



# Thatcham Historical Society

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## 2007, A year of celebrations

By Nick Young

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Sue Broughton noted at our recent Annual General Meeting that the past year, 2007, had been a year of celebrations for the society and an extremely active year. The coming year promises to be just as active and exciting. The previous year, 2007, has seen a great deal of celebrations and activities from the society. The society took part in exhibitions to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of Thatcham Parish Hall and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kennet Secondary School.

Sue continued her review of 2007 noting the Garden Party which took place on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2007 as part of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations for Thatcham Historical Society. Despite the flooding, in true British attitude we braved the weather and continued 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.

As part of the celebrations, one of our founding members, Bill Prosser, was presented, by Peter Allen, with an honorary membership and a copy of the *Journal of Thatcham Historical Society*. Peter also presented Bill with a copy of his own book, *The Book of Thatcham*.

Sue then continued to present flowers to Joan Birch who has kindly undertaken organising the AGM Raffle for a number of years and to Joyce Hoile who has provided refreshments at meetings. Other achievements and events of 2007 including the launch of the society's first journal were also highlighted. After a review from the secretary and treasurer, Sue Broughton was re-elected as the chair, Mervyn King was re-elected as the treasurer and Alf Wheeler was re-elected as the secretary. In addition the normal committee members were also elected as:

- Ray Asher
- Val Bray
- Barry Franklin
- Tony Higgott
- Peter Lavarack
- Chris Turner
- Nick Young

In summary, an excellent year, 2007, and we look forward to a prosperous new year.



Bill Prosser (left) receiving an Honorary Membership from Peter Allen (right).

Photograph by Ann Allen.



Joyce Hoile (left) receiving flowers from Sue Broughton (right).

Photograph by Ann Allen.

## News and Reviews

### A review of “History of the Universe”

By Nick Young

A packed room greeted Steve Harris, a member of the Newbury Amateur Astronomical Society ([www.newburyas.org.uk](http://www.newburyas.org.uk)), on Monday evening (26th November 2007). Mr Harris gave a talk entitled “*History of the Universe.*”

Mr Harris started the talk with a reminder of basic physics, that is that light is simply electromagnetic radiation. Some of this radiation is completely absorbed by the atmosphere. The speed of light is a well know fact of the modern era, however, just a few hundred years ago this was not a known fact. That is until Ole Romer measured the speed of light in 1677. The speed was measured by timing the appearance of Jupiter’s moons.

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*“light travels at 300 million metres per second”*

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We know today that light travels at 300 million metres per second. Thus light from the moon takes just 1.23 seconds to reach the Earth, light from the Sun takes 8 ½ minutes to reach the Earth and light from Mars takes 13 minutes to reach the Earth. Mr Harris noted that if it was possible to travel at the speed of light, then to get to our nearest neighbouring star, Alpha Centauri, would take 4.2 years. But to get to our nearest neighbouring galaxy, Andromeda, would take 2.2 million years.

Mr Harris then looked at some of the facts about the universe. There are about 400 billion galaxies. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, containing at least 200 billion stars and stretching 100,000 light years across.

Mr Harris then introduced the idea of measuring the light spectrum, originally used by Fraunhofer where he found dark lines. The dark lines were later identified by Kirchoff as some sort of reaction, for example within a Nebula certain particles may absorb parts of the spectrum. Hubble later used a method known as Red Shift to calculate the speed and distance between objects.

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*“the big bang which occurred around 13.4 billion years”*

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Mr Harris then moved back into the history of the universe itself, starting with the big bang which occurred around 13.4 billion years ago. It was noted that there are several competing theories about the creation and evolution of the universe and that the big bang theory is just one. A mere 100,000 years after the big bang, the universe was a superheated expanding fireball. The radiation produced from this was measured by Penzias and Wilson with a microwave receiver. The heat generated was uniform with a variation of just 1 ten-thousandths of a degree. These would have been gamma rays, but due to the universe expanding and stretching, the waves were stretched so much that they have become microwaves. 400 million years after the big bang, filaments of galaxies began to form.



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Photograph of  
Andromeda Galaxy  
(M31) by xamad  
(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/xamad/51887697/>)

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The early universe comprised of gases, which grouped together. When enough gas had come together, the compression and density would be so immense that it transformed into a star. Some of these stars, such as our Sun, take a million years to transfer the energy produced at the core to the surface.

The gases include Hydrogen and Deuterium (heavy Hydrogen), which fuse together to form Helium-3 and Helium-4. The amount of material burnt is immense. Our Sun uses 5 million tonnes of energy every second, which is equivalent to 400,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 watts.

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*"Our Sun uses 5 million  
tonnes of energy every  
second"*

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Giant stars are made from varying layers of different elements. For example, working from the surface to the core, possible layers are:

- Hydrogen and Helium
- Helium and Nitrogen
- Carbon
- Oxygen
- Neon, Magnesium and Oxygen
- Silicon
- Inert Iron-Nickel core

Some stars will explode. One such star, now seen as the Crab Nebula was seen in the sky in broad daylight in 1054, although it had exploded 6,000 years earlier. The remains of these stars then collide together and form new solar systems and stars. Indeed everything in the universe is made from star dust. Our own sun is made from other exploded stars.

Mr Harris suggested that the more we learn about the universe, the more questions are raised.

Questions then followed, and a vote of thanks was given by committee member Dr Ray Asher.

## 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

### 4<sup>th</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> May, **Gems from the MERL library**

(4th March to 4th April - cookery books, 8th April to 2nd May - children's books). Meseum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading. Two small exhibitions offering an opportunity to see some of the more unusual collections from the MERL library: Cookery books dating from 1730, part of the rare books collection and a selction of children's books, including Randolph Caldecottt picture books and countryside readers illustrated with woodcuts by C.F. Tunnicliffe. For more information visit [www.merl.org.uk](http://www.merl.org.uk), call 0118 378 8660 or email [merlevents@reading.ac.uk](mailto:merlevents@reading.ac.uk).

### 11<sup>th</sup> March, **Annual General Meeting**

Wargrave Local History Society. Meetings are at 8 p.m. in The Hannen Room, Mill Green, Wargrave.

### 26<sup>th</sup> March, **Somme, 1918**, Clive Priestley

Hungerford Historical Association. Meetings 8.00pm in The Corn Exchange, Hungerford. For more information visit [www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk](http://www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk).

### 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> March (2.15pm-4.15pm), **Felted bags**

Meseum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading. Booking required. £10 charge to cover the cost of materials. Textile artist Ellen Brown will show you how to make a felted bag in this two session workshop. No sewing or knitting involved! For more information visit [www.merl.org.uk](http://www.merl.org.uk).

### 31<sup>st</sup> March, **The History of the Berkshire Hospitals**, Lionel Williams

Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details).

### 23<sup>rd</sup> April, **A History of the Brain**, David Hunt

Hungerford Historical Association. Meetings 8.00pm in The Corn Exchange, Hungerford. For more information visit [www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk](http://www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk).

### 28<sup>th</sup> April, **Antiques from "Below Stairs"**, Stewart Hofgartner

Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details).

### 19<sup>th</sup> May, **Transport in Berkshire through the Ages**, Steve Wimbush

Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details).

### 28<sup>th</sup> May, **Churchill: The War Years, 1939-1945**, Fred Bailey

Hungerford Historical Association. Meetings 8.00pm in The Corn Exchange, Hungerford. For more information visit [www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk](http://www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk).

### MARCH 2008

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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](mailto:nick@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk).

### Hyde/Hide's Family Tree

Dear Sir/Madam

On researching my family tree, it appears that quite a few of my ancestors lived in and around Thatcham in the 1700 and 1800's. They were the Hyde/Hide's. Is there anything that you can tell me about them? My Great, great Grandfather Joseph Hyde was born in Thatcham in c1825 to John Hide and Charlotte King. I would love to know more

Yours hopefully  
Sandra Clare

More information is available on request  
(see contact details at the top of the page).

### Beverley house

Are there any old photos of Beverley house in existence? The reason I am interested is that my grandmother was in service there just prior to her marriage (at least that was the address give on her marriage certificate). Confirmation of this would be if I could establish a link between the owners of the house and the famous Australian jockey Frank Bullock who I know my grandmother was I service to at that time. It is likely that they (the Bullocks) were visiting at this time from their normal residence in Newmarket Suffolk. A racing link between Newmarket and Newbury is most likely.

Martin

A photograph has already been sent, but any additional photographs or information would be appreciated.

### Bare-knuckle prize-fights

Dear Nick

I am researching bare-knuckle prize-fights held in Berkshire in the 18th and 19th centuries. There was one held at Crookham Common between Ben Caunt and Nick Ward on 2nd February 1841 and was wondering if you have any information on it or any advice as where to look.

Thank you  
Mick Hill

## Higgs Family Tree

Hi I am researching the HIGGS branch of my family tree , I am a descendant of Joshua HIGGS b London 1820, who emigrated to Australia with his family in 1852.I believe his father , also named Joshua originally came from "Sunnyside" Cold Ash Thatcham Berkshire. Do you have any additional information about the HIGGS family; any assistance you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

Regards  
Trevor Sullivan

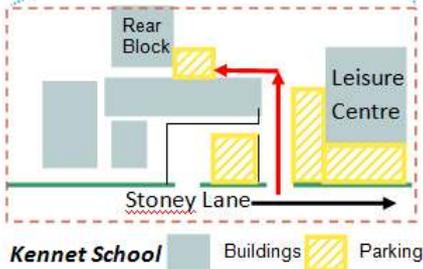
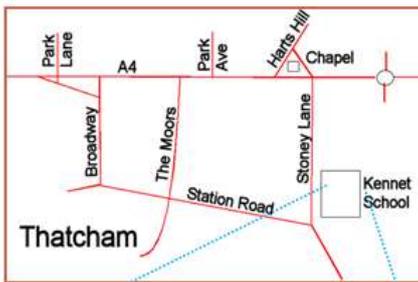
An initial reply has identified the following record:

S / TTMO / SAMPSON HIGGS / who departed this life / April 14 1829 aged 67 years / also of seven little children / and of / PRUDENCE CORDEROY / daughter of SAMPSON and ANN HIGGS who died November 8 1833 / aged 32 years / likewise of HEPHZIBA / daughter of SAMPSON and / ANN HIGGS / who died February 28 1834 / aged 22 years.

Mr Sullivan has confirmed this with the reply:

Thanks for the info regarding Sampson HIGGS; I believe he was the grandfather of Joshua HIGGS who emigrated to Australia. The only info I have about Sampson HIGGS is that he was born in 1762, married Ann CORDEROY in 1789 and died in 1829.

Any additional photographs or information would be appreciated.



## 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.



Members and friends of Thatcham Historical Society arriving at Penrhyn Castle, 2006. Photo by Ann Allen.