

**NEWS-
LETTER
No. 150
November
2020**

Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

Chairman's Report

Dear Members

Well, here we are again in lockdown, having climbed out of the earlier pit, we're back in again! Nevertheless, are we downhearted? No, we're British - keep calm and carry on!

The enforced lockdown has stimulated a flurry of online enquiries, not only from members but via our website, managed by David Feary, and it seems going from strength to strength. Please log in – you'll be amazed at the scope of it.

Your Committee is beavering away in all directions. David Feary has been working tirelessly on the website and, with Jackie Fortey, has been examining YMCA records; Tony Lynch is arranging speakers for next year either in the flesh or on Zoom; Ruth is compiling all her dendrochronological data on Henley's historic buildings ready for a talk to be advised later.

We have put our toes into the Zoom talks pool and had two sessions so far with another in December. Hilary Fisher is sifting through a mass of papers by Ann Cottingham ready to file in our archives.

Looking at possible Outings during 2021, we hope to arrange the Bodleian Library visit again, and another to Wallingford where their Museum is celebrating its 40th anniversary - they have created a completely new 1:300 scale model of the Royal Castle. We hope to arrange a day visit in May – the town, the museum and the actual castle site. We will of course let you know details as soon as we can.

So with Christmas approaching and on behalf of the Committee I'd like to wish all members a safe and well Yuletide in whatever form it evolves.

(Please check your email regularly for the December Zoom talk login details)

Lectures Season 2021, first Tuesday in the month, 19.45 – location yet to be determined

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 5 th January | Megan Aldrich | ‘ The Gothic Revival’ |
| 2 nd February | Nicola Tallis | ‘Margaret Beaufort’ |
| 2 nd March | A.G.M. | |

About our first two speakers in 2021

Megan Aldrich ‘The Gothic Revival’

Megan Aldrich began her career in the Victoria and Albert Museum in the 1980s before joining Sotheby’s Institute of Art in London, where she was Academic Director from 2009-14. She is currently an adjunct professor of architectural and design history at Richmond the American International University and a part-time tutor in the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education. She is Hon. Editorial Secretary of the Furniture History Society, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and has published many books and articles over the years.

Dr. Nicola Tallis ‘Margaret Beaufort’

The life of Margaret Beaufort is one of staggering highs and heart breaking lows: forced to give up the son whose birth almost cost Margaret her life, through him she later became the most powerful woman in England. Margaret was not only a survivor, but she would also become an Uncrowned Queen. Dr Nicola Tallis is a Tudor historian who has worked as a curator, researcher and lecturer. She is the author of three books: *Crown of Blood*, *Elizabeth’s Rival* and *Uncrowned Queen*, a new biography of Margaret Beaufort. Nicola also has a PhD from the University of Winchester, the subject of which is the jewellery collections of the Yorkist and early Tudor queens of England.

Local historical news items

Dr Michael Redley, one of our members, would be most grateful for any institutional or personal information from the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods relating to “**social issues**” in **Henley** and the residents’ opinions on that subject. There was a 1914-18 Remembrance Project – are there any records of that which might have touched on such matters?

Please contact him direct: michael.redley@appleinter.net

John Lovelock (of a neighbouring historical group) has contacted our Group requesting information about what we now call Greys Hill in Henley, but which was **South Hill**

Gardens at the top, and Greys Lane at the bottom. In the 1880-90s there was Hampton House in South Hill Gardens, and there was also 110 South Hill Gardens. Currently there is 110 Greys Hill! Does anyone have a document or map that sets down these old street names?

Please contact our webmaster David Feary who will pass on the information.

Archive material about the YMCA from the early part of the **20th century** has been made accessible to us, for which we are very grateful. Jackie Fortey and David Feary have compiled a list of contents, and Michael Redley's notes appear below.



Y.M.C.A. Henley-on-Thames. From the Athletic Ground.

Above c.1900 picture postcard of the YMCA building on the corner of Queen Street.

Our curiosity was aroused by a mention in the YMCA minute books of **Harpsden Swimming Baths**, used by the YMCA scout group and presumably other members of the public. We have since discovered that this was sited at far end of the car park at the back of the current Harpsden Village Hall, but is now buried deep in soil and debris, and there are three fully-grown sycamore trees. The swimming bath was originally built by the last owner of Harpsden Court Estate, part of a complex of facilities for local residents, especially the young, about whom John Hodges, with strong charitable inclinations, was particularly concerned. Mr Hodges was at his most active in the two decades before WW1, surviving until 1924 when the present Village Hall was built. He had set up a Trust in 1909 to manage all his property in Harpsden but the Trust's

activities seem to have lost their zest after the War and it is presumed the pool was closed soon after – the height of the sycamores suggests such a date.

BOY SCOUTS.

On Wednesday the Y.M.C.A. Boy Scouts were out for their weekly practice. The troop left the Headquarters at 7 o'clock, and made their way to Harpsden, by patrols, some going over Drawback, some by way of St. Mark's Estate, and the remainder along the Reading Road and down Harpsden Lane. Ambushing was practised in the neighbourhood for a short time, and the patrols met at the Harpsden Swimming Baths soon after 8 o'clock, where the majority indulged in a very enjoyable bathe after which they marched into Henley in column. The full staff were on parade and some 40 boys, the patrols being in charge of the usual officers viz: No. 1 under Chief Scoutmaster, E. P. F. Sutton; Nos. 2 and 5 under Scoutmaster, W. Burrows; Nos. 3 and 4 under Scoutmaster, R. Consterdine; and the recruits under Lieutenants, C. V. Rawlins and J. W. C. Read.

An account of an outing by the YMCA Boy Scouts to Harpsden Swimming Baths. One can only hope that the neighbourhood was not terrified by the 'AMBUSHING' practices described in this brief article *Henley and South Oxon Standard, Friday 11th June, 1909*

Dear Members, the Committee would be so grateful if any one has any information about the Harpsden Swimming Baths, which we would be able to add to these recently acquired records. Please contact either John Whiting, David Feary or Jackie Fortey.

The YMCA in Henley

Note by Michael Redley

A valuable collection of documents shedding light on the history of the town from Victorian times onwards has come to light. They were found in a recent clear-out at the YMCA in Henley, and its Chief Executive, Lisa Grant, invited us to see them – a collection of minute books and printed material starting in 1857 and going up to the 1960s. They shed light on important aspects of the social life of the town, including religious faith, sporting activities, charitable organisations, property ownership and class, links with Reading, and young men as migrants. The documents of course belong to the Henley branch, although Lisa Grant has very kindly said that local historians can see them.

The local branch of the YMCA arose out of a prayer group of young men, under the spiritual guidance of the pastor of the Congregational Church, Revd. John Rowland. Rowland spoke about 'the whole man' being balance between body, mind and spirit – a reference to the ideals of the Young Men's Christian Association founded in London in 1844. But a founder member of the Henley group had also previously been in touch with the movement in London, and guided its activities to conform to the YMCA model. Already by the end of 1857, the group saw itself as the Henley branch of the wider movement.

The movement was non-denominational, although there was a tension in its early activities between wider evangelical Christian work, and the spiritual and intellectual needs of the group's members. Its early members included young men from families well known in the town in late Victorian times - Sheppard, Chamberlain, Harris, Crocker and Mead, for example. Several were associated with the creation of a Working Men's Institute in the town in the 1870s. Some also worked for the cause of abstinence, and were active in the Liberal group working for social betterment on the Town Council in the 1880s and 1890s.

The association was relatively successful to begin with. It had around thirty members, topped up as existing members left the town. There was a lively programme of lectures on Christian themes by outside speakers, bible study and a library and newspapers for the use of members. Its base was in the Assembly Rooms in Bell Street. In 1880s and 1890s, a lack of funds created difficulties, although things improved when Leonard Noble of Harpsden Place became a Vice President of the Association in the 1880s. But the corner was not finally turned until a new source of funds was found, from Martin Sutton, the owners of 'Sutton's Seeds' of Reading. In 1900 he supplied the association with new management, a headquarters by the railway station, and sports facilities for young men, which the town had until then lacked. At the same time a branch of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) was founded in the town. Within five years, the YMCA's membership had increased fivefold, and by the First World War, it had become one of the town's most important institutions.

HAHG is always interested in identifying such collections of records, small or large, of the near past. They may relate to institutions or individuals, and often appear ephemeral to their owners, although they provide the foundation on which historical understanding by future generations will be based. If you have such documents yourself, or know of anyone who does, please do get in touch with any office holder of the Group.

Further thoughts on family archive material by Hilary Fisher

The "Records at Risk" is a project, directed by Clare Cowling, an archivist at the Institute of Advanced Studies, London. Oxfordshire was the subject of a pilot research study on how to identify and preserve undeposited records, and members of our group were interviewed. The project aims to:

1. Raise awareness of all the collections of potentially historically interesting materials held privately by businesses, organisations and individuals in Oxfordshire. The interest would usually be either because the material was produced by, or related to, a local business, organisation, family or individual.
2. Encourage their owners/holders to be aware of their historical value and make provision for their preservation. This could just mean making the Oxfordshire History Centre aware of the existence of the collection; it does NOT mean that the Centre wishes to take all materials into the Centre at Cowley (they haven't got the room or the person power for this); they are happy for cared-for collections to stay with their owners. They will offer advice on the care and management of the collection.

The HAHG Group's role is to encourage members to be more aware and to make their friends, personal and business acquaintances more aware of the potential historical value is contained in their cabinets, attics and cellars and, before throwing anything out, to offer it for evaluation either to the History Centre directly, or *via* this Group.

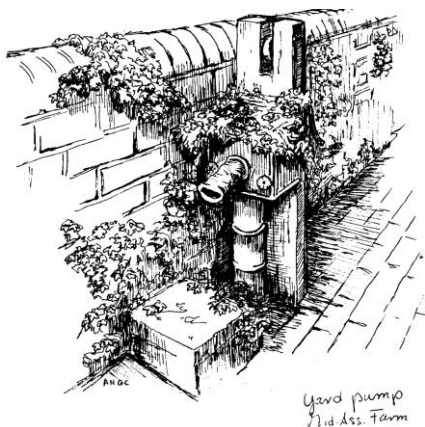
I'd like to emphasise that the Oxfordshire History Centre is very happy for collections – or individual items – that are being cared for, to remain with their owners, although it would appreciate being made aware of the existence of significant collections. However, where a collection is currently, or potentially in the future, in danger of either being destroyed or discarded due to moving premises, the need to make more space, serious deterioration due to damp, the owner is encouraged to offer the collection to the History Centre, or to make provision for this to be done at a future date.

The History Centre cannot accept everything it is offered, it sometimes (but rarely) says “No thank you”, usually because it would be more appropriate for the material to be deposited elsewhere. It is essential to make contact with them and they appreciate a reasonably detailed list of the contents of a collection before making a decision to accept it. Due to staff shortages they do have a cataloguing backlog, but the depositor can always ask to look at the collection even before it has been catalogued.

The History Centre's website www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshirehistory, under depositing or donating archive material, has guidelines for different types of material.

Ann Cottingham's research into local history

Charlotte Cottingham has recently deposited in our Town Hall Archive the local research papers of her mother, our President Ann Cottingham, which span many decades. There is also a huge collection of photographic slides documenting buildings as well as excavations in and around Henley, a large card index on Henley and its inhabitants, its trades and its buildings. Hilary Fisher, assisted by Jackie Fortey, is looking after the material, working out how best it can be used. It is going to be a valuable research resource for present and future historians.



Two of Ann's excellent drawings: a yard pump at Middle Assendon Farm and the granary at Highmoor Farm.

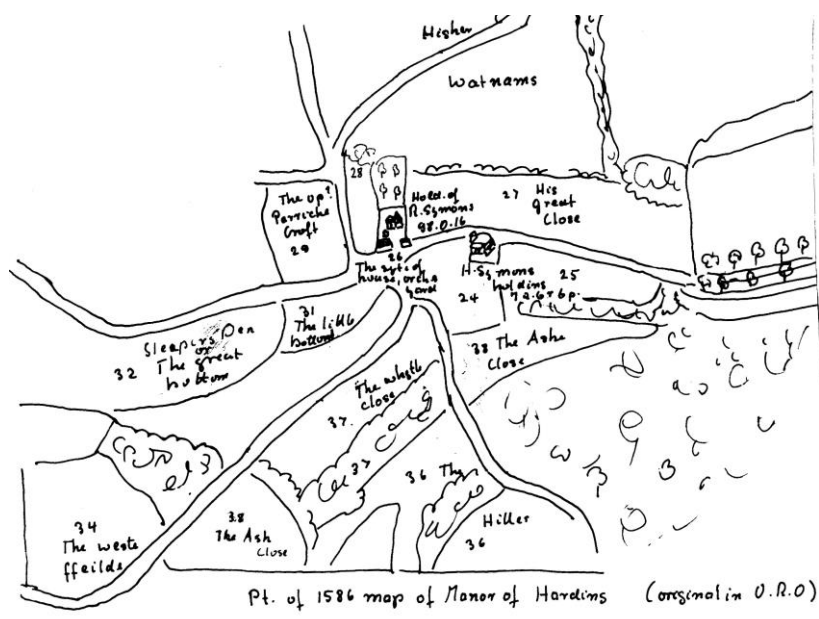
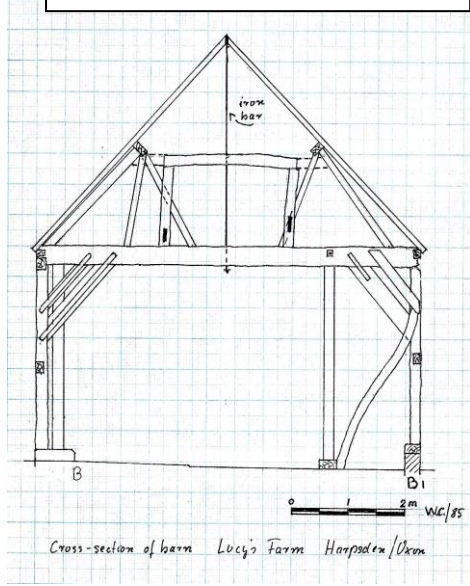
Lucie's Farm Barn Harpsden by Ruth Gibson

If any of you have passed through Harpsden recently, you will have noticed that the roof has collapsed on the barn at Lucie's Farm, Harpsden. This barn was recorded in 1985 but, unlike other barns locally, did not receive a preservation order.



The 1586 Harpsden Court Estate Map (below) shows a barn on this site as well as a farmhouse. The tenant was Robert Symons, but by 1670 it was Richard Lucie, the family which gave the farm its name. The inventory taken at his death showed that he was a well-off farmer with corn in the field as well as in the barn; there were also oats, hay, horses, cows & calves, pigs, sheep & lambs. The farmhouse was well furnished and there was a brew house with furnace and £12 worth of malt. The total value was £253. – The map shows R.Symons' farm in the centre, just above the cross roads.

Collapsed barn and milking parlour extension 2020.
 The 5-bay barn was recorded by us in 1985. Timber-framed and weather boarded, but much repaired and altered to accommodate livestock. It would have been thatched originally and its walls were made of wattle and daub, before being covered in weatherboarding.



H.A. & H.G.
President Ann Cottingham
Officers and Committee members

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman | John Whiting 01491 410963 Johnwhiting75@yahoo.co.uk |
| Secretary, Buildings Recording Newsletter Editor | Ruth Gibson 01491 572271 ruthgibson@hotmail.com |
| Treasurer | Rachel Adams 01491 575398 |
| Web master | David Feary 01491 598236 davidfeary@yahoo.co.uk |
| Journal Editor, Archivist | Jaqueline Fortey 01491 571753 jacquelinefortey@gmail.com |
| Technical Support | Peter Anderson 01491 412531 |
| Lecture Secretary | Tony Lynch 01491 574093 tony@greattown.freeserve.co.uk |
| Information Leaflet/Journal Co-editor | John Whiting 01491 410963 Johnwhiting75@yahoo.co.uk |
| Membership Secretary | Elisabeth Wood 01491 410963 Woodelisabeth@yahoo.co.uk |

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

Edited by: Ruth Gibson and Jackie Fortey