



Thatcham Historical Society

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24th September 2007

Thatcham Historical Society 40th Anniversary Garden Party

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*Members and friends of
Thatcham Historical Society .
Photo by Ann Allen.*

The Thatcham Historical Society is celebrating 40 years this year, 2007. As part of the celebrations, the society has presented displays in one exhibition earlier this year, will be present at the 50th Anniversary Celebrations for Kennet School in September and we will also be showing our own exhibition during the Thatcham Festival of the Arts in October.

The latest part of our Celebrations was a Garden Party which took place on Saturday 21st July. Despite the flooding, in the true British attitude we decided to brave the weather and continue with the celebrations. A speech was given by Sue Broughton highlighting the events and success of the society over the past 40 years. A toast followed complete with a Birthday cake.

A preview of the upcoming Journal, to be released in September, was shown to guests, who were eager to get a copy. Despite the occasional shower, all guest enjoyed themselves, many reminiscing on past events and discussing what the future holds for the society.

The party was hosted by Joyce and Charles Hoile, with their daughter and grand-daughters helping with the catering. Our thanks to them for all their hard work and to all of the committee for their hard work in organising the event.

News and Reviews

A review of "Berkshire People in the Late 16th and early 17th Centuries."

by Nick Young

The room was packed when Thatcham Historical Society met (Monday 21 May, 2007) for a talk on 'Ships, Stars and Isles: Experience of a WWII Navigator'.

"Mr Gordon Augustus Taylor, known simply as Billy"

Mr Mark Taylor presented a unique view of the second world war through the eyes of his father, Mr Gordon Augustus Taylor, known simply as Billy. Mark's interest in his fathers' history began after his death when he was given over 400 letters that his father had written during the second world war, in which his father was a Naval Officer.

In August 1939, Billy was called up and posted to Dover Castle. Shortly after, in September, one of the messages Billy sent was "war is declared".

In one letter, Billy introduced in a letter, the places he would visit such as the Prince Regent Pub where Kay Moody would play her accordion. The letters also indicate a much more emotional feel. Billy noted that Kay confided in him, which she did not do with others.

In 1940 Billy was posted to the Royal Eagle, which was a paddle steamer requisitioned by the Navy. The ship made three trips to Dunkirk and safely transported 6,000 troops. Billy was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his part in this action.

"Mr Gordon Augustus Taylor, known simply as Billy"

In 1942 Billy left the Royal Eagle to train as a navigator at Lansing College. After his training he was posted to the HMS Aubretia, where in 1943 he participated in a salvage operation which saw several squalls. The BBC produced a radio programme, BBC Radio 4, on this with Billy entitled "Big Wave, Little Ship".

In 1944 Billy was promoted to lieutenant and posted to a frigate. During his time on the frigate, Billy was involved in the trials of a new depth charge which used sonar to track targets.

Questions from the audience followed, a vote of thanks was given by Sue Broughton and refreshments followed.

A review of "Berkshire People in the Late 16th and early 17th Centuries."

by Nick Young

The room was packed when Thatcham Historical Society met (Monday 25 June, 2007) for a talk on 'Berkshire People in the Late 16th and early 17th Centuries'. The talk was given by Joan Dils.

Joan started the talk by highlighting the fact that in this period in history the country was very much an agricultural society where 90% of the population lived in the countryside. In addition to this, many of the jobs and tasks people were assigned depended upon their gender. For example, most women were not educated, only 2% of women were literate, and did not go into any profession.

People did migrate and indeed it was rare for people to remain in the place where they were born. Often migration was related to jobs, which was partially connected with the Cloth trade.

At this period in history, the reputation of an individual was very important. Any issues regarding a person's reputation would be taken to the Arch Deacon. Privacy at this time was impossible to achieve especially when maids and servants shared the same beds.

The Black Death had several occurrences in Berkshire, the biggest outbreak being in Henley, with other towns also being affected.

Bron, Daughter of Prophecy

by Iris Lloyd

I would like to bring to your attention my debut novel entitled Bron, Part I, Daughter of Prophecy, available from Thatcham Family Bookshop, Amazon and all other bookshops, price £7.99, ISBN 978-1-906206-07-9.

You probably know Vic Pocock. I help excavate his site at Beedon and have created an Atrebate settlement there, Byden, working some of the finds into the narrative. Bron is born in AD 385, towards the end of the Roman occupation, and the story follows her life as it is entwined in the lives of family, friends and enemies. I also take her for a visit to Calleva Atrebatum, where she watches the games in the amphitheatre. Although the story is fiction, I have meticulously researched the late Roman era.

There will be six parts to the series, during which she will travel to Rome in the wake of the returning legions, then return to a rebuilt Byden where the village now stands, lower down the valley. I have a website for further information, irislloyd.co.uk.

*"an agricultural society
where 90% of the
population lived in the
countryside"*

*"Bron is born in AD 385,
towards the end of the
Roman occupation"*

Egypt's Golden Past and other courses

by Eleanor Betts

The Egyptian civilization lasted for more than 2000 years but what can we learn today from Ancient Egypt? This series of lectures, by Reading University, helps us to rediscover through 21st century eyes the art, cities, artefacts, practices and beliefs of Ancient Egypt. Find out more at:

http://www.rdg.ac.uk/conted/town_hall_lecturesEGYPT_2007.htm.

Other courses are available and include:

A05 Tue eve: Mary O'Donoghue How is Berkshire's ancient history preserved?

Discover the range of heritage initiatives under-way in Berkshire. Have you ever heard of the Holy Brook Project, the restoration of the Commons Land, Leckhampstead or the research undertaken at Colne Valley Park? Learn more about these and many more, about publishing, conservation and research and ways of approaching funding.

A16 Mon eve: Mary O'Donoghue Berkshire's ancestors: tracing your community through time

Discover the unique character of your locality by studying how its landscape changed from the Prehistoric to the Medieval periods. Which ancient features are reflected in the modern landscape? Learn how to build a picture of the development of your area over time, using maps, aerial photographs, books and place names.

Find out more by visiting:

<http://www.rdg.ac.uk/conted/>

"Discover the range of heritage initiatives under-way in Berkshire"

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



The Living Landscape Guided Walk

by Jacky Akam

Sunday 18th November 11am – 3.00pm

Celebrate the start of Winter with this 6.5 mile guided circular walk from the Nature Discovery Centre at Thatcham up to Greenham Common for a picnic lunch and back via a different route.

See the local landscape from a different perspective; learn about the geology that formed it and the history and land-use that has shaped it since. Learn what makes this landscape unique, how to recognise wildlife habitats and what might live there. How might our landscape look in another 50 years?

This event is organised by BBOWT, the local Wildlife Trust, with the assistance of a local historian and geologist. Bring a packed lunch, a drink, and wear stout footwear as some parts of the walk are uneven, steep and muddy. Free event but booking essential, call Jacky Akam at BBOWT on 01635 500886.

Regulars

This section contains information and articles, which will be published every issue. If anyone has any suggestions, events, and publication details or would like to provide some input for an article, please do not hesitate to get in contact with us.

Upcoming Events

6th October, **A Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Thatcham Historical Society**
St Mary's Church, 1am to 4pm

7th October, **Society half-day visit. Museum of English Rural Life, Reading.**
Details to be confirmed in the September speaker meeting.

13th October, **Timber Turning and Thatcham**
An illustrated talk by Peter Allen.
Thatcham Memorial Hall, 7.30pm
Tickets (free) available from The Family Bookshop.

13th October, **Kennet School 50th Anniversary**
Anniversary celebrations for the School and Thatcham Historical Society.
Will take place at Kennet School. Times to be confirmed.

14th October, **Gone but not forgotten, Thatcham Depot**
An illustrated talk by Peter Allen.
Moorside Community Centre, Urqhart Road, Kennet Heath, Thatcham, 2.30pm
Tickets (free) available from The Family Bookshop.

15th October, **History of Thames Valley Police Force**
Ken Wells
Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details).

26th November, **History of the Universe**
Steve Harris
Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details).

28th January 2008, **Annual General Meeting and Social Evening**
Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details).

OCTOBER 2007

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NOVEMBER 2007

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DECEMBER 2007

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Readers Enquiries

The society continually receives enquiries through various channels. This section is intended to help the society members who get such enquiries to provide more detailed replies. The enquirers contact details are kept private, unless permission has been given to make them public. All feedback will be passed back to the enquirer, acknowledging your input. Some success stories will be included in future newsletters. If you can possibly provide any help in responding to any of these enquiries, please contact Nick Young via email at nick@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk.

Thatcham Road Transport Station

I am searching for an John Bretts that went to school in Thatcham (infant) 1950's but now lives in New Zealand.

I am also trying to establish whether Crookham House was a school used by the USAF as a school between c1954 and 1958.

I do hope you can find someone that can help me on the above matters.

Yours
Tim Tucker

Thatcham Floods

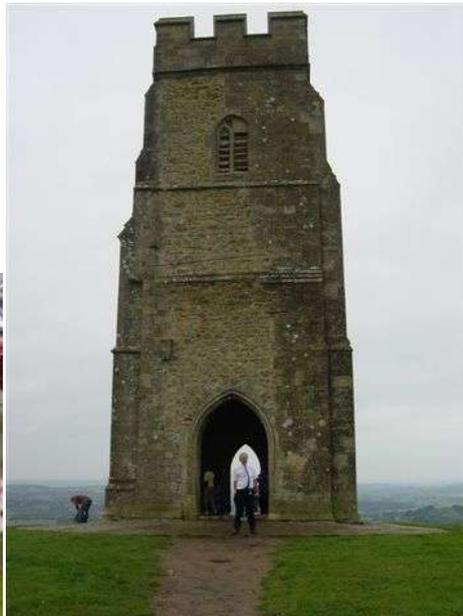
Thatcham and Newbury were flooded on July 20th 2007. This day is now part of our history and as such we think it should be well documented. If you have any photographs, videos, stories, you would like to be kept for future generations, please email them to us (enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk).

When sending us material, please clearly indicate your Name, contact details, where the material (photo, video, etc.) was taken and any other useful information. Please note, that by submitting to us you are confirming that you own the copyright and also giving the Thatcham Historical Society permission to use the material, with author of the material acknowledge, in future publications.

Has Thatcham flooded in the past? Do you remember sever weather affecting the Thatcham area in the past? Are you willing to share your memories in an interview as part of our Oral History project? If so, please contact Sue Broughton on 01635 861836.

Event Photographs

This year, 2007, has already been a memorable one. We thought we would share a selection of the photographs collected during some of these events. Photographs by Ann Allen and Stephen Wooldridge.



About the Thatcham Historical Society

The Society was formed in 1967, with the aim of promoting an interest in the local history of Thatcham and surrounding areas. In addition, more general historical matters are of interest to the society and its members. Members have differing levels of involvement with some carrying out research into topics with the intention of publishing their results and others just being content to enjoy the monthly speakers and activities. The meetings are held at the Kennet Secondary school:

Room E8/9, Rear Block
Kennet School, Thatcham

What we do

Our society exists to promote an interest, not only in the local history of Thatcham and district, but also in historical matters in general. One way we aim to do this is by arranging a regular series of talks by invited speakers throughout the year. We try to ensure that we have a wide range of subject matter in the talks by interpreting "historical" relevance very freely. Past talks have covered reports of visits to the ancient civilisations of the Middle East and South America, aspects of industrial, transport and agricultural history, as well as aspects of the local history of Thatcham and District. The latter, where possible, are given by speakers who are involved in local research. Most talks are illustrated by slides and some have given members a chance to identify (or guess at!) the purpose of certain historical artefacts from local collections.

We organise a day trip each summer to a place, which not only has strong historical associations, but also more general interest, since we invite member's friends and relations to join us. For instance Rochester, Bristol and Southampton have been visited in recent years. An afternoon guided tour of a local town or place of interest is often organised in the autumn.

Projects

Another way in which we follow our aim is by initiating and encouraging research into the history of Thatcham and its surroundings. Currently we have a group working on the production of an index of maps covering Thatcham from the earliest available, indicating where they may be seen. Another group has recorded the inscriptions on Thatcham gravestones and is finishing recording those at Cold Ash. A further group has produced and published "Thatcham over 2000 Years", a chronology of events in Thatcham from the earliest times to the year 2000. Copies of this book are still available. Any member wishing to help in a project is always welcome, as are any suggestions for future research. Such involvement is of course entirely voluntary.

Becoming a member

The annual subscription fee is currently £7. This allows you to attend all of the series of talks we arrange each year and includes refreshments at the meetings. It also includes the refreshments at our AGM and social evening. The costs of any excursions or visits would be extra. Visitors can also come along to any of our meetings at a cost of £1.50 per person per meeting. This also includes refreshments. If you are interested please come along to one of our meetings, you will be very welcome. You can join at any meeting, or just pay as a visitor.

