write, it will be available for sale very shortly, at a price of £7.50.

For further information, or to place an order, please contact one of the following:

☎ Shirley Blomfield (<i>phone</i>)	01494 758314
☎ Paddy Thomas (<i>fax</i>)	01494 758426
☎ Sandy Clarke (<i>phone or fax</i>)	01494 758567

Shirley Blomfield

The Library

Members may borrow any books from the Group's small library by contacting Paddy Thomas on 01494 758460. The titles are:-

Coram's Children - the London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century by *Ruth McClure*

The Field of Hastings by *Lt. Col. Charles H Lemmon DSO*

Muir's Atlas of Ancient and Modern History

The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia by *J. Richardson*

Sources for English Local History by *W B Stephens*

English Local History by *K Tiller*

Seventy Summers by *Tony Harman*

Hilltop Villages of the Chilterns by *David and Joan Hay*

Chapels and Meeting Houses - Buckinghamshire : Royal Commission on Historical Monuments

Records of Bucks Archaeological Society : 1957/8, 1972, 1974 and 1980 to 1994 inclusive.

There is also a motley collection of articles and booklets of general interest.

Timeless

I'm harking back to last year's programme. Do you remember Jean Archer telling us about the Lyde Garden by Bledlow church? If you haven't already visited it, I do urge you to do so - it is just as wonderful as she said.

Lord Carrington is to be congratulated on the splendid work he has done in the ravine. Even on the wildest of days the deep valley is calm and quiet, with only the trickling and plashing of the water, and gentle birdsong, enhancing the perfect peace. The natural moisture loving plants are carefully tended in their own chosen environment, the stream descends through a series of pools and waterfalls to lose itself in the graceful sweep of the willows while the myriad tiny rivulets spangle the hillside as they rush down from the very fountains of the church which perches, apparently so precariously, on the edge of this wonderland. The boardwalks of natural timber blend well, and allow for easy walking without any damage to the soil and root systems, and the whole experience is quite magical.

In the depths of this ravine, you can see and hear nothing of our century - you could be at any time in the past, present, or perhaps future. Do go and see it!

Sandra Freeman



The Hilltop Stater

Thanks to our Chairman's memory and keen curiosity, the newsletter is able to report that a quarter stater found in the Hilltop Villages is currently on display at the County Museum in Aylesbury.

Stater is a name given not only to coins from ancient Greece but also to coinage used by the warring Celtic tribes of ancient Britain. The Hilltop Stater dates from around 125BC to 100BC and has been attributed to a Gallo-Belgic tribe called the Caletes - it pictures a Celtic horse on the reverse but the obverse has been defaced.

This link with the distant past can be viewed in the Romans section of the introductory case to the Touch of Bucks gallery at the Museum, open Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm and Sundays 2pm to 5pm.

Editor



The Buckinghamshire Quiz - part two

- ☞ Which Buckinghamshire town is famous for its **annual pancake race**?
- ☞ Which village has **the tallest spire** in Buckinghamshire at 186 feet?
- ☞ Which monarch transferred the status of **county town** from Buckingham to Aylesbury?
- ☞ Where in the county was the **first pineapple** grown in England?
- ☞ Which famous actor's father was once the **vicar of Addington**?

Answers on a postcard, please, to be handed to the Chairman. Despite last year's hiccup, the winning entry will on this occasion be drawn and announced at the Members' Evening and a small prize will be awarded.

Turning Fact into Fiction ~ Some Thoughts on "Station X"

In our first issue I wrote that much pleasure can be had sorting fact from fantasy in historical fiction. Except in extreme cases and in the interests of entertainment I can be quite happy with fantasy, but I cannot abide avoidable error in works that claim to be genuine historical fact.

The Group's 1998 visit to Bletchley Park was so interesting and inspiring that I felt compelled to watch Channel Four's "Station X". Some padding and longeurs could be overlooked, but what incensed me was the sloppy research in illustrating landmarks in the Bletchley Park saga. In episode one, the point was made that the young and "inexperienced" decoders were taken seriously by the Admiralty in 1940 only after the unnecessary loss in the North Sea of the aircraft-carrier "Glorious", two destroyers and 1500 lives. We were then shown two shots of "enemy" battleships, one clearly British, the other a pre-World War I German vessel operating in the Baltic! The error was more insulting because only a fortnight before there had been a repeat of an hour-long programme about this very incident. It contained footage filmed from the ships responsible for the sinkings. This is not an arcane point: even without the German source material, any 13 year old enthusiast, as I was at the time of the disaster, could have spotted the errors, that standard recognition manual, "Jane's Fighting Ships", being readily available for reference in the public library.

Less blatantly obvious errors occurred in later episodes of "Station-X", but errors they were and are. It is clear that we must be on our guard not only where historical fiction is concerned, but also - and perhaps more so - when dealing with historical fact!

George Cobby

Snippets

The Local Studies Section of Aylesbury Reference Library has the following resources available for family historians:

Details of almost 700,000 soldiers who died in World War I, listed on computer; and The International Genealogical Index (IGI) for the United Kingdom, compiled by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, recognised as one of the most important sources available to family historians.

The Editor would welcome contributions to the next Newsletter from any member who has researched a family history with Hilltop Village connections.

Historical Teasers

For our readers with a few moments to spare, George Cobby offers these brain teasers:

What were the historical references disguised in the Shakespearean meteorological metaphor

"Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York"

During the present millennium, there have been three years in which three kings have reigned in England. Which were the years and who were the kings?

No prizes are offered, only the satisfaction of outwitting George, who will provide the answers at Members' Evening.

CHOLESBURY-CUM-ST LEONARDS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP COMMITTEE

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