

Meeting reviews 2012/13

Castles in Wessex by Alan Turton



Alan's interest in castles started at an early age, he went on to work for the County Museums' Service for 25 years and also lived in Basing House, the last castle to be built in Wessex. Starting with the Iron Age and hill forts such as Maiden "Castle" Alan explained that strictly speaking Wessex had no castles until the Norman invasion in 1066. A castle being defined as a "private fortress of a King or noble and not a communal stronghold for all folk". So, back in the Roman period there were forts, mostly portable structures at first and then earth banks eg at Portchester. This was later adapted by the Saxons and provided protection for its community from invasions by Vikings and Danes. Alfred instigated the idea of "burghs" – defensible towns with space for all the inhabitants for 20 miles around to find refuge in. Wareham and Wallingford have impressive remains to this day. When the Danes invaded, Canute ordered Burghs to be destroyed so that the people couldn't use them as a stronghold against him. After the Norman Conquest, private individuals built fortified positions. This was a new concept. The motte, constructed in layers of different materials to aid stability, and timber keep, sometimes built on stilts, required acres of forestry to be felled for their construction. Vast areas of the countryside

were laid to waste to ensure not only initial construction but to constantly renew the rotting timbers. The landscape would have looked much more barren than today. The original Basing Castle was the 3rd oldest castle of the Norman Conquest, after Pevensey and Hastings. It was a ringwork and bailey castle, about 300' in diameter making it the largest in the country. One of their other large fortifications is at Old Sarum where the Normans built a ringwork defence on the existing huge Iron Age enclosure. It was here that William stood his army down. Winchester Castle had an early stone structure inside a Norman timber one. Henry 1st (early 12thC) started replacing timber castles with stone. He built great stone square keeps such as the shell keep at Carisbrooke, IoW (formerly a Saxon burg). Men would be conscripted in to work during the summer. On average there was an annual increase in wall height of about 4' – if you look at castle walls you'll often see large capping stones every 4' – used to protect layers beneath from winter frosts. Southampton Castle was originally a motte and bailey construction, first in timber, then stone, as was Corfe Castle and Portchester where the Norman square keep was added to the Saxon earth and timber work. Later the church was involved with castle building. Bishop Roger Salisbury rebuilt Old Sarum in stone (late 12th C) as his palace, together with Devizes and Sherbourne Castles too. Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester (and brother of King Stephen, grandson of William the Conqueror) built Wolvesley Castle. What looks like a keep is actually the kitchen and the other tower is a latrine! Under William, nobles had to have a "license to crenellate" to ensure the crown retained some control over who was fortifying which property. It appears that law has never been rescinded and may still be active today. In the early 13thC, castles such as Great Somerfield, Wiltshire and Fordbury Gardens in Reading were "thrown up" – adulterine castles, often unlicensed, a result of feuding lords. Most were soon destroyed. Although Henry's son, King John spent a lot of money on castles, the only new one, originally a hunting lodge, was at Odiham; it has the earliest octagonal keep and a moat. From here King John rode to Runnymede to sign the Magna Carta. Henry 3rd (mid 13thC) invested much into Winchester Castle (about £6000!). He pulled down the old keep and built tall curtain walls linking new round towers to defend the castle. He created 3 sally ports and rebuilt the Great Hall which survives today although his other grand apartments were destroyed by fire. Wars on the continent in the 14thC brought in ransom monies with which returning noblemen rebuilt their castles or fortified their manors, often in a more decorative form than previously eg Donnington near Newbury and, the most French in style, Old Wardour in Wiltshire: a huge hexagonal tower around a central open court. During Henry VIII's reign (16thC), with the threat of invasion from the French and Spanish, government structures were built to defend the land. These are "forts" not "castles" since they were not designed as homes for living in. The last license issued for a full castle was at Basing House (mid 16thC). It was the first mock castle, built for show mainly in brickwork. There is also Lulworth "Castle" but this was a hunting lodge with a tower, erected in James I's time but it had no license so strictly speaking is not a real castle! The civil war destroyed many Wessex castles and the stones of what remained were often used to build houses locally. Portchester castle was used as a prisoner of war camp in the 18thC for the French, and later as a theatre. Winchester Castle was blown up in the civil war and what remained was levelled (late 17thC) by Charles II except the Great Hall, in preparation for his grand renaissance plan for a palace to rival Versailles to be designed by Wren. However, this was never finished and in the 18thC the buildings were converted to barracks. Although in centuries past castles would have been a symbol of domination and often a thing of hatred for the people nearby, they now form a part of the beauty of our countryside in a much more wooded landscape than during their heyday.

Hookpit Farm Past and Present



This is a photo of Hookpit Farm House which stood not far from the Tesco store in Springvale Road close to Cundell Way. Nigel Bright was born at the Farmhouse and still farms nearby today. On 10th January Nigel took the Worthys Local History Group on a fascinating journey through the history of the farm and farming techniques. The farm features in early maps from the Victorian times and sale details of the property in 1919 show it had 7 bedrooms, sitting room, scullery, box rooms, living room with range and dresser and underground cellar, 430 acres with 6 additional workers' cottages. Nigel's father became the tenant there in 1941 later buying the property in 1962. The farm return in 1941 showed the business had 76 cattle with calves, 90 acres of wheat and oats, 4 horses and 2 tractors and 98 acres of bare fallow. Among the memories recounted by Nigel were tales of the pond in front of the farm - fun for a young person to float rafts on and also fun for Mr Till to swim in each Christmas day well into his 80s and 90s. Although it sounded a somewhat muddy lagoon as the drain for the cattle ran nearby! Work on the farm started at 7am with breakfast at 8.30. Nigel would

join workers as they made a bonfire in a can to keep warm and cook toast. Another fond memory was that of the annual hedge cutting around the lanes which usually ended in a bonfire party with baked potatoes and candles in jam jars. Part of the farm was designated a casualty station in the Second World War but all that Nigel's mother was issued with was one crutch and a roll of bandages! Fortunately the station wasn't needed. The family did wake up one night though, to find a tank squadron outside the farmhouse. This was the night before troops embarked for D-Day; the men washed in the water troughs next morning. In 1950s the farm installed a milking parlour and used milk churns - tankers didn't collect the milk as they do today. The farm had a herd of Ayrshires with a few Guernseys to improve the quality of the milk. Later there was a mobile milking parlour which the dairy men and women had to use out in the fields in all weathers. The cattle were sold soon after Nigel's father bought the farm and it became arable. The farmstead moved to its current location on Stoke Charity Road in 1966. Over the years the style of farming has changed dramatically. Earliest harvesting involved stooks and thrashing. The tractors were dual fuel - petrol to start them and paraffin to run on - but they were difficult to start and travelled very slowly. The first combine was very labour intensive, now it's all worked by computer. In earlier days spanners were used to adjust the combine controls for different crops, now it's done at the push of a button and there is even technology to analyse soil quality. This was a fascinating look at how the face of farming and this area of Kings Worthy have changed almost beyond recognition, with amazing photos of a time gone past.

Whatever happened to King Alfred's College?



Hill which was considered to be healthier owing to the airy position and mod cons, including fans in the roof that removed foul air, were fitted. Initially it was built with 56 students in mind and two houses for the Principal and Vice Principal. After the First World War there was a great push to expand and adjoining properties were bought. St. Swithun's Lodge, for example, was used to house Catholics and non-conformists away from the rest of the students! In 1928 it was decided that having Winchester College and Winchester Training College was confusing so the institution was renamed King Alfred's College. From 1940 to 1946 it was used by non-commissioned intelligence staff that moved to Bletchley and the ATS who kept troops in touch with their families. The university were pleased to welcome come of these staff back on campus during the 2011 Winton celebrations. The second half of the twentieth century saw many significant changes. In 1958 there was a vigorous debate about how to expand and this resulted in women being admitted much to the irritation to some of the existing male students. St Elizabeth's halls of residence were built and a female Vice Principal, Robina McIntyre, would fire an airgun at the bottoms of male student caught sneaking in the windows! The 1960s and 1970s saw King Alfred's beginning to award University of Southampton degrees and becoming a College of Higher Education. And perhaps more excitingly, young Colin Firth learnt to swim in the swimming pool on campus. This something worth remembering when watching the famous driving in the lake scene in *Pride and Prejudice*...In 1985 the college had around 1,000 students but by 1995 this had increased to 4,500. The programmes available had expanded just Primary Education to a variety of single and combined honours degrees. Other major changes were the development of a West Downs Campus, a Bar End sports stadium and the granting of taught degree awarding powers in 2003. The name changed from King Alfred's College of Higher Education to University College Winchester in 2004 and then the University of Winchester in 2005. Research degree awarding powers were granted in 2008. Today the University has around 6,500 students from 60 countries on undergraduate, postgraduate and research degrees. The campus continues to evolve in order to provide students with the most up to date facilities as well as fresh air!

On 7th February Emeritus Professor Tom Beaumont James talked to the group about the history of the University of Winchester. Tom has worked in the History/Archaeology department of the University for over 30 years and has recently been commissioned to write an updated history of the institution. The University started life in 1840 as a diocesan training school for teachers and was based in St. Swithun's Street. It later moved to a site at Wolvesley Palace but this proved unsatisfactory as students were prone to typhoid. In 1862 a new permanent site was chosen on West

Kings Worthy House: From Victorian Pile to Pile of Rubble



The history of Kings Worthy House was obviously something a lot of people were curious about given the large audience for Alix Hickman's talk. The first evidence of this house was an advertisement in the Hampshire Advertiser in June 1860 inviting tenders from local buildings were wished to build "a dwelling house (to be called Worthy Lodge)". The census taken the following year shows the house was being built. The first resident appears to have been Dame Sophia Anne Watson widow of Sir Frederick Watson and daughter of Sir William Thoyts, High Sheriff of Berkshire. Little is known of Sophia's time in Kings Worthy other than the fact that she used to visit the school to inspect the needlework. She died in 1869 and is buried in at St. Mary's. The next residents were Edward and Mary Ann Daniell. Again, little is known of their brief residency in Kings Worthy other than a news article of 1871. It reported that while driving through Headbourne Worthy during a storm, their carriage was hit by lightning killing their coachman on the spot! In 1874 Edward died and Mary Ann moved to Brighton. There was a massive sale of furniture and the house was sold to the Turnor family. They were probably the best known residents as they lived in the house for four decades and were great

benefactors for the village. Richard Whitehead Turnor bought the church a new organ, paid for the Ascension window in memory of his father and also provided the Reading Room and Almshouses. Sadly he and his parents died by the end of 1888 and his spinster sister Emma was the only Turnor left at Kings Worthy House. Emma lived at the house with her companion Margaret Ethel Sturges until her death in 1916. Charles and Dora Fetherstonhaugh lived briefly at the house. Charles had made his money in tea and coffee plantations in Ceylon. After living at Kings Worthy House they moved to Northlands, Worthy Road. Gerald and Mary Curry were the next residents, living there from 1920 through to their deaths in 1927 and 1946. Mary is often mentioned in the reminiscences held by the WLHG. She was a very smart lady who wore a toque like Queen Mary and who was driven around with her pugs by a uniformed chauffeur. Mary was involved in a variety of charitable works including fundraising for the building of the Jubilee Hall. At this time the lodge was occupied by the Matcham family and Richard Matcham was employed as the gardener. During the war his children/grandchildren took refuge at the lodge house and remember, among other things, the spiders lurking in the outside loo. Mary Curry died in 1956 but the Matchams remained at the lodge while the main house was turned into a hotel and then a children's home. In 1952 there was a fire at the main house. Fire crews came from Winchester and Alresford to tackle the blaze and to rescue children who were still inside. After this time the house was used as a lodging house and was run by the Cowells. By then the lodge was occupied by the Hibbert family and they made much effort to modernise their home with mains water, electricity etc. By 1963 the house was vacant and under demolition. A fire broke out, probably caused by the vandals and "hippies" that had moved in. Many large country houses were demolished at this time, by 1955 one large house was being demolished every five days. In the case of Kings Worthy House it is likely that the possibility of a road being built on part of the property was partially to blame for its decay. Today the property is owned by a Jersey company. Two planning applications have been made (in 1985 and 1992) to turn the land into technology/light industry parks but both applications were refused. Today it is possible to walk through the property and trace where the gates and buildings were. Only rubble remains from what was a beautiful Victorian pile.

Worthy Down: The Fleet Air Arm Period 1939-1960

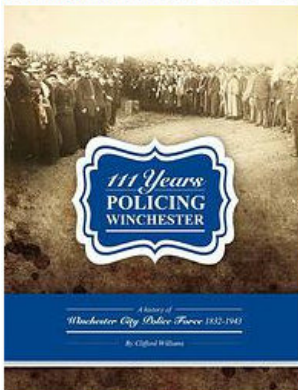


In November, Tony Dowland spoke to the group about the Fleet Air Arm Period of Worthy Down's history. Worthy Down had been used as an airfield since 1917 and before that, as a racecourse. In 1939 the site was taken over by the Admiralty and named HMS Kestrel. It was used by no. 755, 756 and 757 squadrons for Telephonist Air Gunner training using Proctors, Sharks, Seamews, Lysanders, Skuas and so on. After war broke out the site was also briefly used by the survivors of the sinking of HMS Courageous. Worthy Down itself was under attack during the Battle of Britain, a raid by the Luftwaffe in August 1940 thankfully did not cause too much damage. Other bases were not so lucky so testing of spirifires, seafires and other planes was moved to Worthy Down. Later that year Lord Haw Haw, not knowing that HMS Kestrel was a land base, announced that it had been bombed and sunk! Another interesting point that that Laurence Olivier was based at Worthy Down. He and Vivien Leigh resided at School Lane, Headbourne Worthy while Laurence was training. As the war progressed the need for TAG training reduced and so 755, 756 and 757 squadrons were disbanded. Worthy Down was used temporarily by a variety of units including observation aircraft preparing for the Normandy invasion. Towards the end of the war helicopters and first line types were stored on the site and after the war ground units were based there. However in 1950 the site was closed down and did not re-open until the arrival of Air Electrical School in 1952. Worthy Down was known as HMS Ariel during this time and the existing wartime buildings were supplemented by new technical accommodation. After the AES left in 1958 the site temporarily used by the Westland Whirlwind helicopters of the 848 squadron before being handed over to the Royal Army Pay Corps. Tony paid tribute to the late Lieutenant-Commander Blake of Woodham's Farm in Kings Worthy who was extremely helpful during Tony's research of the history of Worthy Down. The talk was well illustrated by a variety of photographs, the aerial shots showing the racecourse track and airfield was especially interesting.

The Swing Riots by Caroline Edwards, Hampshire County Archivist

In 1830 agricultural labourers were becoming increasingly distressed and angry because of low wages, poor conditions and lack of work due to the introduction of threshing machines. These machines were seen by the labourers as taking away their winter employment and they were targeted and destroyed during the riots. Letters signed with the pen name 'Captain Swing' were sent to farmers and others demanding higher wages and threatening to destroy the threshing machines. These became known as the 'Swing letters'- hence the name 'Swing Riots' for the disturbances that followed. Mainly in the south of England, mobs of labourers roamed around their own and neighbouring districts, demanding a living wage from their employers and destroying the machinery. In Hampshire these riots began on November 19th and ended on the 26th but the consequences for the men were devastating. Many had been forced to join in the rioting against their will. Special constables were recruited to arrest the men and many were innocent of the crimes for which they were condemned. Some were hanged, many transported or imprisoned and their families were reduced to utter poverty. At the time a married man might earn nine or ten shillings a week while young unmarried men received as little as 4s 6d. The labourers were seeking 12s 6d a week for married men and many of the magistrates agreed with that rate. According to James Carter, an agricultural labourer from Sutton Scotney, "It was the young men as led the others and forced them into it." He was sentenced to seven years transportation, later commuted to imprisonment in the hulks. He was released after two years. Sadly, the result of these few days of rioting were continuing poor wages and unemployment in the winter. Many families were reduced to utter destitution when they were deprived of a breadwinner. Caroline showed us letters from transported labourers that were surprisingly articulate and written in a good clear hand. It also transpired at their trials that some of them were well read and able to discuss contemporary affairs in a knowledgeable way. Among the archives at the Record Office are letters from men who had been transported and a great deal of other background information relating to 'The Swing Riots.' Information about the activities of the rioters in Martyr Worthy and Abbots Worthy can be found in Worthy History No. 6 and No. 7

Policing Winchester 1832 - 1943



On 9th May Dr Clifford Williams spoke to the group about the history of the Winchester Police Force. The force was established in 1832, before similar forces were established in Southampton, Portsmouth, Andover, Lymington, Basingstoke and Romsey. The Hampshire Constabulary was formed in 1839. In 1875 a police station was created in the Guildhall and this was used until the new station was built in North Walls in the 1960s. The presence of the barracks meant that Winchester's population fluctuated but generally there were 20,000 people during the late nineteenth century. During the 111 years that the force was operational for there were no proven cases of murder. The more common crimes were theft, vagrancy and drunkenness. There were cases of infanticide but none were given the guilty verdict. Crimes that Dr Williams found particularly interesting included riots in 1864 over the proposed buildings on Orams Arbour, the annual beating of the bounds (when the police constables helped the marking of the boundary of Winchester) and in 1915 when there was trouble at a dairy shop which people believed was run by a German! At first the force consisted of one inspector and seven constables. Turnover of officers was high, probably due to working long shifts seven days a week. Only a few days off per year were allowed. Later there averaged one police constable per 1,000 people. The force was closed during the second world war and in 1943 it was decided to amalgamate it with the Hampshire Constabulary. For more information you can buy Dr Williams' book in Waterstones or via the following website <http://hampshireconstabularyhistory.org.uk>

A Visit to the University of Winchester



On 13th June the group met at the University of Winchester for a tour conducted by Alix Hickman, graduate of the University and member of the Student Recruitment team there. The tour began at the West Downs centre which was originally a Victorian prep school but was developed in the 1990s by the University. Initially a student village was built in the grounds and then the main school building and master's lodge were redeveloped. As many original features as possible were maintained including the chapel screen and memorials. Next the tour moved to the main King Alfred campus on Romsey Road. The group were shown recently built and renovated buildings as well as the original chapel and main building which were built in the 1860s. For more information please visit the university website www.winchester.ac.uk The picture shows the West Downs Centre, which now houses the Winchester Business School.

Tour of St. Peter's Church, Winchester

On Monday 8th July the group gathered at St. Peter's Church on Jewry Street. John and Pat Thornhill welcomed the group in the impressive new pastoral centre and then John gave the group an interesting insight into how the church came into being. The story began in 1674 when a wealthy Catholic, Roger Coreham, bought property in what is now St. Peter's Street and settled a priest into his residence. In 1792 John Carter and John Milner built a Chapel and this was the first consecrated Roman Catholic Church since the Reformation. In the 1800s further land and property was purchased in the St. Peter's Street/Jewry Street area. The current Church was designed by Waters and built by Russell White of Basingstoke. It was completed in 1926. John then conducted a tour and highlighted included the 1948 window created to commemorate the Second World War, the Sacred Heart Chapel and the Lady Chapel. Moving outside the Church, the tour concluded with the residences and the Milner Hall. The group was very grateful to John for explaining the history and symbolism of the various aspects of the property. And were grateful to John and Pat for the very welcome refreshments at the end.