

Thatcham Historical Society

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2

29th June 2009

Inside This Issue

- 2 News and reviews
- 4 Upcoming Events
- 5 Readers Enquiries
- 6 About the Thatcham Historical Society

“Remembering Peter ...”

Members of the public are invited to send in photographs, anecdotes, memories, articles and any other material suitable for collation into a large bound volume to remember Peter Allen who has just recently died. Please send any suitable material to **Thatcham Town Council, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham RG18 3HF**. Alternatively, please email **enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk**.

Peter touched so many people's lives in Thatcham and beyond in so many ways. A book of memories to be entitled “Remembering Peter ...” will be a very special reminder to his family of the very great and lasting contribution he has made to the community.

Queries: **Angela Bates 01635 863 592**

National History Month

The May National History Month (also known as Local History Month) was a big success for everyone involved, including the Thatcham Historical society. As reported in the previous newsletter, every day in May a post was published on our website with a historical fact about Thatcham (or the surrounding area). That was 31 facts in total.

For those without internet access, the facts in the were made available by listening to the Henry Kelly Show on BBC Radio Berkshire as well as their website. Additional coverage was made by the Newbury Weekly News and KickFM. A big thank you to Anthony Wooton from the BBC for the help and support.

The BBC also allowed us to take part in their BBC bus tour on 28th May in Waitrose car park. A steady stream of visitors flowed and numerous questions asked.

All 31 facts are now available in audio format on CD and in printed form from our library. We are now looking at repeating this in 2010 and welcome any suggestions on how we could improve this event.



The BBC's coverage of our involvement in National History Month.

News and Reviews

The past in Stone and Metal

By Nick Young

Our members were give a talk tonight (18th May 2009) by Malcolm Langford, a local metal detectorist. Malcolm, who is an enthusiastic speaker and historian, wanted to highlight the importance of Thatcham through the items that he and his colleagues have discovered.

It was noted that there have been at least 8 attempts to colonise this country through the millennia. These started back in the Ice Age when people travelled ice. Distances travelled were huge. For example it is known that people moved from France, over the ice to America. Bone needles were used in making clothes and oil soaked skin boats. Many of these are still in use today, by the Inuit's for example.

Malcolm highlighted that even finds that were made a while ago, several decades, are still shedding light on what we know and indeed re-writing the history books. The "Red Lady of Paviland" for example which was discovered in 1823 in Wales and was initially dated to be 2000 years old. Through modern dating methods this date has now been pushed back to 24,000 years ago.

With the water being locked up in ice fields, the sea levels around the World were much lower, to the extent that the English Channel did not exist. Animals and people could walk over this land easily. Fisherman in the North Sea today often pull up evidence of this in the form of bones. Tusks from elephants and mammoths to sabre tooth tigers dating to around 35,000 years ago.

One thing that was stressed was that dates from the differing periods (i.e. Mesolithic, Bronze, Iron, etc.) did not suddenly change but was a gradual shift. Malcolm showed a hand axe, that the people would have used, from 15,000 years ago. They would also have used the rivers to navigate inland. Some archaeological digs, including those in Thatcham, have shown people of this date eating rabbit, which was thought to have been introduced by the Normans.

Other activities such as the "coffer dam" that created a lake near or on Thatcham Moor could have several uses. One possibility Malcolm suggested was fish farming. Ceremonial finds have also been unearthed, which clearly indicates some sort of social structure to the people of the period.

The Stone Age (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic) gave way to the Bronze Age starting around 2,500BC. Finds from Harts Hill were shown including a bronze axe head. The Bronze Age then gave way to the Iron Age in around 600BC. Or that is what was believed. A site at Harts Hill, excavated a few years ago, has caused this to be re-evaluated and the date pushed back to as late as 1000BC. Malcolm stated *"this makes Thatcham an Internationally Important*

"still shedding light on what we know and indeed re-writing the history books"

"dates from the differing periods did not suddenly change"

"this makes Thatcham an Internationally Important site."

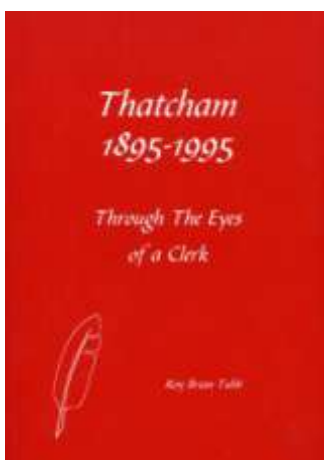
site." Malcolm then went on to show coins that had been collected from the Iron Age through the Roman Age and on to the Modern day.

A vote of thanks was given by committee member Alf Wheeler, followed by questions and refreshments.

Journal of Thatcham Historical Society

We hope to publish the second issue of our very own Journal later this year. We are still happy to receive any submissions of articles for inclusion. Submissions can digital or handwritten, we are more than happy to scan images, negatives, slides, etc. and any other work that may be required for your article.

For further information, please speak to committee member *Nick Young*.



"Thatcham 1895 – 1995: Through the Eyes of a Clerk", just one of the many books in our library

Library

We would like to remind all members that our library has a wide range of books, including:

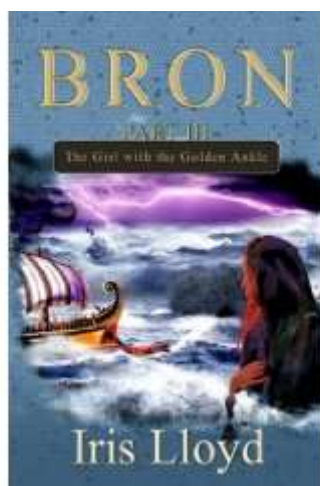
- Berkshire old and new;
- Fires of Windsor Castle;
- Tales of Oxford;
- Thatcham 1895 – 1995: Through the Eyes of a Clerk.

As you can see, subjects are varied and cover a wide range of areas, dates and topics. There are over 260 items in the library. As a member, you can book these items out and take away with you.

For more information, please speak to our librarian, *Tony Higgott*.

Bron: The Girl with the Golden Ankle

For those of you who enjoy historical fiction, the third book in *Iris Loyds BRON* series has been published. Part I, *Daughter of Prophecy* (ISBN 978-1-906206-07-9), and Part II, *Flames of Prophecy* (ISBN 978-1-906206-23-9), take place on a site being excavated at Beedon, north of Newbury. Iris has created an Atrebate settlement there and Bron is born into the village in AD 385, towards the end of the Roman occupation. In Part III, *The Girl with the Golden Ankle* (ISBN 978-1-906710-35-4), she takes ship for Italia and has many adventures and dangers to face before setting foot in Ostia. Copies can be ordered from bookshops, through Amazon, or found in local libraries.



Bron: The Girl with the Golden Ankle by Iris Lloyd

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

SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Events for September 2009

Many other organisations are still planning their summer and autumn events. To keep up to date, please keep an eye on our website at www.thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk.

8th September, Bats, Balls and Biscuits, Martin Bishop
Wargrave Local History Society. Meetings are at 8 p.m. in The Hannen Room, Mill Green, Wargrave.
 The Huntley and Palmer's biscuit factory cricket team is the focus of this look at the social and economic history of the company workers, and the development of cricket locally.

23rd September, 400 years of Schooling in Hungerford, Dr Hugh Pihlens
Hungerford Historical Association. Meetings 8.00pm in The Corn Exchange, Hungerford. For more information visit www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk.

28th September, William Morris and his circle of friends at Kelmscot, Lois Pihlens
Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details, NOTE: NEW LOCATION – SIXTH FORM BLOCK).

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 enquiries@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk.

Little Lane, Upper Bucklebury

Hi,

I am trying to find out historical and land usage information about the site of my house and the immediate surrounding area, in Little Lane, Upper Bucklebury.

Do you have any resources covering the area, or can you point me in the direction of a person or organisation who might be able to help?

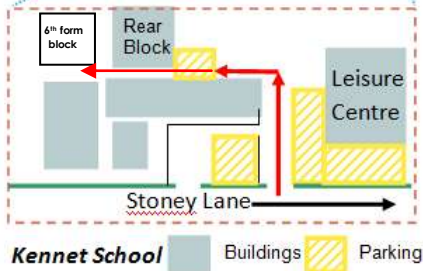
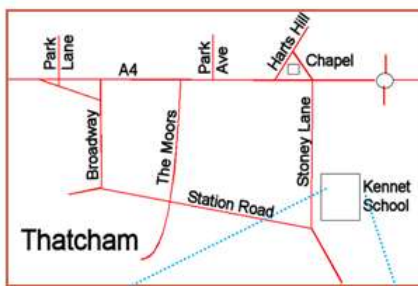
I have found one old OS map, which suggests that there may have been a cemetery covering the site, however, having spoken to a number of local people (church, parish council, former resident of my house), nobody knows anything about it.

I would be grateful for any assistance.
Thanks in advance.
Best regards,

Alex.

Bryan Gush, Thatcham Garage

I am trying to find more for my local car club about Bryan Gush who apparently had a garage in Thatcham and developed his own car that was very successful at Brooklands in Spring (possibly March) 1934. I have a NWN article 29.3.1934 but no more local background. Any help would be greatly 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:

Sixth Form 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.