

Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

NEWS-
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Report from the Chair

AS I am writing this it is now midsummer and we have been experiencing high temperatures over a prolonged period. I hope you are enjoying these days and that it has not been too hot for you. Near-by Grey's Court has been especially valuable providing beautiful gardens and shade. On our behalf Ruth has been in contact with Grey's Court to try to find out why the benches overlooking the valley as you enter the property have been removed; also the erection of many fences and especially the entry to the Bluebell wood has been made much more difficult for people to access. Ruth is corresponding with the N.T. about these matters. (See below for more details on this)

Ruth and I belong to the Reading Centre of the National Trust and as many of you are members of the NT I wonder if you know of the existence of this Supporter Group. It is excellent, with holidays, afternoon and evening lectures and monthly visits. They are a large group with over 500 members and they have no difficulty in attracting Committee members unlike us who keep asking but with no response.

We are facing a critical situation and if we cannot resolve our problems then the Group will fail and it would be so sad for a special Town like Henley not to have a Group interested in History and Archaeology.

WE require volunteers to join the Committee and take over some of the tasks. Importantly they must have basic Computer skills. Recently we have had a number of younger people joining our Group, so that is very encouraging and good to see them attending the lectures and being interested in family history and archaeology. We certainly could not manage with 500 members, but we do need more people to be involved with the running of our Group.

I will have completed 4 years as Chair in December and I will stand down at the AGM. It is a privileged position but not difficult and I can think of many of you who could easily fill this post. Ruth has for years asked to be released from the Secretarial position but so far this has not happened and she just has to carry on which is very unfair.

We also need to think about our activities for next year. I know Tony Lynch is well underway with his lecture plans and our Treasurer Rachel Adams has exciting news with a visit to the Apothecaries Hall in London. If you have ideas

for visits and could help with the organizing then please discuss with a Committee member; so far we have not planned a major outing so suggestions will be welcome. - Remember that our last summer outing is to Portchester on 15th September. It is fully booked and will be departing by coach at 9 a.m. from the Catholic Church in Vicarage Road.

Our next meeting is on October 2nd and the topic is Boudicca. This year you do not have to come with your cheques, as subscription will not be due until January.

Looking forward to seeing you all.

Pam Syrett

Lectures Season October – December

All lectures are held at 7.45 p.m. in the old ‘Kings Arms’ Barn; entry from Kings Road Car Park. All welcome, members free, non-members £ 4

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| 2 nd October | Jill Eyers | ‘Boudicca: Warrior Queen or Rebel’ |
| 6 th November | Phillada Ballard | ‘Culham Court’ |
| 4 th December | AGM: Refreshments and brief member’s contributions | |

About our next two speakers

Jill Eyres Who was Boudicca? What precisely happened during and shortly after the Roman invasion of Britain, and how did we get to the rebellion of some British tribes in AD60 ? This talk goes into the hard evidence and some of it might surprise you.

The lecturer was a professional geologist who undertook research projects within the UK (Bucks, Berks, Oxfordshire, Cumbria, Norfolk) as well as abroad (Brazil, Northern Spain, Turkey and the Grenadines). More recently (from 2006) she works as an archaeologist (Director of Chiltern Archaeology). Archaeology projects include the Roman villas at Hambleden in Bucks, Bisham Abbey, Iron Age sites, and Saxons 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.

Phillada Ballard on Culham Court

The lecture covers the history of the Thames-side estate of Culham Court in Berkshire from medieval times to the early 21st century. Like many Berkshire estates Culham was in the ownership of a succession of families. The present villa was built in c.1770 when the estate was owned by Richard Michell, a London lawyer. The house still enjoys what has been described as a ‘glorious and unspoilt setting as can be imagined.’ Its escape from development will be discussed at the lecture.

The lecturer is a historian specialising in the landscaping and history of suburban and rural estates. Her publications include histories of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, the botanical gardens of the University of Birmingham together with a study of the now vanished landscape created by the 18th century industrialist Matthew Boulton at Soho, Birmingham

Reports on our 2018 Outings

This summer we have had two interesting outings so far; to historic Kelmscott & Buscott Park, organized by Pam Syrett. The other was to Blewbury, a walking tour through the village and visit to near-by Blewburton Hill, organized by Ruth Gibson. See brief descriptions below of the two interesting days.

The last trip this season will be further afield on the 15th September to the Solent and Portchester Harbour, which still retains the Roman castle, built to defend its 'Saxon Fore-Shore'. The trip is now fully booked, but if you are interested, but may wish to go on a waiting list, in case there is a last minute cancellation. For more details on historic Portchester have a look at our March newsletter or contact: Ruth Gibson 01491 572271.

Kelmscott and Buscot Park

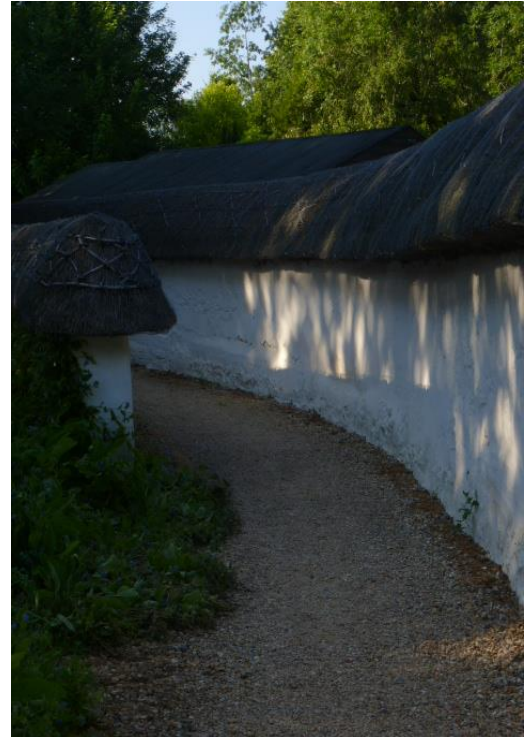
Outing to Blewbury and Blewburton Hill

On 16th June sixteen Group members met our local guide Audrey Long at the Red Lion Hostelry in the centre of historic Blewbury. Bright sunshine and gardens decked out in flowers (ready for the Gardens Open Day the following Sunday) greeted us, as well as a local, very knowledgeable metal detectorist. He gave us a brief account of numerous recent finds, which has led to the discovery of some Roman habitation in the surrounding area. He also mentioned the 'Big Dig', a community enterprise of excavating the back gardens looking for earlier settlements under the mostly medieval village.



A typical timber framed and thatched cottage, very probably originally one of the medieval farm houses.

Right: One of the many narrow village 'snickets' with its cob walls, built on a stone plinth and protected by a good overhang of thatch.



Despite some infill to accommodate new comers to the village, especially C19th farm workers, there are still an amazing amount of green and watery spaces within the village, although there is no traditional village green. The early farmers must have erected their farmhouses, barns and stables on good sized tofts/crofts with paddocks for grazing, all of which well watered by numerous springs. These now form a network of streams with pedestrian paths throughout the village giving access to many timber framed medieval and Tudor period dwellings as well as the medieval church, the early C18th school, alms houses, a mill and moated manor house.

The location on the spring line below the Downs must have attracted early farmers away from the dry Blewburton Hill. By the time the Anglo Saxons arrived and gave the village and hill its name (ton meaning farmstead) the Iron Age hill fort was only used as a burial ground. Excavations have found some evidence of early settlers, such as the foot print of an Anglo-Saxon Gruben Huette, also known as a Sunken Featured Building, or in the archaeologists vernacular a Grub Hut. This is a simple timber structure of two posts holding up a ridge beam, which in turn supports rafters, which rest on the ground (very much like a tent). The inside of this 'tent' is lowered by c. 1 foot, to achieve some head room. Early Anglo Saxon pottery and loom weights are often found within.

Luckily we have secured a talk by Dave Carless for May 2019; not only a keen local archaeologist, but also chairman of SOAG (South Oxon Archaeology Group). He will be able to fill in some of the gaps and tell us much more about what is known about the early history of the site and its hill fort, than was possible to find out during our very enjoyable, but brief visit in June.

Ruth Gibson



The Henley Bridge Lights Controversy

There has been much in the press on this subject, but actual factual information on the situation seem to be in rather short supply. A few facts, as I understand and recall them from my working time in conservation, may help to get a perspective on the works carried out.

- The Bridge was Grade I listed by the Secretary of State.
- Only 2 % of all listed buildings are in this very special category.
- English Heritage will always be consulted on works to a Gd.I listed building and their officers' opinion carries great weight.
- It is an offence to carry out alterations, which affect the special interest of a LB.; see the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- An application for Listed Building Consent needs to be made by the owners or their agents. (N.B. This means that neither Henley Town Council nor Mr. Hemsley can apply for 'late' Listed Building Consent to regularize the present situation)
- In this case the Bridge is in the care of the Highways Authority; only this body or its agents can make a L.B.C. application for alterations which affect the special character of this building.
- Listed Building Consent can only be granted by SODC.
- In the case of this Grade I Listed Bridge the advice of English Heritage would have to be sought by the L.P.A. on a L.B application and taken into account when making the decision on this 'Late' Application. (Retrospective consent cannot be granted. The works will only be authorized from the date of the consent)
- During the consultation process the Local Authority will consult widely; such as Henley Town Council and neighbouring Remenham Parish Council, local amenity societies and other affected neighbours. That will then be the opportunity for everybody to have their say, – but the decision can only be made by the Local Planning Authority. It cannot be decided by Henley Town Councillors, nor by the opinion poll generated in the local press.

Ruth Gibson, BA hons. Arch.& Hist.

H.A. & H.G.

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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>

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