



Thatcham Historical Society

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A Trip to St. Fagan's

By Alf Wheeler

Fifty-three members and friends of Thatcham Historical Society visited St Fagan's Museum of Welsh Life in Cardiff on 13th July 2008.

Founded in 1948, this open-air museum dominated by St Fagan's Castle, consists of a collection of re-constructed buildings from all over Wales, spread over a site of some 42.3 hectares (104.5 acres).

Passing through the main exhibition hall, members were able to pause at the displays of every day domestic items of Welsh life through the ages. A special display of Bardic chairs was on view.

Entering the display grounds, the building on view ranged from a Celtic Iron Age Village of Round houses, where Iron Age style smelting was in progress, to a house of the future with eco friendly features.

St Teilo's Church from Llandidlo Talybont was built in the 13th Century. In danger of total collapse, it was transported, stone by stone to St Fagan's. The beautiful wall paintings and carvings are an amazing sight.

This was true of all the other 60 or so buildings, transported and re-constructed on site; farmhouses, shops, a tall house, cottages, a corn mill, a tannery and even an ancient cock-pit.

The final climb up to St Fagan's Castle and The Italian Gardens, left members exhausted, but well rewarded by the views and the tour around the family rooms, kitchens and bedrooms of this fine Elizabethan Manor house.

Members and friends returned home well satisfied with a most informative day out.



Members strolling through the gardens.

Photograph by Ann Allen.



A view inside a round house.

Photograph by Ann Allen.

News and Reviews

The Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery

By Nick Young

Colonel John Cameron-Hayes gave a talk on the history of the Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery on Monday 30th June.

The Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery is part of four main regiments, the other three being the 1st Tidworth, 3rd Germany and the 7th Para. These three have all seen active service.

The Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery, based at St. Johns Wood, consists of 6 officers, 120 horses and 180 soldiers. When in displays, there are three sections, a section being composed of two guns weighing 1-½ tonnes each. St. Johns Wood has been used as a base for horse artilleries since 1880.

The Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery was formed in 1945 when the King wanted a troop for displays a state occasions. The artillery, when participating in shows fires 41 guns when in London but 21 guns everywhere else.

King George died on the 6th February 1952 and the Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery fired a salute to the King on the 7th. A round was fired for every year of his reign. On the 8th, 41 guns were fired for the proclamation of the Queen.

When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, she was asked if she would like to change the name to The Queens Troop Royal Horse Artillery, however, she was more than happy to leave it with here fathers original designation.

Displays have taken place around the world including Denmark, Germany, Canada and Italy. Every Sergeant Major is sent on a course for training horses, which lasts for 6 months. During the national service, the Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery got several Jockeys.

A vote of thanks given by committee member Sue Broughton.

The Family of National Parks

By Adrian Thornton

England and Wales enjoy a family of 12 National Parks; the Broads, Brecon Beacons, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Lake District, New Forest, Northumberland, North York Moors, Peak District, Pembrokeshire Coast, Snowdonia and Yorkshire Dales. It began in 1951 with the Peak District and Lake District. The 21st century saw the birth too of a Scottish family, with two National Parks so far Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, and the Cairngorms.

There are likenesses between the family members. But their diversity is just as striking.

"consists of 6 officers, 120 horses and 180 soldiers"

"On the 8th, 41 guns were fired for the proclamation of the Queen."



*The coastal walk on Exmoor.
Photograph by Nick Young.*

"The beauty of the Lake District is so famous that parts are too popular for their own good."

In East Anglia, Broadland is so flat that the only way to see a wide panorama is from the air. Teeming with wildlife, it needs to be experienced and explored quietly, ideally by boat. The Broads themselves are artificial, despite appearances: they originated as huge holes created by peat-digging, mainly in Norman times. This got forgotten later, and was sensational news when rediscovered by careful research in the 1950s.

Pembrokeshire is far from flat; with its coves and cliffs each view you meet on the easy coast path is a new and rich experience. The tiny City of St David's has a splendid cathedral and major music festival. The inland tidal creeks of the Cleddau Estuary (also best seen by boat) are different again, as are the Preseli Hills, where the bluestones of Stonehenge came from and which have their own prehistoric remains.

The beauty of the Lake District is so famous that parts are too popular for their own good, but it has many uncrowded valleys and hills that are just as enjoyable. We too can help (and get better views.) by travelling by bus or lake steamer where we can, leaving the car at base. Even better, strike out on foot.

Lake District grandeur may suggest an untouched natural landscape, unvisited by industry. Yet on Pike O'Stickle's slopes is a 'rectory' where prehistoric man guarded volcanic tuff and roughed out stone axes to be exported all over England. The eastern mountains' summit is surprisingly called High Street, after the Roman road along its ridge. Majestic Thirlmere and Hawes Water were once small lakes, now much enlarged by dams built in 1890 and 1930 to build reservoirs for Manchester. The Lake District's history is rich, varied and fascinating.

There have always been divergent opinions as to how National Parks should be 'developed', and whether development is consistent with conservation. There's no doubt that conservation is essential, as if we let them get spoilt or eaten away, our children and grandchildren won't be able to get them back. The National Trust does a fine job of conserving the areas it owns (making them accessible too), but most National Park land is privately owned and much is extremely vulnerable to commercial exploitation.



*A waterfall on Exmoor.
Photograph by Nick Young.*

National Park Authorities, their planning bodies, walk a tightrope but mostly hold the balance well. Yet mistakes are easily made and can cause great harm. There is a charity, the Council for National Parks, which aims to ensure that the best balance is in fact kept. Backed by many environmental and recreational groups (like the Wildlife Trusts, the Youth Hostels Association, and the individual Parks' support societies), it benefits too from the support of the Friends of National Parks, individuals in all our cities and counties who value the National Park family, and feel it a civic duty to support National Park values and 'put something back' in return.

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

7th October to 23rd December, **NFU 1908 to 2008: celebrating 100 years of the National Farmers Union**
Museum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading
 For more information visit www.merl.org.uk, call 0118 378 8660 or email merlevents@reading.ac.uk.

11th October, **Festival of the Arts Exhibition**

Thatcham Historical Society, 10am – 4pm, St. Mary's Church, Thatcham.

14th October, **Shiplake Lock Island**, Michael Pooley

Wargrave Local History Society. Meetings are at 8 p.m. in The Hannen Room, Mill Green, Wargrave.
 "Comments on an unusual way of life" - Michael will talk about the unique way the Islanders enjoy the open air, river and locality of Wargrave and Shiplake.

20th October, **Scenes of crime**, Ken Wells

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

21st October, **Farming and a sustainable countryside: how do we meet the challenge?**

5pm in the The Great Hall, London Road Campus

Free Admission. Ticket required. To request a ticket, please visit www.merl.org.uk, call 0118 378 8660 or email merlevents@reading.ac.uk.

22nd October, **West Berkshire Placenames**, Dr David Peacock

Hungerford Historical Association. Meetings 8.00pm in The Corn Exchange, Hungerford. For more information visit www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk.

11th November, **Wessex Film Archive**, David Lee

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

David will bring films from the Wessex Film Archive, including some local items, to show us.

24th November, **Thatcham Postcards and Ephemera**, Graeme Stewart

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

26th November, **Somme 1918: the Tables Turned**, Clive Priestley

Hungerford Historical Association. Meetings 8.00pm in The Corn Exchange, Hungerford. For more information visit www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk.

OCTOBER 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.

House fire

Hi,

I am trying to find out about a House fire in Thatcham in the 1960s the occupant being CHAMBERLAIN, I am sorry to say i have no idea of where to start this enquiry.

Regards,
Steve.

Streatley family

I am researching the Streetley/Streatley family who came from Thatcham if anyone has any information.

Lorraine Hall

Sellwood family

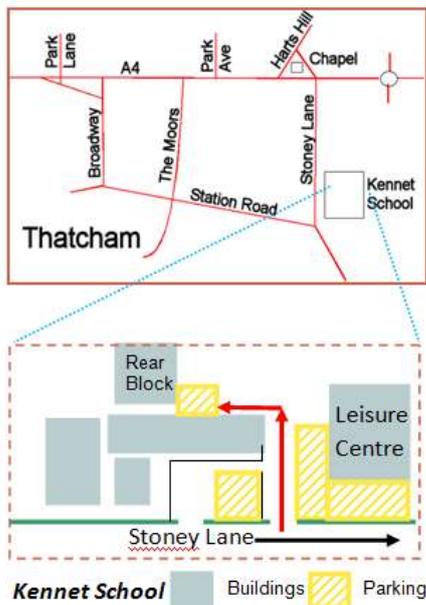
I am researching the Sellwood family history and have Stephen (Thatcham 1704), Stephen (Thatcham 1732), Joseph (Oare 1770), William (Wasing 1804). I would welcome any further info about the family. In particular, are there records of employees on the Wasing estate?

Many thanks.
Tony Parry

Owen's of Hatch Gate

Hi, I am keen to trace anyone who knows of any descendants of John and Hannah Owen of Hatch Gate, Cold Ash they were the parents of 9 children George, John, Anne, Matilda, Lucy, William (my great grandfather), Sarah (mother of William House VC Winner), Hannah was laid at the prancing Horse prior to burial at St. Mary's. I believe John was the son of Francis and Mary Owen who maybe were married at Bucklebury? I am now living on Harts Hill Road, Thatcham and would extremely grateful for anyone with any local knowledge of the Owen family circa 1790 and before They were from an agricultural background and I know 2 generations were farming at Cold Ash. I have found out that John and Hannah were married on 16th of October 1851 John was the son of James and Mary Owen Beleived to be from the Thatcham area and Hannah was the daughter of Charles and Anne Tidbury of Midgham.

Yours Sincerely
Clive Owen



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.