

Meeting reviews 2013/14

The Archaeology of Cranborne Chase

On 10th October 2013 Dr Martin Green came to talk to the group about his work at Down Farm, Cranborne Chase. Martin's family have farmed there for generations and he himself has been involved in studying, excavating and recording archaeological finds there for decades. Martin spoke of the first aerial photography he took of the site. He started in 1981 and used this method to show standing earthworks, crop marks and soil marks. Since then universities and the Meet The Ancestors team have worked on the site. Finds include a Bronze Age settlement and chariot fittings, a banjo enclosure, a late Romano British Grave with a bone comb and jewellery spindle and Roman coins. The site also contains the Dorset cursus which crosses three rivers and is aligned with the midwinter solstice. Martin's book *A Landscape Revealed: 10,000 Years on a Chalkland Farm* is available to buy for £14.99 on amazon.co.uk Thank you to Karen for taking notes.

Manuscripts, Maps and Memories



On 14th November Jan Smith spoke to the group about manuscripts, maps and memories. Jan worked as an Archivist for 35 years following training at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Her final role was as County Archivist for the Hampshire County Record Office. Jan spoke of the pleasure she gained from her job, the variety of people she met and the sources she dealt with. The work of the archivist is varied and includes collecting items for storage from all manner of places including dusty houses, a belfry and cow sheds! Archives matter because they are the unmediated evidences of history rather than post-event analysis in books. They help us to understand how we came to be as we are. They can be used to hold leaders to account, or to enable them to defend their record. They can be breath-taking in their ability to speak to us across the centuries. The greatest threats to archives have been mildew, rodents, silverfish and fire. Records at Winchester Cathedral have twice been damaged by troopers. Some

documents were turned into kites and one was found floating down the river at St. Cross! The Hampshire Record Office keeps documents in controlled conditions and regularly audits how safe they are from loss. Digitalisation is ongoing and the most items are being added to the website (including a map of Kings Worthy.) The Hampshire Record Office has storage capacity for another 6 years or more if the current rate of deposits continues. Most of the users of the Hampshire Record Office are undertaking family history. Notes by John Payne.

Carlton Bath - Winchester Cathedral

Carlton started with a brief résumé. He explained that he has worked at the cathedral for 23 years. He started as a carpenter, after first doing an apprenticeship with a company in New Alresford, which did a lot of work in churches, and hence his introduction to the cathedral. He has now worked for 3 Deans the current one being James Atwell. He leads a team which includes 3 gardeners, 3 masons, a carpenter and two others. He also has to rely on specialist contractors for certain work. Nowadays he finds that an extremely useful tool is a digital camera so that he can often discuss matters with the cathedral architect without the architect having to be there. He demonstrated with a photo of the Antony Gormley statue in the crypt – which at the moment is currently closed to the public due to the flooding – the statue is apparently at present flooded to the height of its thighs. The clock in the tower surprisingly has hands that are 10 foot long. The clock dates at least from 1777 when it was overhauled. There have been problems recently with it stopping which has now been sorted, but understandably it does not keep perfect time, and has to be adjusted periodically. A number of cathedrals, including Winchester, run a combined apprenticeship scheme for masons which last 5 years, which involves them spending short periods together at all the cathedrals working with the different stones. Winchester works in limestone. The flag post is 50 foot high, and the flag is 20 foot by 10 foot. Occasional problems involve the services of a steeplejack. Recently they had the loan of an extraordinarily large cherry picker and lorry, and Carlton showed some extraordinary photos of himself and the operator high above the cathedral out of sight of the lorry. This enabled him to inspect and photograph various items, including the presbytery roof which is currently being re-leaded for the first time in a hundred years. With regard to masonry repairs they only replace when all detail has been lost, and otherwise conserve so as to preserve the appearance of the building – they do not want parts of it to look new. At the end of the talk Carlton went over, with photos, the filming which has taken place at the cathedral, in which he and his team are involved to ensure the protection of the building – and a few of the team have even appeared as extras! This has included the “Da Vinci Code” – 1 week of filming for a few seconds on screen- “Murder in the Cathedral”, “God’s Architect” and “Elizabeth the Golden Age”. Of particular interest were the very realistic polystyrene tombs etc. produced by the film company to conceal radiators etc.

The Tichborne Claimant



Gill Arnott, the Keeper of the Arts for the Hampshire Museum Service explained the difficulties in proving identity in the case of The Tichborne Claimant in Victorian England, when only the beginnings of forensic science were available. Work on the Bowker Archive was started in 2006 with lottery funding, on condition that the Museum told the story. It took three years to put the talk together. Roger Tichborne (see above) was born in 1829 into a catholic family with considerable estates. His mother was an illegitimate offspring of the French royal family who had married Roger's father James Tichborne, who was at that time the fourth son of the family and so would not have expected to inherit the family baronetcy. As well as Roger they had another son Alfred born in 1839, after which their mother spent most of her time in Paris keeping the young Roger with her. During this time Roger was educated and spoke French, until he was brought back to England and sent to a catholic school at the age of 16. After this the family bought him a commission in the army. He met his first cousin Katherine and they wished to marry. However, an arrangement was reached that he would leave the army to travel for 2 years and if they still wanted to marry then they would try to arrange a dispensation from the Vatican. He spent a year in Valparaiso, until he was asked to return to help running the estates. However, six weeks after the vessel the "Bella" sailed only its longboat was found, but otherwise there was no wreckage or bodies. Lloyds declared the ship a total loss with all hands. All three of Roger's father's elder brothers had died without male heirs, which meant that his father, before his own death, became the baronet. Roger's younger brother Alfred died at the age of 27. However, his wife was pregnant at the time, and as it was a son, the infant became the new baronet. Roger's mother refused to accept that Roger was dead, and advertised for information.

Unsurprisingly she got a reply from a Tom Castro a butcher in Australia. He travelled to the Swan in Alresford, initially claiming to be a journalist, before claiming to be Roger Tichborne. He travelled to Paris where his "mother" claimed to recognize him, and provided him with a generous income, both to live on and to proceed to trial to claim the title. Unfortunately, his "mother" then died. This not only weakened his case but also meant that the funding ceased. As a result he started to issue Tichborne bonds which would pay out if he won the case. The trial did not go well for the claimant, especially during the evidence of Kathy, the first cousin who he had planned to marry. However, some of the evidence including the first use of photographs in the trial and an examination of the handwriting were favourable. However, the English Establishment had become concerned, particularly that the use of the bonds might be used in other cases, and he was brought to criminal trial for impersonation. Despite popular support, particularly in the press, the case went against him and he served 10 years in prison. On his release he enjoyed a considerable income for a few years going round the music halls, however, at the time of his death he was a pauper. The questions at the end of the talk illustrated a number of the conflicting points in the case. Despite a genetic fault which should have prevented him having children, which was also shared by Roger Tichborne, the claimant apparently had four children with his first wife, and four with his second. The claimant claimed to have lost the use of French, following a fall from a horse. The earlobes in the photos of the claimant and Roger were also different, but at the time it was not realised that these could not change with time. The poll of the audience was unanimous that the claimant was not Roger Tichborne. However, as Gill Arnott pointed out there were nevertheless a number of features in the case which went in the claimant's favour; and it is possible that he was in fact an illegitimate descendant of the Tichborne family.

The Worthys Other Mill - the Kings Worthy Saw Mill



In April Derek Brockway gave a talk on the Kings Worthy Saw Mill. Derek had used a wide variety of sources including maps, census returns, newspapers, adverts, photographs, sales brochures in order to piece together the history of this virtually unknown mill. It is not clear when the mill was first built. The Domesday Book lists several mills in the Upper Itchen Valley but by 1701 only two mills were in existence, one in Abbots Worthy and one near St Mary's Church, Kings Worthy. Maps of 1823 and 1840 and the 1841 census provide conflicting information as to the use and location of the mill in Kings Worthy. The 1841, 1851 and 1861 show the Allen family living in Kings Worthy with father then son working as sawyers. George Mundy was the proprietor of the saw mill around this time. His bankruptcy case was mentioned in the London Gazette in 1862 and presumably then the mill passed to its next owner, Thomas Sills, from Chesham. Derek believes that a big investment was made by Sills. An advertisement in the Kellys Directory of 1867 is only one of many adverts in trade directories that Sills placed. The 1871 census shows that ten people were linked to the saw mill, six of whom came from Chesham. The 1881 census, however, shows only one person (William Ings) working as a sawyer.

William was a local lad who had married a wealthy woman in 1877 with whom he had one child, Alice Maude Ings. His wealthy wife died and in 1891 William remarried and had a further ten children. By the 1890s William had added saw mills in Alton as well as one in Kings Worthy and moved to Ropley. He died there in 1906 leaving his mills to his eldest child Alice. She appears to have employed her half brother as manager and it seems he did not excel in this role. In 1908 it was noted that 'the late owner Mr Ings carried on a very successful business for many years but it has been badly managed during the 12 months since his death and needs an energetic man to look after it.' When the mill finally closed the building began to decay. When the by-pass was built in the late 1930s the course of the river was diverted and the remains of the mill were completely obliterated..

The history and landscape of the Worthys through painting in the Winchester City Council collection



In May, Ross Turlé delivered a brilliantly illustrated talk about the Worthy villages using a images including paintings, lithographs, sketches, objects and photographic plates. The City Council holds 42,000 items, some of which are online on the Winchester Museum Collections website. The collection includes the work of William Savage (1817-1887). William was one of several professional photographers in Winchester but the only who has a significant amount of work surviving for us to examine today. He began by selling fancy wool and needlework goods in The Square but later moved to the High Street and added glass, china and then photography to his business interests. Hundreds of his photos are in the Winchester City Council collection including ones from c. 1865 of the railways in Kings Worthy. His photos show the bridge by Legion Lane and the Lovedon Lane cutting when all the chalk was removed. Ross also used postcards and photographs to tell the story of Captain Basil Nixon and his wife Dorothy Nixon nee

Theodore. Captain Nixon was based in Winchester for part of the First World War and his wife and their baby son came to live in Kings Worthy. The collection gives a great insight into the military life and family life of the Nixons. One item gives a timetable of Captain Nixon's day which ends at 9.15pm when he starts hiking to Kings Worthy to see his wife.

A Visit to Down Farm, Sixpenny Handley, Dorset

Those who went on the 7th June enjoyed a very interesting visit on a lovely afternoon. Martin Green welcomed us and we began in his museum where we saw the amazing collection of things which he has found in his excavations, together with pictures and other artefacts. We could have spent a great deal longer there, but Martin had much more to show us and he took us around the various barrows and excavation sites on his farm, stopping frequently to explain and answer many questions. Quite apart from anything else, we enjoyed the extensive views across the Dorset countryside and this added to the pleasure of the afternoon. Derek thanked Martin on behalf of the Group.

A Walk Around Alresford



On 19th June Glenn Gilbertson conducted the group on a historical tour of Alresford. The tour began at the station which opened in 1865 as part of the Alton Alresford Winchester railway and later the Mid-Hants Railway. It is now a heritage railway known as Watercress Line with trains travelling between Alton and Alresford. Glenn then took the group along Station Road and pointed out the public toilets which were used, during the 1960s, by the Portland Spying Ring as a drop point. The tour then proceeded to St. John's Church where the people of Alresford have worshipped since the thirteenth century. The current building was largely rebuilt in the Norman gothic perpendicular style in 1898. The tour then moved down West Street and up Pound Hill. Here the group was shown the cottage that was bombed in the Second World War. The Junkers 88 plane that dropped the bomb was damaged and ended up crashing on Bramdean Common.

This was not the only plane that crashed in Alresford. In 1943 Captain Robert W. Cogswell was flying his damaged bomb laden B-17 Flying Fortress 'Lady Luck' in the direction of Alresford. It was clear to Cogswell that unless he took immediate action the plane would crash in the middle of the town which would cause a huge amount of damage and loss of life. After ordering his crew to bail out, Cogswell managed to ensure the plane would miss Alresford before bailing out himself. The tour continued up The Avenue, through Alrebury Park and on to the river. Here the group saw the Fulling Mill, a timber framed thatched house that sits across the river. There has been a mill here since the thirteenth century when water driven hammers turned raw cloth into usable material. The route continued along the river and on to Broad Street. The buildings here are largely Georgian although the laid out is due to the work of Bishop de Lucy who created the town in the thirteenth century. The tour ended at the Swan Hotel where the group enjoyed a meal together. Thanks go to Glenn for a splendid evening.