

**NEWS-
LETTER
NO. 138
October
2016**

Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

I hope you all had an enjoyable summer and come back eagerly looking forward to the interesting lectures we have planned for the winter.

During the holidays some members took part in the Calleva walk and others enjoyed a day out at Blenheim so now we need to plan for the next year. I am running out of ideas so suggestions please, either for places we could drive to or travel by coach.

On returning from the Blenheim visit many of us dashed to Highlands Farm to view the plans for the site and were very shocked by what was presented. It was the usual box of houses with 4 bedrooms and a garage but what was especially amazing, considering we were told that it was to be a 'Hambledenesque' type village, was the block of flats at the entrance to the development, replacing the historic barn, stable and farmhouse. We certainly hope that Crest Nicholson take notice of our comments and return with a much-improved plan.

Now for the bad news. Graham Jones is resigning, effective from January, from his position as Web master/ Journal Editor. This is a great blow for the Group and we all hope that somebody will come forward to take his place. We certainly owe Graham a great deal for all his hard work and all good wishes to him and his wife Barbara.

You are aware that Ruth is acting Secretary/ Newsletter Editor in the hope that somebody will emerge and volunteer to take over the role of hon. Secretary, but so far everybody is remaining quiet. Also this year will be my final one as Chair, a position I stepped into because nobody else would take over the role. If I am lucky I will have completed 3 years, which is the limit as stated in our Constitution.

I am sorry to end on a serious note as I sincerely hope we have an interesting year but we have to face up to the fact that if people do not come forward the future of our Group looks uncertain.

Pam Syrett

Lecture Season: January to March 2017

3rd January	Richard Fortey	On Lambridge Wood
7th February	Jill Eyers	Life and Death in a Roman Villa: Story of Yewden, Hambleden Valley
7th March	Dan Remenyi	Henley Management College: A World Class Pioneer in Management

**All lectures are held at 7.45 p.m. in the ‘Old Kings Arms’ Barn; entry usually*)
from Kings Road Car Park.** All welcome, members free, non-members £ 3

About our first three lecturers in 2017

Prof Richard Fortey worked at the Natural History Museum in London for forty years as an expert on ancient life. He has lived in Henley for more than thirty years. Apart from numerous scientific writings he has published eight books for the general reader, on geology and natural history. More recently he has made three TV series for BBC4. He is a fellow of The Royal Society and The Royal Society of Literature.

The wood for the trees is an account of the natural and human history of a small piece of Lambridge Wood on the outskirts of Henley. For nearly 1000 years it was part of the manor of Grey’s Court, and earned its keep by providing wood products. It saw the rise and fall of the furniture industry, after which beech was converted into tent pegs and brush backs. In common with other Chiltern woods all commercial activity has ceased for more than sixty years, which poses questions for the survival of a most important part of our local heritage. Richard will explain how the ecology of beech woods works, and how the ‘natural’ environment is actually a product of long-term human activity.

Dr. Jill Eyers was a professional geologist who undertook research projects within the UK (Bucks, Berks, Oxfordshire, Cumbria, Norfolk) as well as abroad. From 2006 she has been working as Director of Chiltern Archaeology. Projects include the Roman villas at Hambleden, Bisham Abbey, Iron Age and Saxon sites and others at Monks Risborough. Dr Eyers has been a lecturer for the Open University since 1987 and regularly lectures for other universities, as well as being a publisher of geological guides in the *Rocks Afoot* series and archaeological books.

Following amazing discoveries during a project undertaken during 2008 to 2011 in the Hambleden Valley this talk shows what was happening in Roman Britain and how we know. It shows Hambleden as it was through the finds of an excavation and field survey and explains what life was like. And for the ‘deaths’? Dr. Eyers will explain what might have happened to the 97 baby and several adult bodies found in a well.

Dr. Dan Remenyi was an external member of Faculty at Henley Management College over a 25 year period. Originally studying Economics and Political Science before going into business for 20 years; after gaining a PhD from the College he became involved in teaching and supervising research there.

The College was located on the banks of the Thames due to the generosity of the 3rd Viscount Hambleden and this wonderful location is recognised as an important factor in the College’s success. Viscount Hambleden was the grandson of W.H Smith who acquired Greenlands as his country seat in the second half of the 19th century. Greenlands is indeed an exceptional place where there has been a river side house since at least Tudor times and it has been the home to a number of famous occupants.

*) NB: *During forthcoming large scale constructions at the adjacent Market Place Mews site the access to our barn venue may have to be changed. We will let you know what the arrangements are going to be.*

Reminder: Please don’t forget that memberships need to be renewed for this season. Unless you have already done so, John Whiting is looking forward to receiving your subscriptions of £12 for single or £20 for family membership.

Henley's Anglo-Saxon landing stage ?



In December 2015 **Network Archaeology** found some fascinating objects whilst excavating a site next to the Angel-on-the-Bridge. These included a fragment of C17th German stoneware, clay pipes, and most intriguing of all, a large wooden stake, found c. 5/8 m in from the present river frontage. The dimensions of the stake are: 0.75m long, 0.28m wide at the top and c 0.12 thick. Working with the archaeologist Andrew Hunn, my guess was that tree ring dating might identify the stake as medieval, but months went by and it seemed as if the project had been forgotten, but then an email from Andrew had some startling news. The C14 analysis (not enough tree rings to use dendrochronology) gave a date of between 990 and 1010 AD, i.e. late Anglo Saxon. This is a clear indication of how important the riverside must have been for both trade and travel well before the planned town was laid out in c. 1170. This may be our first proof that this riverside frontage always provided a safe landing place for loading and unloading goods; a good reason for the king to lay out a market town here next to the Royal Manor of Fillets. It was probably done by the astute Henry II – known as the founder of towns – although no royal charter for Henley survives.

Viv Greenwood

News from SOAG

Members of the South Oxon Archaeology Group have been working at the Highwood Roman site for 2 seasons now and results as well as research and new Lidar images suggest that this site may have been larger and of more significance than previously thought. This article from SOAG Newsletter No. 370, reproduced below, is based on documentary evidence of 17th C. land use researched by Andrew Allum.

The Mystery of the Highwood Mound - The Story so Far

30 September 2016

Near where the SOAG excavations at Highwood are taking place there is a mound which was excavated by Henley-on-Thames Archaeological & Historical Group between 1977 and 1983. As part of the SOAG excavations I have been reviewing their records. What was found was a mound of demolition material, bone, pottery and coins from the Roman period, but nothing that was conclusively a building. There was a significant amount of painted plaster, which is not the case with the current SOAG dig.

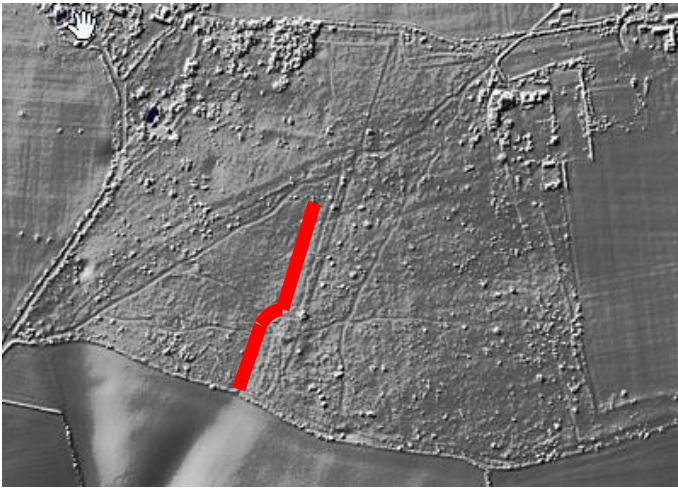


Fig 1 – Lidar image of wood bank and mound

This suggests that the building material did not come from where we have been digging this year. Among the records was a map that showed the mound as being situated where there are two significant changes of direction in a woodbank. This woodbank or field boundary can be seen clearly from the lidar image (Figure 1). It has also been pointed out that the lidar image also suggests that a ridge and furrow system could predate the wood.

The old wood bank seemed to go round the mound. It was known that the current wood was not always as it is today. The southern portion of the wood was believed to have been a field in the past.

Because the field had been called Windmill Field it was originally thought that the mound could have been the base of a windmill. On the current map (Fig 2) the old wood banks are shown and can be seen to follow the outline of the original field. In all the maps that follow the mound, which was not shown on the original documents, has been added.

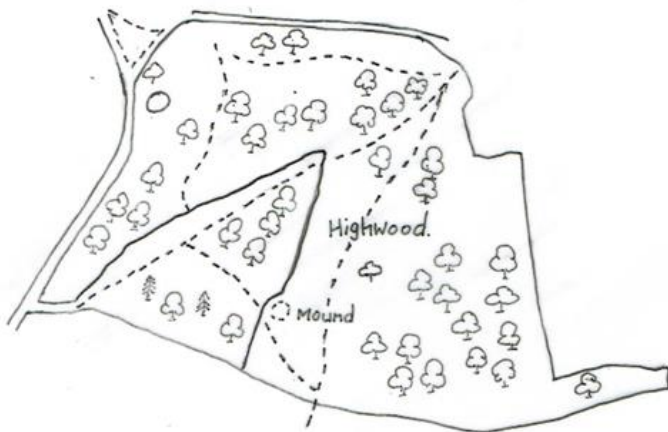


Fig 2 - Highwood as it is today

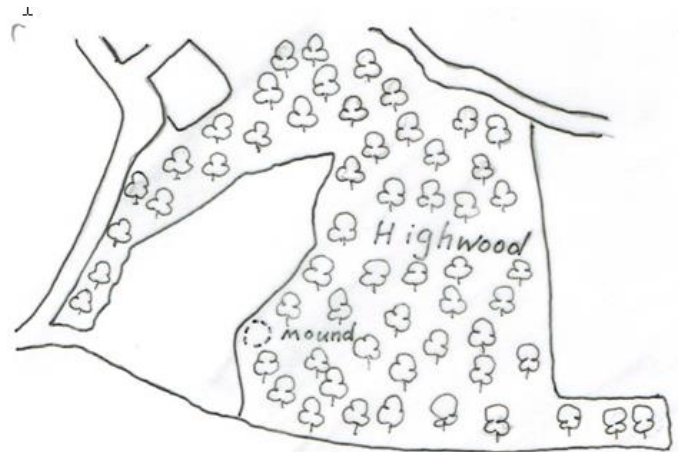


Fig 3 - Ordnance Survey First Series 1830 scale 1:63360

The field is clearly shown as separate to the field on the original Ordnance Survey map of 1830 (fig 3). The same field boundary can be seen on the parish map of 1840 (Fig 4), but by 1875 (Fig 5) it appears to have become a plantation along a different boundary with the original field boundary still shown.

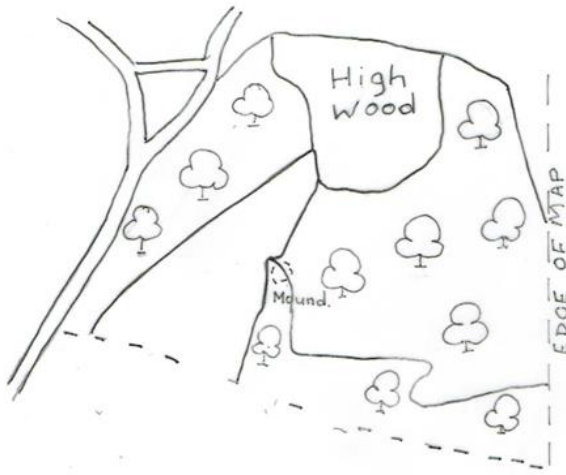


Fig 4 - Harpsden parish c. 1840

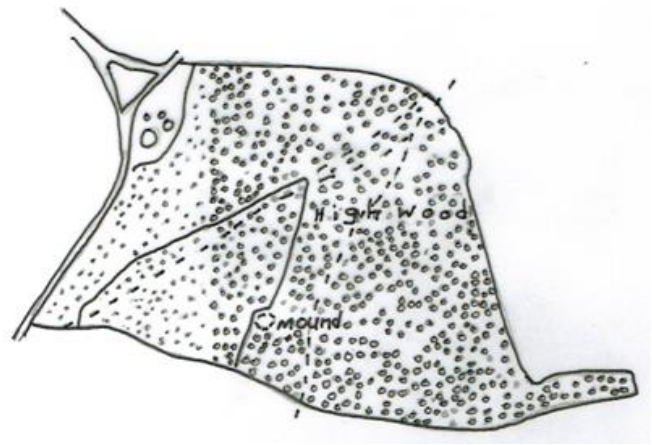


Fig 5 - OS County Series: Oxfordshire 1875/79

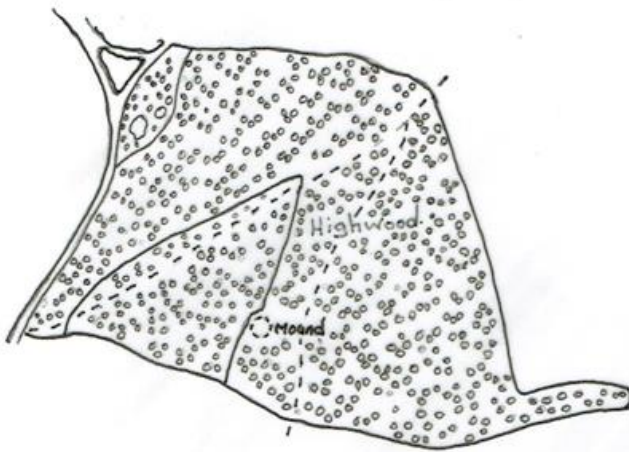


Fig 6 - OS County Series: Oxfordshire 1898

By 1898 the whole wood is shown in the way is shown today (Fig 6). Now the thing that is intriguing is that the woodbank appears to alter direction to go round the mound. If this is the case then the mound predates the field or the wood, which ever was there first. It should be said that the wood is probably a relatively late wood as it does not have the normal clear woodbank surrounding it, unlike most of the woods in the Chilterns. When the mound was excavated some medieval glazed pottery was found, again suggesting the mound could have been there a long time.

The question is where has the material in the mound been moved from. Originally I had thought that the mound could have been cleared from the adjacent field in order to make ploughing easier. However, this seems unlikely, if it was being moved it would not have been moved far enough to have a straighter boundary. To deepen the mystery I then came across this by accident.

From the 16th to 18th centuries landowners apparently managed some coppices directly and leased out others. The tenants were mainly local farmers, [\(fn. 292\)](#) but larger areas were sometimes let to specialist craftsmen, like the Shiplake hoop-maker who took on Highwood and Windmillfield coppices (36 a.) in 1665

This says that in 1665 Windmillfield was a coppice, not a field, which is interesting; however, more interesting is that it is distinct from Highwood, this suggests a boundary. Presumably the one going round the mound could have been in place in 1665. Or that the mound was part of the boundary keeping animals in the timber wood at Highwood, and out of the coppice. In turn this suggests that the medieval pottery in the mound could have been included when the mound was moved from its original location, wherever that was! I would welcome people's thoughts, so please feel free to speculate.

With grateful thanks to Henley Archaeological & Historical Group for lending us their records.

Andrew Allum

Another medieval house discovered - More Dendro dates for Henley Houses

Recently a further medieval house has been successfully dendro dated to 1431-40 by Dr. Dan Miles of the Oxford Dendro Laboratory. This building, now subdivided into 93 and 95 Bell Street, is one of five once very substantial houses at the northern entrance to the town, formerly called North Street, all from the first half of the C15th. Most of these houses take up over three perches of road frontage i.e. between 16–18 m, compared with the width of 1 ½ perches (7.50 m) of the standard burgage plots, which have been identified in Hart Street (VCH Vol XVI, p 33, A. Catchpole).

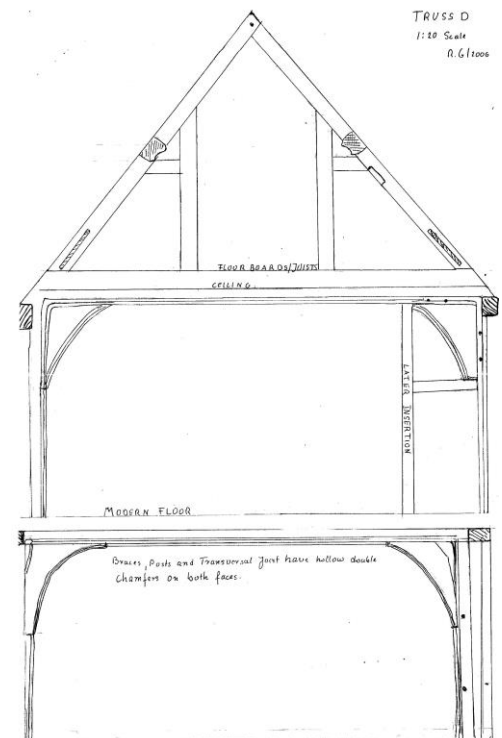
The interesting questions are what was it about this location that left enough land available to build along the street frontage, rather than using the long but narrow, standard burgage plot sizes? And what was it about this time in the early C15th – only some 80 years after the Black Death had first decimated the population – which gave wealthy burgers the means and initiative to build very substantial, high quality town houses?

Below: The fine timber framed interior of the four-bay house, recorded here in cross section (right), now subdivided and hiding its age and framing behind its C18th façade (below).



No 93

No. 95



The wool trade expansion in Henley was significant in the early C15th, as illustrated by documentary evidence of one of the wealthiest inhabitants of the town, John Elmes. He was admitted as a new burgess in 1417 and traded wool via the Southampton staple. He would have been involved in purchasing and shipping local fleece from Henley (VCH Vol. XVI, p.82) and importing luxury goods in return.

The reason for the rise in wool and decrease in grain trade at that time is very likely due to the sharp population decline. Fewer sowers and reapers to work the land meant that grain cultivation gave way to sheep husbandry. This only changed again once the London population was growing once more, increasing demands for bread and beer; making the river borne grain trade again the most important business of the town.

Ruth Gibson

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Please visit our web site: for more information on our activities on
<http://www.henley-on-thamesarchaeologicalandhistoricalgroup.org.uk/index.php>

Victoria County History Volume XVIII

Volume XVIII of the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire was published at the beginning of August. This covers the Ewelme Hundred and has chapters on each of the fourteen parishes in the Hundred including Benson, Chalgrove, Ewelme, Nettlebed, Nuffield and Swyncombe.

There are copies in the Local History section of Henley Library, one for reference and one for lending. The class number is 942.579.

As HAHG is a Group Member of Oxfordshire Local History Association, our members are entitled to a 25% discount on the purchase price until the end of this year. This makes the price, including post and packing £74.95. The 25% discount also applies to the Henley volume XVI. Details and order forms can be downloaded from the VCH Oxfordshire website.

Hilary Fisher

HENLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL GROUP AGM 6th December 2016

Nomination for ordinary Committee member

Nomination for officers (Hon. Secretary)

Name:.....

Sponsor:

Nominated person has agreed to stand

Please, send/give completed form to: Membership Secretary John Whiting, 4 Orchard Close, St Andrews Road, RG9 1HR or via E-mail Johnwhiting75@yahoo.co.uk