



# Thatcham Historical Society

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 3

29<sup>th</sup> November 2010

## Inside This Issue

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

## Successful day trips

By Nick Young

The first of two trips over the summer took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July and saw members of the society, and guests from other societies including the U3A, visit Hampton Court Palace, home to King Henry VIII.

Although Hampton Court Palace is typically associated with King Henry VIII, it does have connections with many other monarchs including Queen Mary I, James I, Charles I, Charles II and George II. The palace itself can be dated back to before 1494 when Giles

Daubeney, who later became Lord Chamberlain, leases and modernises the medieval manor of Hampton Court. Other notable historical figures have also been involved with the palace including Shakespeare who in 1603 performed plays in the Great Hall for King James I.

The second of our trips took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and saw members of the society, and guests from other societies including the U3A, and friends and family, visit the Natural History Museum.

A wide variety of items were seen, with some of the younger guests the Dinosaurs being the highlight whilst others enjoyed the geology section, a few took part in activities in the Darwin Centre and others were fascinated by the mammal section showing the evolution of various animals.

We tend to think of history as a few thousand years, maybe a few tens of thousands, many forget that the history of our Earth stretches back some 4.5 billion years. This was shown in the museum by a fascinating exhibit on the creation and formation of the Earth within which were shown meteorites dating to around 4 billion years. Other exhibits show the scale of some extinct animals. Being stood against these animals, Dinosaurs and Plesiosaurs, that walked (or swam) the Earth over 100 million years ago and being dwarfed by them is a humbling and amazing experience.

All of the exhibits form part of our history and although we may not like it, some of the exhibits showed our more disturbing historical events. Within the museum there were several examples of this, perhaps the two most notable was the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991, which showed the effect on human life and the environment, and then whaling.

Everyone who went on the trip left wanting to go back for more. The museum itself is incredible and just goes to show there is much more to history than people first think.



Hampton Court Palace. Photograph by Nick Young.



Model of a Blue Whale in the Natural History Museum. Photograph by Nick Young.

## News and Reviews

### Underwater Archaeology

Our previous talk was given on the 18<sup>th</sup> October by Gareth Owen from Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology ([www.hwtma.org.uk](http://www.hwtma.org.uk)). Gareth started the talk by highlighting the fact that Maritime Archaeology is not just ship wrecks. To highlight this several slides and videos were shown, showing how the English Channel formed. This clearly identified the fact that 9,000 years ago there was no English Channel, it was all dry land. This then begs the questions, if it was dry land, were people living there?

That was the topic of the talk, looking at one specific site, Bouldnor Cliff, which has Mesolithic finds from over 5 areas of interest. This is just one site which would have been flooded around 3,500 years ago. The site at Bouldnor Cliff was made aware by a local diver inviting the archaeologists to look at the finds they had made. The site is approximately 12m under water, and the finds made, flints for example, were still sharp enough to be able to cut through the dive suits. All of the finds date to the Mesolithic, although there may still be earlier finds to be made. The site shows layers built up and therefore actually shows the different periods remarkably well. This allows a picture to be built up, not only of who was living there and the activities that are going on but how they changed over time as well.

A vote of thanks was given by chairman Dr Nick Young, tea and biscuits along with a barrage of questions then followed.

### Thatcham Festival of Arts and Leisure

Thatcham Historical Society took part in various events throughout the festival, starting with an exhibition in St. Mary's Church on the 9<sup>th</sup> October. Our Chairman, Dr Nick Young, gave a talk on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> October on "*Thatcham 1968: not just an Olympic Year*", committee members were challenged by Thatcham Town Council to enter the Festival Quiz and another exhibition was put up at the end of the week as part of Thatcham Vision's Lifelong Learning Fair.

All of the events were well attended, the launch day, 9<sup>th</sup> October, being more popular than ever before. Members were quizzed about various topics on Thatcham's history by members of the public, several new members have also been picked up from these activities.

The event was organised by Thatcham Town Council who have done a fantastic job. A big thank you though must go to all those who helped to run our own events and all of those who came along to our events.



*Committee Member Peter Lavarack with Churchwarden Chris Watts.*



*Society members Malcolm and Bob with a member of the public at the Lifelong Learning Fair.*

## The East Woodhay Heinkel

Tonight, 28th June 2010, Roger Day gave us a talk about "The East Woodhay Heinkel." Roger noted that his interest started when a find, 7 or 8 foot tall came into his possession. The find, which was part of a Heinkel aircraft, sparked his interest to find out how it came to be found in Fullers Lane, just west of Wooton Hill and the only one within a 25-mile radius. The aircraft that the part was from was a bomber and would have been targeting Avon mouth Docks, although it could have been another target.

---

*"Immediately the East Woodhay Home Guard was dispatched to the scene"*

---

The crew of the aircraft were ordered to bail out on the return journey and all landed around the Highclere Castle area although the aircraft itself came down in Fullers Lane. Immediately the East Woodhay Home Guard was dispatched to the scene in order to guard the site and stop members of the public taking parts as souvenirs. As brave as these men were, they were jumpy with this being one of the first instances they would have dealt with.

One instance saw one of the guard shoot at a light in a tree, which turned out to be a star! Despite the guard, items were taken from the crash site as was the case at many sites early on in the war.

The crew took longer to capture. The first two-captured fast, three took several days and the last member took 9 days to capture, which was the longest any member of the Luftwaffe had avoided capture for the entire war. Roger is the author of several books on this topic including:

---

*"the last member took 9 days to capture"*

---

- Ramsbury at War
- Savernake at War
- Tonight We Die As Men

See Roger's website for more information at [www.ramsburyatwar.com](http://www.ramsburyatwar.com).

## What's coming in 2011?

The Peter Allen Memorial Lectures (PAML) were run this year for the first time and was thought at the time they would be a one off event. Due to the popularity and comments received the event will become an annual event every May.

Due to events and school term dates in 2011, there will be no normal speaker meeting in April, however, we are planning to hold a special event on a Saturday in April, based around the Civil War. Find out more in January at our AGM!

We are planning to continue our trips with a half day trip and a full day trip. The half day trip is likely to be to Wallingford Museum, but is subject to change. The full day trip is being investigated.

We have a variety of projects continuing into 2011 including documenting the monuments in Midgham Churchyard, the Journal of Thatcham Historical Society, Oral Histories and more are planned.

Details of all of these will be given at our AGM on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011.

## 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

### Events for December 2010 to January 2011

Until 22<sup>nd</sup> December, **Farming for the new Britain: images of farmers in war and peace**  
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, Redlands Road, Reading, RG1 5EX

14<sup>th</sup> January, **Newbury Town Regalia**, Rod Thomason  
Newbury District Field Club, 2:30 pm at the Town Hall

25<sup>th</sup> January, Members Evening  
Newbury District Field Club, 7:30 pm at the Town Hall

26<sup>th</sup> January, Witchcraft in Berkshire, Mr Douglas Clapp  
Hungerford Historical Association  
Meetings are held at 7.30pm in The Corn Exchange, Hungerford

31<sup>st</sup> January 2011, **Annual General Meeting**  
Thatcham Historical Society, 7.30pm (see back page for location details, Sixth Form Block).

#### DECEMBER 2010

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	31	

#### JANUARY 2011

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	31					

## 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 chair@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk.

### Reverend John Mackenzie Bacon FRAS

I am researching the life of the Reverend John Mackenzie Bacon FRAS, the scientific balloonist who lived in Cold Ash from 1876 until his death in 1904. John Mackenzie Bacon was a remarkable man: astronomer, balloonist, mathematician, Britain's first aerial photographer, pioneer movie-maker, researcher (acoustics, smog, magnetism, eclipses, radio telegraphy), pyro-technician, co-inventor of the balloon hot-air burner, theologian (published 4 theology texts), Times correspondent, bell-ringer, bee-keeper.

He established the first Cold Ash Fete (1877) and set up many clubs to help educate and entertain Cold Ash villagers. He was also a kite flyer, adventurer, risk-taker, local benefactor, showman and prankster. John M Bacon was great grandson of the neo-classicist sculptor John Bacon RA and grandson of John Bacon RSA, also a prolific sculptor. If anyone has any materials that would help me with my research, I would be delighted to talk to them.

Dr Fred Davison

### Jenkins Family

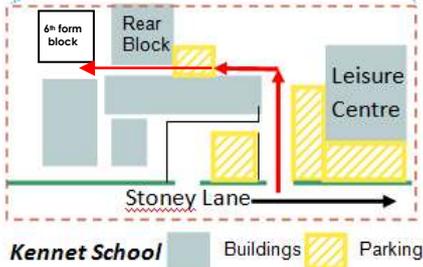
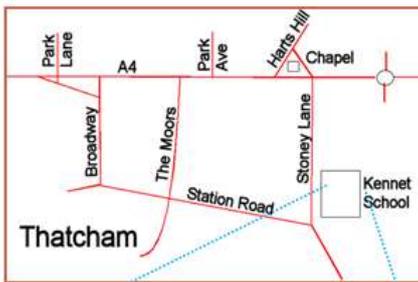
I'm trying to trace any information on Thomas Jenkins Senior and Junior, blacksmiths in Chapel Street. I know, according to the 1881 census that Thomas Junior was listed as blacksmith invalid and he died shortly afterwards. Can anyone shed any light on what happened or indeed anything about my ancestors at all? Anything would be gratefully received!

Sue Weatherburn

### Buxey Family

I am researching my family history and believe that my 4xgreat grandfather lived in Thatcham in the mid 1700s. There is a baptism record in 1762 of my 3xgreat grandfather, Richard son of Thomas and Elizabeth Buxey, in the Thatcham register. Richard subsequently went to Inkpen where the remainder of my line of the family stem from. I would be grateful for any information anyone may have on Thomas and Elizabeth and where they may have originated from. The family name spelling varies; common versions are Buxey, Buxcey, Buxy and I also know that there was a Buxcey family in the Bucklebury area.

Many thanks,  
Martin Buxey



## 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.