



Thatcham Historical Society

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Peter Allen Memorial Lectures

By Nick Young

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The Peter Allen Memorial Lectures ran throughout May and were put together in memory of the late Peter Allen who passed away in May 2009, to raise money for the British Heart Foundation and to promote National Local and Community History Month. The whole event has been well received and a big success. Every talk engaged the audience with both audience and speaker learning something new. Every session raised questions and answers which showed a healthy appetite for wanting to know more. A two day exhibition at the end of the month showcased several local community groups including:



- Old Bluecoat School Trust
- BBOWT
- Newbury District Field Club
- Thatcham Historical Society
- Thatcham Art Group
- Thatcham & District Philatelic Society
- Thatcham U3A
- St. Mary's Church

From left to right, Rev. Tom Moffatt, Dr Nick Young & Bill Butler at the talk on 22nd May 2010. Photograph by Norman Jones.

Visitors were able to buy a copy of "*Thatcham: an historic town in a changing world*" for £3.00 at each event where £1 of each copy was donated to the British Heart Foundation (thanks to Thatcham Vision and Thatcham Historical Society for allowing this).

The event is organised by a sub-committee of Thatcham Historical Society and includes several non-society members. Without the committee and speakers (Dr Nick Young, Sue Broughton, Alf Wheeler, Tony Higgott, Graeme Stewart, Rev. Tom Moffatt, Bill Butler & Stephanie Steevenson), not to mention the organisations above and our supporters (Norman Jones (photography), CuttyFruty.com, Newbury Building Society, DevZen, Thatcham Town Council, Hosemaker, Unimaster Components, Tesco, Business Training Solutions, Thatcham Family Bookshop), none of this would have been possible, so they all deserve a big thank you.

The event has not only ignited a thirst for local history in many locals, but has allowed us, by the donations people made, to raise in excess of £300 to donate to the British Heart Foundation in memory of the late Peter Allen.

On a final note, at every event we were asked "*is this going to be annual?*" I can now confirm that this will indeed be an annual event. Once again, a big thank you to all who have made this event the success it has been.

Peter Allen
Memorial Lectures

News and Reviews

Industrial Developments and the Spitalfields Weavers

A large audience braved the heat tonight, 24th May 2010, to hear PhD student Will Farrell talk on "*Industrial Developments and the Spitalfields Weavers.*"

Will showed examples of some of the products of the weavers dating to the 1750's. He noted that most patterns reflected natural history. The materials used for men's waistcoats and women's dresses. Will did note that styles changed regularly, every decade or so between 1690 and 1800.

The weavers themselves were looked at and Will described how some emigrated whilst others immigrated taking or bringing their skills with them. Many of these skills were transferrable with some requiring re-training of 2 years instead of the full 7-year apprenticeship.

Some of these immigrated to England due to friends and family influence, charities or guilds. Others emigrated due to the emergence of industries in other countries.

Will said that a lot of his research had been carried out through criminal records, as many of the weavers were thieves. He said that these records actually gave a very good insight into their personal lives. Interestingly he also noted that despite records saying foreigner, this often referred to people outside of the local area, so for example might be from a neighbouring town or county and not necessarily a foreign country.

Will noted that he had only been carrying his research out for 6 months. However the amount of work done already was just amazing.

A vote of thanks was given by Chair, Dr Nick Young.

Place names of West Berkshire

A large audience gathered to hear Dr David Peacock give a talk on the place names of Berkshire. David noted that whilst many names date to the Anglo-Saxon period, some have their roots much earlier dating from pre-Roman times. The later includes the River Thames (Temesa) and Rive Kennet (Cynetan). David noted several place names and where they originate from including: Combe – adapted in to Anglo-Saxon and means a bowl shaped valley. An example would be Combe Town, which today we know as Compton.

David highlighted this issue with our own Thatcham. Samuel Barfield noted in his history of Thatcham that the name derived from a Saxon Chief, Tace, who set-up his settlement, or hamlet, here. Hence Tace's Ham changing over the years to Thatcham. There is little evidence to support this, although it is possible. David put forward two alternative suggestions which raised a great many questions.

A vote of thanks was given by committee member Peter Lavarack.



Will talking to historical society members.

"many names date to the Anglo-Saxon period"

Help to research for a book on the Hut Camp

By Charles J. Hoye

I am a former US Army soldier stationed in Thatcham 1943-1945. I am attempting to write a book on my arrival in England and Thatcham and my subsequent Army service at the then-known G-45 Army Depot and about my life and experiences in your community. I was stationed in **THE HUT CAMP** on Station Road. I seek any history of that camp and our company that you might have to share with me. I have memories of a number of families in Thatcham, Holland, Tavares, Thomas, to name a few. I shall appreciate hearing from you.

(please see committee member Nick Young if you can provide any help).



Photos provided by Mr Charles Hoye of the Hut Camp.

Photo on the left: Camp HQ with (from left to right) Lt. Thomas Taylor, Capt. Francis Robinson and Sgt. Abraham Brill

Photo on the right: The Hut Camp from Station Road.

National History Month: Fact a Day

National local history month, May, has now come and gone, again! We celebrated the month with two events, firstly with the Peter Allen Memorial Lectures (see front page) and secondly with a fact a day. The latter was a huge success in 2009, and despite the media coverage this year, due to the election, we have still had coverage on our own website, the BBC and on Newbury Sound. Copies of the facts will be made available later in the year. In the mean time, here are a few facts we published:

- **10th May 2010:** Bryan Gush, who had a garage in Thatcham, developed his own car that was very successful at Brooklands in Spring 1934.
- **11th May 2010:** The earliest known written record of Thatcham's name comes from c.950 and is spelt Thaecham. This is likely to refer to either Thatched dwellings or the reed beds that run nearby which would have supplied the roofing materials.
- **12th May 2010:** The present Northfield Road was not known by that name in 1881 but called Three Chimneys Lane, or sometimes Heath Lane, the latter still used for a length towards Cold Ash.
- **13th May 2010:** Some 649 households were recorded in 1881 in the parish and the number of persons in a household varied between 1 and 18.

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 July to September 2010

3rd July, **Day trip to: Hampton Court Palace**

Thatcham Historical Society, Leave Thatcham Broadway (Thatcham Family Bookshop) at 9.15am.

17th July 1st August, **Festival of British Archaeology**

Hundreds of events taking place across the UK. Please check their website for details: <http://festival.britarch.ac.uk/>

18th July, **History on your doorstep, Nature Discovery Centre**

An exhibition and talks on local (Thatcham and Newbury) history and archaeology held at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre. Talks and exhibitions currently provided by Thatcham Historical Society and Newbury District Field Club.

9th to 12th September, **Heritage Open Days**

"From Cumbria to Cornwall, Northumberland to Norfolk, properties across England will throw open their doors for free as part of the country's annual celebration of local architecture, history and culture. Supported nationally by English Heritage and run locally by an army of volunteers and community champions, Heritage Open Days takes place on people doorstops and is the country's leading grassroots cultural event."

www.heritageopendays.org.uk, June 2010

11th September, **Day trip to: Natural History Museum**

Thatcham Historical Society, Leave Thatcham Broadway (Thatcham Family Bookshop) at 9.15am. Please note, although many of us are going to the Natural History Museum, so long as you are back at the coach on time, you can go anywhere (Science Museum, Victoria and Albert, Harrods or Hamley's).

27th September, **Bats, balls and biscuits**, Martin Bishop

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

28th September, **The Work of the Victoria County History**, Dr Simon Townley

Newbury District Field Club, 7:30pm in St John's Parish Room

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SEPTEMBER						
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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 chair@thatchamhistoricalsociety.org.uk.

Lawes Family

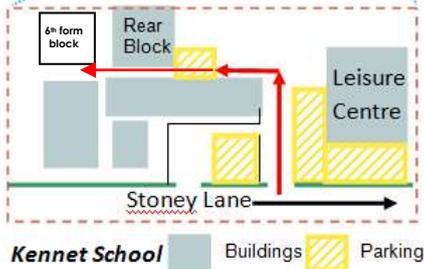
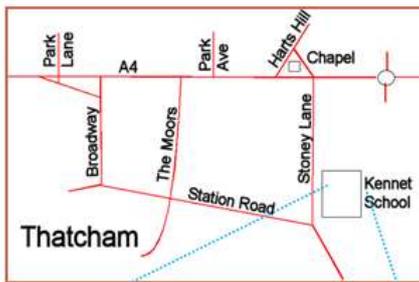
I am researching the Lawes family and believe I may be related to Richard Lawes (son of William and Ellen) who was christened on 9 Aug 1835 in St Mary's Church. If anybody else is researching the Lawes family I would love to get in touch.

Kind regards,
Michael Lawes

Collins Family

Hello, I am currently researching my family tree and am looking for information on Collins family Joseph Collins who married Frances Goldfinch and lived with their family in Chamberhouse Farm Thatcham between 1810-1850 he was listed on 1851 census as a farm bailiff. I know that Joseph Collins was born in 1783 in Kingsclere Hants and became farm bailiff the Collins family and a lot of other people in my tree had connections with Upton Court in Berkshire his wife was born Frances Goldfinch and her parents were George Goldfinch and Frances Norris and a high percentage of my tree alternated between Hampshire and Berkshire.

Peter Lindsey



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.