

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 12

Editor—Terry Collins

October 2014

Much Hadham Forge

A visitor from the nearby village of Much Hadham was our speaker for September, as Robin Webb spoke to us about the Much Hadham Forge Museum. Robin has been involved with the museum for many years and is also a member of Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust, which looks after a number of buildings within the county.

The Forge has been in operation for over 200 years and even today it is a working forge with a blacksmith in residence. Robin began his talk by describing the art of the blacksmith which has developed since Roman times and was awarded its own charter in the UK by Queen Elizabeth I. in 1571. He then went on to describe the differences between a blacksmith and a farrier who works solely with horses. Whereas the blacksmith may shoe horses he will be more likely to be working in metal making gates, hinges or weather-vanes.

Until the middle of the 20th century almost every village in the country had its own smithy but they slowly dwindled away in the 1930's and 40's. although I can remember at least one near my home in South



Much Hadham Forge Today

East London in the 1950's. Today there are very few blacksmiths still working. Until the 19th Century the blacksmith would have been using wrought iron but then it was replaced by steel, an easier metal to work with.

Robin explained some of the tools used and the techniques the smith uses. Fullering is shaping a square bar of metal, while upsetting is hammering a piece of metal on the end to make it shorter. Two pieces of metal can be joined by heating them until white hot and then where the pieces meet they are hammered together until they fuse together.

The Forge Museum is set within a Grade 2* listed building dating from the 15th Century when it was part of Moor Place, and parts of it date from a century later, although the Forge and the Bellows room date from a 17th Century conversion. The blacksmiths shop was added in 1811 when the blacksmith Charles Page moved in.

The Page family were to remain the village blacksmiths for the next 170 years until Charles Page, always known as Charlie, died in 1983 aged 91. His daughter, Jean, did not want the forge to fall into disrepair or be sold on, so in 1988 she conveyed the forge to the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust.

A great deal of work has been done into restoring the Forge to its present

condition, and after the renovation, during which over 7000 items were found which are still being cleaned and catalogued, it was rented out to a working smith and part of it converted into a museum, and re-opened to the public in 1991.

Robin answered a number of questions from the audience and was warmly thanked by the Chairman for his educational and interesting talk to the Society.



Hadham Forge Wall Painting

One of the unique features of the Forge Museum are the Elizabethan wall paintings found by Jean Page by accident they date from the 16th century and show scenes from the 'Judgement of Solomon' plus the coat of arms of Queen Elizabeth and the Newce family who were the original owners of the buildings. The figure seated on the throne in the painting represents Solomon but on close examination it appears to be Queen Elizabeth.

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SALHS Barbecue 2014

Despite the threat from the tail end of Hurricane Bertha 26 SALHS members went along to Bachelors Hall in the High Street, the home of John and Rowan Lloyd on Sunday August 10th. On arrival the sun was shining and it was a lovely summer afternoon. Not for long however, before we had a chance to even get the barbecue hot, down came the rain. Fortunately John had a marquee that was erected in a hurry, almost like a challenge on a TV show.

Up went the umbrellas and on went the waterproofs for a few minutes until we all managed to get the chairs inside the marquee and everyone seated. With the food covered by umbrellas all was dry, apart, that is, from the drinks table, meaning that anybody pouring something for themselves got wet outside as well as in. Despite the heavy rain, thunder and lightning, everyone seemed cheerful enough,

and after about 20 minutes the rain cleared and the sun emerged, as did some of those in the marquee. Fortunately the barbecue itself was under cover and all this time 'Dick' Dixon had been busy grilling sausages and burgers to complement the salads and baguettes already laid out.

Most of the members there were fascinated by the gazebo that the Lloyd's have at the bottom of their garden overlooking the Mill Stream. Built in 1760 it is a lovely little building with windows on two sides and a very nice little fireplace to keep its occupants warm. When they first bought the house they were told that they should demolish the gazebo as it was unsafe. They decided not to do this and refurbished the building. This involved jacking the building up while some of it was straightened or replaced. Now painted blue and white it looks

extremely quaint at the bottom of the garden.

When everybody had finished the barbecue out came the desserts, all homemade and extremely tasty. Thanks go to Rowan Lloyd and Jane Dixon for these, enjoyed by one and all, I think that everybody for a while forgot about calorie counting. Conversations were taking place all around the garden, as the afternoon progressed in the sun, with the drinks table starting to get busy.

Things began to wind down at about 5.00pm when we started to clear up, dismantle the marquee and start the long process of washing up, seemingly a never ending task.

As everybody left they rightly thanked John and Rowan and Dick and Jane for all the hard work they had put in to ensure that, despite the weather to begin with, everybody who attended enjoyed the afternoon.

A Message from Ron Dale

Thanks to all people who sent me cards during my two stays in hospital - too numerous to reply individually. I am now learning to walk with my new hip and have recovered from the pneumonia. I have recently met many new friends, both in hospital and amongst my many carers I have had fussing over me. Naturally the subject of local history cropped up in these new conversations and as I am very proud of our website I naturally recommended that people look us up. However, after asking them what they thought of the news about Alwine's Frith, eyes glazed over! It soon became obvious they had been looking at the wrong website. Two of these people were actually members. Our website has everything a local history website should have thanks to Ian and especially to Brian Johnson for all his hard work. But you do need to search for SALHS and you do need to click on MEDIA to read all the research. There are several other excellent sites concerning Stanstead Abbots but for research and history you need the local history society. Once again, thanks for the cards and phone calls, very much appreciated.

Stanstead Abbott Scouts Talk

Stanstead Abbots has a flourishing Scout troop of some 50 members and on Friday 17th October they were given the task of assembling boxes and filling them with 15,000 poppies for distribution around the village. As it is a large group they were divided into two and whilst one dealt with the poppies in the Parish Hall, Terry was requested to give a short talk, about the war and a few of the names on the War Memorials in



Stanstead Abbots and St Margaret's, to the other group in the scouts HQ. They would then swap over and it would all take place again. They seemed to enjoy the talk and there were lots of questions and we were told it was a success by the scout leader, Neil Johnson, as they were still talking about it later that evening, during their sleep over.

Glenis Collins

The Reality of War 1914-1918

by Wilfred Owen, one who was there

Probably the most famous of First World War poets, Wilfred Owen was initially a pacifist, but driven by guilt, he volunteered in 1915 and joined the army as a Lieutenant in the Manchester Regiment. After training in England he was posted to France in January 1917, where his unit were sent to the Somme area at the village of Serre. Up to this time his poetry had been unremarkable, but he was determined to become a poet after the war. In his new uniform, like thousands of other young men, he was full of boyish enthusiasm for his forthcoming adventures and was soon embroiled in the gruesome adventure of blood, gore, mud and the horror of life in the trenches. His opinions soon altered. He wrote home to his mother; *'The people of England needn't hope; they must agitate.'* (June 1917)

Eventually he was wounded. He was blown up, he was con-

cussed, he suffered trench fever and was sent home to recover as he was suffering from shell-shock (neurasthenia). He was sent to Craiglockhart hospital near Edinburgh. It was here he met Siegfried Sassoon, another of the war poets, who encouraged him to continue with his poetry. Soon he was keen to return to the trenches in France. He told his brother, *'I know I shall soon be killed, but it's the only place I can make my protest felt'*, and in April 1918 he was back in the front line. On 31st October 1918, he wrote to his mother what transpired to be his last letter. The Germans were in retreat. The French people were welcoming English soldiers jubilantly. They all sensed the war was nearly over.

Wilfred wrote, *It is a good life. I am more obvious, dear mother, than you are of the ghastly glimmering of the guns outside and the hollow crashing of the shells...of this I am certain;*

you could not be visited by a band of friends half as fine as surrounds me...

A few days later, on 4th November, one week exactly before the Armistice, Wilfred Owen was shot and killed in the village of Ors. His parents received the telegram informing them of his death just a week after the war ended.

Owen's poems did not glorify war. That was never his intention. He wished to portray the pity of war, not the glory. But he did write of his real life experiences and did not any punches.

Based on a gas attack in which a friend died, probably his most moving poem was DULCE ET DACORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI, which are the first words of a poem by Horace and translate to, 'It is sweet and right to die for your country' a sentiment that Owen called the old lie.

Ron Dale

*He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in the face,
His hanging face, like a devil's, sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gurgling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
The old lie; Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*



Wilfred Owen 1893-1918

Notes from the Past Part 6

This month we are looking at the entries in William Clift's notebook referring to his son (Arthur) Thomas.

He joined the army on 26th February 1916 in the Hertfordshire Regt. He was sent to Tring for training on 2nd March and went to France on Wednesday 5th July 1916. He was transferred to the Bedfordshire Regt shortly after.

From then on there were letters and postcards from Tom almost every other day, sometimes William received more than one a day. On 28th October 1916 William received a letter from Tom stating that he was in hospital. He mentions his leg but we are unsure whether this was a wound or an illness. He was released from hospital about 12th November or later. He was back into hospital again however on 4th January 1917 and he was out again by 25th February as his letter on that date makes no

mention of a hospital.

The next mention of Tom is on 11th November when he came back to England for 12 days leave. There are no further mentions of Tom until 12th November 1918 when he was home again on leave. He returned to France on Tuesday 26th when they went to London to see him off.

He finally came home for good from Belgium on 26th January 1919. When he left the army he held the rank of Corporal and was awarded two medals, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He started work at Easene on 3rd March.

Tom (as he was called) died in 1952 aged 58 years.

Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above act we have to advise that the Society holds information on computer in respect of each member. This information is used for routine membership purposes only and remains confidential.

Forthcoming events

November Friday 14th In Memoriam by Terry Collins
Please bring along any WW1 memorabilia you may have.

December Friday 12th Xmas Party (Members Only)
Please bring a plate of food to share - Drinks Provided.

January Friday 9th **2015** Buntingford Line Part 2 by Stephen Ruff

February Friday 13th Theobalds-Hertfordshire's Lost Royal Palace by Stephen Poulter

March Friday 13th The Poor Law in Hertforshire by Alan Thomson

April Friday 10th Ware History (With a Nod to S/Abbotts) by David Pearman

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm
Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included

The SALHS Annual Quiz Nite

Something that seasickness might do...!

Answer...Turnham Green! Just one of the answers to questions about the London Underground in SALHS latest quiz night on 10th October!

Terry and Glenis Collins organised a wonderful, if testing, evening for 74 people at the Parish Hall. 10 rounds of questions plus the Underground quiz drove most of us insane with frustration! The night involved a huge amount of alcohol befitting a traditional history society! Many guests joined us and hopefully their fun filled evening will translate into increased membership.

The evening raised £435 for the SALHS coffers some of which will go towards the Xmas party in December. 15 prizes in the raffle one of which was a pair of microwavable slippers won by someone on our table...slippers that can be microwaved...that's new to me!

So a huge thanks to Terry and Glenis and everyone who joined in.

Ian White – Chairman

The SALHS Committee May 2014

Hon. President	Ron Dale
Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Website	Brian Johnson
Archivist/Historian	Ray Dixon
Archivist/Facebook	Andrea Coppen
Public Relations	Bob Hunt
School Liaison/ Programme Organiser	Janet Dance
Newsletter	Terry Collins
Parish Council Rep	Julia Davies
Co-opted Member	Jenny Johnson
Committee Members	Linda Gifford Gerald Coppen

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