



Henley Archaeological & Historical Group

NEWSLETTER No 163 May 2025

Message from the Chair

Our year so far has been packed. The variety and quality of our monthly meetings (with zoom option) has been a particular feature: Londoners in Henley in the fourteenth century, Mesolithic archaeology with waders in the Severn Estuary, the archaeology and history of the Chiltern tops, from hill forts to field systems, and the impact of Second World War on the county, not least on its children.

This provided a suitable backdrop for our own seminar on 10th May, contributing to Henley's celebration of the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. Life in the town at war was described in seven talks. They explored how Henley prepared, its impact on the town, with the large influx of evacuees and the loss of many local men, killed or made prisoner, how social life continued with the privations of rationing, contributions to wartime production, with a special focus on the pumps and engines of Stuart Turner, and the coming of troops, including the Americans, Canadians and Poles, with war workers also billeted in the town. A final talk explored how the town was changed for ever by the impact of the war.

I hope those of you who attended enjoyed it. Thanks are due to all involved - in the original research, the presentations and the effort behind the scenes to make it all happen. Mastering the IT and acoustics of the Thames Room at the River and Rowing Museum was a major challenge, overcome triumphantly through the dogged determination and dedication of David. A booklet containing the texts of the talks, *Life in Wartime Henley*, pulled together by our Treasurer, Chris, was on sale for the event, and we have copies still available (£5). Tours of the town, weaving their way through the crowds viewing the Spitfire in Marketplace, were provided by the Group in the afternoon. Placards at each of the eight stops, with QR codes leading to further information on our website, supplied by Annabel and David, enabled visitors to Henley to undertake a guided tour for themselves. For those interested, the walking tour is still available on our website at <https://hahg.org.uk/walk-ww2/>.

After a decent pause for breath, in due course we'd like to launch a successor project, also based on collaborative research. If anyone has any suggestions for where to turn

our attention, or who would love to take part, do please contact any member of the committee listed on the last page of the newsletter.

Events for members to look forward to include a talk on the Shelleys of Marlow, involving Frankenstein and Ozymandias, on 3 June, and our outing on 18 June to Broughton Castle in Berkshire. Jose Griffin is also offering members guided walks of the Henley Boundary on the 21 and 22 June – please see his article in this newsletter for further details. After the summer break, we resume with talks on Reading Gaol (though this has yet to be confirmed), the Post Office and excavations at Greys Court. As in previous years, we are intending a lecture on some wider historical topic in the middle of September – details to be announced.

Finally – very much in the thoughts of the committee – is the future of the local history collection in the River and Rowing Museum. Members of the committee are in touch with the trustees of the museum, who have already said that it cannot continue as it is. What we want to know is how the local collection, going considerably beyond what is displayed and a uniquely valuable representation of Henley's past, is going to be managed through inevitable change. We'll be reporting to members when more is known. Again, anyone who has a particular interest in this important issue is invited to get in touch.

Michael

H.A. & H.G. Spring/Summer Outing to Broughton Castle

When: Wednesday 18 June

Cost: £14 per person includes private tour at 1pm, followed by free time to explore the gardens and visit the tea room and shop.

Transport: Self-drive, meeting at the Gatehouse at 12:45pm. Journey takes just over 1 hour from Henley. Lift shares may be available.

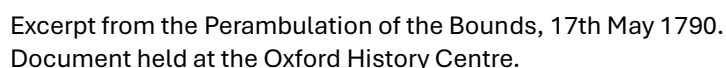


The ancestral home of the Fiennes family. Broughton Castle is a moated and fortified manor house near Banbury. Set in parkland it is the home of Martin Fiennes (22nd Lord Saye & Sele) and his family with ownership of the Castle in the female line since 1377. For more information on the castle see: <https://www.broughtoncastle.com>

Contact: hahg.members@gmail.com

Jose Griffin

sometimes even daubed upon a house or heavy stone. These, the predecessors of the stone boundary, of which a couple still survive in Henley, impressed with the letters S B and an arrow pointing in the direction of the neighbouring parish, can be found in Lambridge Woods, following the line of the boundary on the edge of the old treatment works. Between 1790 and 1892, we have records of at least four surviving texts of these perambulations (one



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There was some ambiguity about the way these boundaries were set, rejigged and realigned following the Local Government Act of 1894. A number of changes to the map began earlier in 1892, when the boundary encroached into the Parish of Rotherfield Greys, taking into account the expansion of Newtown and St Marks Estate to the south. These were incorporated into the Henley Parish in 1905, from which time, parish and borough were contiguous.

Local papers reported some uncertainty, specifically around the exact lines drawn at the edge of St. Marks Estate - what we now call Peppard Lane but was then known as Mill Lane. These provoked the Chairman of the neighbouring Parish Council of Peppard to ask for some clarity, with the staking of the adjoining boundaries between the two parishes in a letter to the Town Committee, discussed on October 28th, 1908. Tenders went out for six iron boundary posts to be made for this resolution, which was won by the Griffiths Railway Foundry of 57 Vastern Road, Reading. The committee, accepting the estimate of 8/- (shillings) per post at a meeting a month later. The *Henley Standard* went on to report that on December 22nd councillors and representatives from both parishes met at the St Marks Estate and agreed upon the boundary line. The six iron boundary posts were put in at the points decided upon.



OS Map 1910 showing the likely position of the first six Iron boundary posts on what is now Peppard Lane, but then known as Mill Lane, on the edge of the St Marks Estate.

Another shake-up of our boundaries took place in 1932 following an Oxfordshire Review Order and the local Government Act of 1933, when further expansion brought in parts of Badgemore, Rotherfield Peppard and Rotherfield Greys together with Harpsden Heights along the south, adding some 833 acres to the Borough. Though major changes to land boundaries have occurred since, such as altering the county lines between Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire in 1991, our own civil parish boundary has remained pretty much unchanged since this time.

The *Henley Standard*, in December 1933 went on to report that during the previous month of November, “all the available iron boundary marks have been re-fixed, and the surveyor reports that a further 22 will be required.” The Committee instructed the Surveyor, Mr Frederick Candy Wren, to secure tenders for the same and to further obtain and place, in the Town Hall, a 6 inch ordnance map, showing the new boundary. The following February 1934, the Committee had received prices for the supply of the 22 boundary posts and recommended the acceptance of the tender of Messrs B C Barnett Ltd, who operated from the Iron Works Foundry in Friday Street, of 14/- and 6d each, this being the lower of the two quotes.

What is curious is that one imagines when the original order was placed with Griffiths of Reading, in 1908, the purchase must have included the cast, as no other types of iron posts have been identified. We know more than six exist and at least 28 were manufactured at these two different times, by the two different foundries.

As to how many remain in the ground, the Ordnance Survey Maps have at one time or another, shown as many as 25 locations, though it’s true that they were not always of the cast iron variety. There is also no doubt that some will be lost forever, whether deeply buried or ripped out and scrapped. And thus, so far, knowing there are possibly more to find, my searches have returned fifteen of these posts. Two of which are in private collections and another two, seem to have never appeared on the map, which of course, begs the question, as to how many more might lie anywhere along the boundary lines, much of which is across private land.

The fifteen I have recorded, that is to say located, noted and photographed, of which some needing landowners permission to access on private property, can be found at Cottage Reach, Harpsden Way, Drawback Hill, Peppard Lane, Five Dials, two on Gillott’s Lane, Boundary House on Greys Road, Hernes Farm, Pack and Prime Lane, Friar Park Stables, Badgemore Hill and Lambridge Woods. The two in private hands, completing my fifteen, are also recorded as above, as well as establishing their original location, which for one, was also on Pack and Prime Lane, east of the one already mentioned there, and the second from Nicholas Hill.

A Beating of the Bounds themed walk

A beating of the bounds themed walk based on Henley’s existing Boundary Posts.

When: Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd June

Where: 9:30 am at Mill Lane Car Park

Walk time: Approx 2.5hrs

Contact: Jose Griffin by email at jmgagency@aol.com or text your name and number to 07889-912884

Snapshots from the Past: A 50-Year Mystery Unfolds in Henley

David Feary

Sometimes, the most intriguing stories are found in the most unexpected places. Fifty years ago, Sue Clayton from Berrick Salome stumbled upon five family photograph albums in a Henley junk shop. On a whim, she bought them. Little did she know, those albums would sit in her cupboard, silently waiting for their story to be told, for half a century.

Fast forward to early 2025. Sue, deciding it was *really* time to declutter, contacted the Henley Archaeological & Historical Group by their website hahg.org.uk. Her request was simple, yet daunting: "Can you please find the owners of these photographs?"



Now, I enjoy a good mystery, and old photographs? Even better! But this was a challenge on both accounts: 1,400 photos spanning nearly 40 years, and a 50-year gap to bridge. Plus, the albums ended up in a junk shop, so the odds of finding the family felt very slim.

The albums themselves were a treasure trove of clues. The earliest photos dated back to 1901, the latest to 1939. Before World War I, the family travelled freely around Europe – Paris, Brittany, even Dresden for skiing! Post-war, they explored Scotland, France, and Pisa. They clearly enjoyed snow sports, horse riding, and the company of friends some of whom owned impressive motor cars.



A young woman had meticulously compiled the albums in the 1920s. One entire album documented her six-month adventures in India in 1925/26, filled with travels from Madras to the Tah Mahal and mingling with officers of the Raj! The catch? She identified herself as "Self" and her friends and relatives by their initials! A cryptic puzzle!

Thankfully, the photos offered more concrete leads, particularly those featuring houses. Several depicted a house in Ireland and also various holiday homes. But four were labelled "Henley." Surely, locate these houses, find out who lived there between the wars, and the case would be cracked? Perhaps!

One house was named Well Place in Binfield Heath. It exists but has been rebuilt.

Our Chair, Michael Redley, investigated “Broughton Cottage”, and found “Broughton House”, at the end of Green Lane. The connection was tenuous and we had no way of knowing who lived there 100 years ago.

A photo of a stunning Rolls Royce in front of a pillared portico initially suggested Badgemore House at the golf club, so I took a walk up Gravel Hill only to realise that the building there in no way matched the house in the photograph.

The fourth house (shown below) was a beautiful home of the late Victorian period complete with a hexagonal turret and a lawn reaching down to the river with a landing stage for punts and the like. This must surely be easy to find on the Henley reach!

I grilled every boat owner I could find and even consulted the experts at Hobbs of Henley. Everyone *thought* they knew the house, but nobody could pinpoint its location! I was stumped!

Then, I remembered Hilary Fisher, a Henley historian, author and collector extraordinaire.

Lucky Break #1: I showed Hilary two of the photos, and she came up trumps! I had been correct in guessing the house was Badgemore House, but now I learned that it had been demolished in 1946 and a new one built – which is now the home of the golf club. Records of the occupants were available but did not match what we knew about the family.



“Riverside Cottage”, December 1919

Hilary then produced a postcard from 1912, featuring a house *exactly* matching our mystery photo entitled: "Riverside, Shiplake." Did it still exist? The following weekend, my wife Hava and I trekked to Shiplake. After some searching and a chat with some local ladies, we found it!

Lucky Break #2: Ten minutes later, we were knocking on the door of Jim and Margaret Cowan, the owners of "Riverside Cottage" since 1986. Now Jim is an avid collector of riverside memorabilia, and he has an intimate knowledge of Shiplake and every detail of the Cottage. With amazing hospitality to two strangers, he showed us his house and garden leading down to the river. The river Thames? No! The Lashbrook – which is a short wide and private tributary off the Thames. Another mystery solved!

Jim then turned his attention to the house's history. Built in 1901, it was sold in 1920 to Rose Marion Barbour and her daughter, Reba May Barbour. Rose lived there until 1975, covering most of the album's timeline!

Lucky Break #3: It was so lucky to have Reba's almost unique name. The 1911 census showed her at school at Roedean at the age of 15. The 1921 census, with perfect timing, records her living at Riverside Cottage aged 25. She was without doubt the author of the photograph albums. That was one hundred years ago. Did Reba get married? Did she have any children? Are any relatives alive today???

Lucky Break #4: Fortunately, the answer to all these questions is: Yes! Ancestry revealed her family tree. I contacted the owner and within a day, I had a reply from Reba's granddaughter, Elaine Lawrence living in Spain! Furthermore, Elaine has a sister, Karen Valerie Smith, who lives in Devon.



Left to right: Hilary Fisher (HA&HG Member), Sue Clayton (finder of albums in 1975), Jim Cowen (current owner of Riverside), myself (David Feary), Karen Smith (Reba's Granddaughter) and Beccy (Reba's Great Granddaughter).

After some logistical wrangling, on one sunny afternoon in April, Sue, Hilary, Jim, Karen, her daughter Beccy, and myself gathered for tea and cake. After exchange of all parts of the story, Sue then formally returned the albums to their original family.

Karen had visited her grandmother when a young child, and she remembers Reba showing her the album of her visit to India. Today all the albums have been returned to the same cupboard that was in Riverside Cottage

I suspect Sue had subconsciously always hoped to return the albums. For both of us, mystery solved, and task complete!

Update on Henley Library

Annabel Lyell

On the 14th of April I paid a visit to the newly refurbished Henley Library to see what it was like. The overall look is a lot brighter and lighter than before and there are new heating systems and lighting. Duplicates have not returned to the library and hence it is significantly more spacious. It has several nice new features including better signage to point visitors to the different sections, new furniture, a lot of individual workspaces with charging points, and a bookable soundproof space with a table and six chairs – useful for a small meeting.



The local history section is in the same place as it was before but there are several points worth noting;

1. The Parish Registers have not come back to the Henley Library. According to the librarian I spoke with, they are being held centrally, and I was the third person to enquire about them. It has not been decided whether they will be brought back to Henley. I was given the impression that they are only going to bring them back if there is sufficient demand for them. So please go and ask at the desk for them if you use them, even though you now know they are not there.
2. There is still only one microfilm reader and it is not working well. The screen is quite dark, and the attached printer is not working. I was told that they have already asked to have the screen fixed.
3. The maps are no longer immediately accessible but kept behind the main desk in the offices and therefore you will need to ask for them. The maps are not available at the moment. They are currently held in storage at Holton. There is still work to be done to secure the map cabinet before the maps can come back to Henley. It is worth noting that not all the maps are coming back to Henley Library. Some of the maps will not be returned because, I am told, there are better digital copies available elsewhere online. However, the intention is that anything unique or not readily available will be returned.
4. Again, there are other aspects of the local history collection held in the offices rather than out on the main library floor. These include two filing cabinets of newspaper

cuttings and a filing cabinet full of photocopies of sales catalogues for local properties in the Henley district from the 1830's.

5. There is no longer an enquiry desk stationed next to the history section, you will need to go to the main desk.

My overall impression is that it is important for HAHG Members to go in and use the library as often as possible over the next few months and ask for things that you cannot find. The Henley Library is looking closely at what resources are wanted by its users and so it's important to make good use of the variety of resources in our local history section. In my view, it is a nicer environment to read and work in than previously and so well worth a visit.

I would really appreciate if you could let me know your experiences over the next few months, particularly if there is a historical resource missing so that we can compile a list as a group. I can be contacted at annabel_lyell@yahoo.co.uk. A further update will be given in the next newsletter in the autumn.

Our forthcoming lectures

Details available on the website (<https://hahg.org.uk/lectures-coming/>)

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| 3 June | Frankenstein and Ozymandias: Discovering the Shelleys of Marlow, Heather Adams, The Chantry House, 7:45pm |
| July – Sept | Summer Break |
| 7 Oct | (Awaiting confirmation) History of Reading Prison, Mark Stevens, The Chantry House, 7:45pm |
| 4 Nov | Kings, Boxes and Dots, John Rogers, The Chantry House, 7:45pm |
| 2 Dec | Excavations at Grey's Court, Adrian Cox, The Chantry House, 7:45pm |

Special events for H.A. & H.G. Members

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| 18 June | Broughton Castle Spring Outing (details on page 2 of Newsletter) |
| 21 & 22 June | A beating of the Bounds themed walk (details on page 5 of Newsletter) |
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H.A. & H.G. Officers and Committee Members

Chair	Michael Redley michael.redley@appleinter.net
Secretary	Dawn Murton dawnmurton@hotmail.co.uk
Treasurer	Chris Whitehead chriswhiteheadhambleden@gmail.com
Webmaster	David Feary davidfeary@yahoo.co.uk
Lecture Secretary	Tony Lynch anthonyhowardlynch@gmail.com
Membership Secretary	Alexis Rendell-Dunn a.rendelldunn@gmail.com
Outings Secretary	Vacant Position – If anyone would like to help us with this, please contact any member of the committee
Journal Editor	Susanna Venn susanna.r.venn@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Annabel Lyell annabel_lyell@yahoo.co.uk
Archivist	Simon Lunn simonlunn1@gmail.com
Remembrancer	Peter Anderson Tel: 01491 412531

Our Website

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