

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 22

Editor—Terry Collins

April 2017

The Gunpowder Plot

Our speaker in February saw the welcome return of Richard Thomas with an enthralling talk detailing the story behind the Gunpowder Plot. Richard's presentation was the result of an enormous amount of research into the details of the plot and the 13 conspirators themselves.

The succession of James I to the throne led to many Catholics hoping that this would lead to their religion becoming permitted and free. However this did not happen and many Catholics in the country began to make their opposition to the king more open.

One such man was Robert Catesby, in effect the leader of the plot against the king.

Together with fellow conspirators John Wright and Thomas Wintour, they met at the Duck Inn in Fleet Street on 20th May 1604 and took an oath to blow up King James and his Parliament the next time it met, 7th July 1604. But the King and Parliament cancelled this sitting.

By then there were 13 conspirators including Guido Fawkes, who was included for his experience with gunpowder gained while serving as a mercenary in the Spanish Netherlands for some years. It was planned to plant gunpowder in the undercroft of the House of Lords and 36 barrels of powder were assembled, but due to the delays they became damp and could not be used

and so they were abandoned and, presumably, thrown into the Thames. Another 36 barrels were purchased and taken across the river to Westminster and hidden under firewood in the undercroft. The second part of the plan was to kidnap the 9 year old Princess Elizabeth, the Kings daughter, who lived at Combe Abbey near Coventry. Once the

held it from the King until 1st November. Lord Monteaule's servant, Thomas Ward had connections to the conspirators and sent a message to Catesby advising that the plot had been discovered but it still went ahead.

Fawkes was discovered in the undercroft on the night of 4th November but was able to talk his way out of trouble, but later that night he was again discovered along with matches, torchwood and gunpowder, so he was arrested and taken before the king the following morning. With the plot now known to the king the plotters fled from London, heading North towards the Midlands. On the 6th November the plotters raided Warwick



King and the rest of his family and the Parliament were dead Elizabeth was to have been installed as Queen. It was assumed that once the King was dead there would be a popular uprising.

Fawkes had got a job under the name John Johnson and was caretaker of a house next to the House of Lords and was scheduled to set off the gunpowder on 5th November. The final details of the plot were finalised in October, but the plot had already been discovered.

On 26th October 1604, Lord Monteaule received an anonymous letter which set out the basics of the plot, unsure what to do, he took it immediately to Lord Salisbury, who with-

Castle for gunpowder and arms, and then continued to Holbeche House on the borders of Staffordshire, where six of the plotters were determined to make their last stand. When the local Sheriff arrived with 200 men the firing began and within a few minutes the conspirators were either killed, wounded or taken prisoner. The survivors were all tried and found guilty of treason and hung drawn and quartered. Had the plot succeeded all those in the House of Lords would have died.

At the end of his talk Richard answered questions from the audience and was warmly thanked for an excellent and knowledgeable talk.

Terry Collins

Antiques Roadshow Returns

March saw the return of our popular Antiques Roadshow feature. This time the speaker was Tim Turner, Sworders senior valuer and his talk was the intriguingly titled, Fakes and Forgeries and he followed this by looking at and telling us about a number of the items that members had brought along and put on display.

He began his talk by explaining that most of the famous artists in the past had used apprentices and assistants and when these began painting on their own they used the styles of their masters. It was assumed in 1925 that there were over 700 paintings by Rembrandt around the world, and to confirm this it was decided that all of them should be checked for authenticity, so 10 Dutch experts checked them all over 25 years. In 1945 the number confirmed had been reduced to only around 400 and in the late 1990's just over 100.

Tim then recounted a few stories showing how some of the forgers operated. In 2002 an elderly man went into Bolton museum with a parcel wrapped in brown paper and tied with string, claiming it to be from his grandfather's forgotten collection. On opening it there was what appeared to be an old Egyptian figure from the Amarna period of which there were only two others known in the world. The museum said that it was interested in the piece and after consulting experts at the British Museum and Christie's they bought it for over £400k and displayed it until 2006.

This was not the first time that Greenhalgh had sold a fake, in 1994 he had sold a small figure called The Faun claiming it to be a work by Gauguin. It was sold to Sotheby's for £20k, and later bought by the Art Institute of Chicago where it was displayed until 2007.

They were caught when they tried the same trick with a supposed Assyrian relief from Nineveh of soldiers and horses. After being examined by the British Museum and certified as genuine, when it was examined at Bonham's auctioneers they became suspicious about certain anomalies. The horses reins were not of the right period and there was a spelling mistake in the cuneiform writing. The Museum contacted the Arts and Antiquities Unit at Scotland Yard and the offenders were arrested after an 18 month enquiry.



The Faun by Shaun Greenhalgh

At their trial 44 different forgeries were discussed and at least 120 had been passed to various institutions and police believe there are still some in circulation.

The next story concerned John Myatt and John Drewe who, police claim perpetrated the biggest art fraud of the 20th Century. Myatt was an artist who put and advertisement in Private Eye magazine offering, 'Genuine Fakes. Nineteenth and Twentieth Century paintings from £150' One of his customers John Drewe asked him for a painting for his wife in the style of Graham Sutherland, which he duly painted. Drewe then came back twice more asking for similar paintings, which he then sold on to museums and gal-

eries. Myatt became a willing partner and is believed to have produced at least 200 fakes, but only about 60 have been recovered, many were sold by Christies and Sothebys and art dealers around the world. When Drewe was both arrested in 1996 police found materials at his home that he had used to produce certificates of authenticity and provenances of the work Myatt had produced. Both were sentenced to prison but on his release Myatt continued painting and has even held an exhibition of his 'Genuine Fakes'

Following his talk we all had a wine and cheese break while Tim examined a number of items that members had brought along.

Tim then spoke briefly about almost all the items that he had examined but he concentrated a few, including a clock with a French movement in a rosewood case, a Shelley tea set and a first edition of Dickens' Little Dorritt. Tim was thanked by Vice Chairman Bob Hunt and answered a number of questions from the audience, at the end of a fascinating evening.

Terry Collins

Editors Apology

You will see that this copy of the newsletter is not up to standard, colour wise, due to the fact that the printer is wearing out. We have supplied two printers for the Society's use so far but they are not really capable of printing the volume of pages that we need for the newsletters. As the cost of an ink-jet colour printer capable of meeting our needs would be too expensive, my suggestion is that the Society purchase a mono laser printer, a colour one would be too costly, which can cope with the high volume we print. We could always e-mail a colour copy to those of you who would prefer it, as we will still be producing it in colour. We are of course open to any other suggestions from the membership.

Terry Collins

General Joseph Bonus (1836-1926)

One of the village's most prestigious residents in the early 20th Century was General Joseph Bonus who retired from 31 years army service to live quietly in England. Firstly at Frome in Somerset, and then in Brentford, Middlesex and spent his final years at Newlands, Hunsdon Road. He had two sons and a daughter from two marriages

Although today few people would have heard his name, he spent most



General Bonus as a young officer

of his army career fighting in India and taking part in numerous campaigns, being mentioned in despatches several times. His exploits would fill a book and have been faithfully recorded by Lieut. Edward de Santis U.S. Army retired, in his online biography of the brave old soldier in 2002.

He commenced his military career as a cadet in the East India Company's Military Academy at Addiscombe House, Croydon and entered the Army as a second lieutenant in the Royal Engineers and Bombay Sappers and Miners. His bravery and enthusiasm for hard work gained him the seven promotions during his long career to become a General.

Although he was in charge of engineers running a railway across the Indian continent, he took part in many skirmishes with hostile tribesmen and was involved in a siege and capturing and disarming mutineers. He saw a great deal of action for an engineer! For reasons unknown, General Bonus was never rewarded with a knight-

hood, which his story tells us he deserved. When he died in 1926 at Newlands, local doctor, Dr Robert Odell signed his cause of death as 'Senility and myocardial degeneration.' His death was recorded by Stanstead Abbots Registrar Mr.



A.H. Wilshere.

He died at the age of 89 after living at Newlands with few, if any, residents of the village knowing anything about his 31 years of brave fighting in India.

Ron Dale

The Griffin Inn, Roydon Road

The griffin (or gryphon) is a legendary creature with the forelegs, body and tail of a lion, the wings of an eagle and talons on its back legs. It is a mixed up creature, unsure of what it is, but its image and the belief in its existence stretch back to Ancient Egypt. It was believed to be the most powerful and majestic of animals, the real king of animals and there was a belief that it guarded treasure and all valuable possessions. Much used in heraldry and school crests (three gryphons is the crest of Trinity College, Oxford) it was also very popular for pub names in the late 18th century and although our local Griffin is long gone, many 18th century pubs of this name survive.

Stuart Moye has drawn the location of the Griffin Inn on a map in his excellent report, *Village Pubs, Past and Present*, elsewhere on our website, although he admits the pub name cannot be proved. There is a watercolour executed by Thomas Frederick Luppino (1748/9 -1845), a Hertford theatrical scene painter and artist showing what appears to be the Griffin pub at the corner of Roydon Road, next to the Clock House or Grammar School as it was in the early 1800's. Although he sketched and painted many local buildings, this is the only one in Stanstead Abbots and represents the earliest known illustration of our village. Unfortunately the Red Lion and the Clock House are practically the same view today and the painting was done from Roydon Road facing the Red Lion. The picture I found in a book about the life of the artist, *The Artist and the Organist*, but unfortunately there is no date on this picture but the author states that most of the local views were painted between 1826 and 1834 when he was living in Hertford.

In the picture the mystery pub is next to the Clock House and is a tall building with what appears to be a painted pub sign high up on its walls. There is an image on the sign that is indistinct, but it could be an upright griffin. I have a record of another 'lost' pub near the entrance to the Corn Mill called *The Swan*, but this image is more like a griffin than a swan. The pub occupies the site later occupied by the Mill House and was probably built in the late 18th century as were many others of the same name. Cheers.

Ron Dale

Stanstead Abbotts Convicts 1770—1870

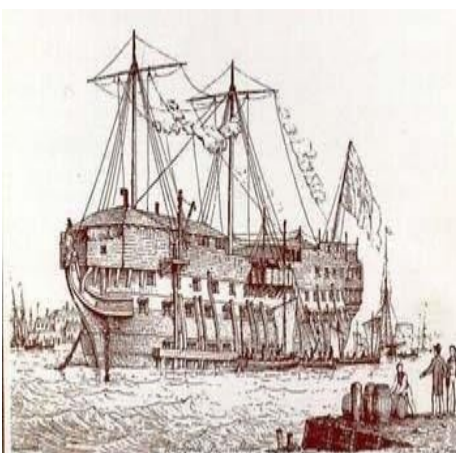
Ken Griffin began his talk on “Stanstead Abbotts Convicts” by telling us that between the dates mentioned above there had been over 2500 convicts from Hertfordshire.

In 1770 over 200 crimes carried the death penalty, but by 1867 it had been reduced to just four. As well as harsh prison terms, transportation to the colonies was also a common sentence. Transportation for 7 years was common as were sentences of 14 years and from 1833 a life term. Even if you were not sentenced to transportation you could find yourself on one of the rotting prison hulks moored on the River Thames, for terms of more than 2 years, any shorter sentence was in a local prison. Between 1176 and 1784 terms of 1-6 years were carried out performing hard labour working on the River Thames.

Sentencing was carried out at the

local assizes at quarter sessions. In Hertfordshire this meant either St Albans or Hertford

Transportation took place between 1597 and 1876. From its start until 1776 it meant being sent to the American colonies. After America became independent prisoners were sent to the West Indies



Prison hulk on the River Thames

where many died from tropical diseases. Australia received 77,000 prisoners from Great Britain between 1787 and 1867. In total over 330,00 persons, men, women and children were transported to the colonies.

Ken then went on to give us some

stories of Stanstead Abbotts convicts. He began with Edward Ward who was tried at Hertford Assizes in 1775 charged with stealing a sheep and a stick worth one penny, he was sentenced to death.

Joseph Clibben, from Babbs Green, Ware, charged with highway robbery along with his brother and father Joseph, stole 3 shillings from William Whittenbury. During the robbery his father was shot dead but the sons escaped. Joseph was found guilty and executed at Gallows Hill, Hertford.

John Prentice from Stanstead Abbotts stole 14 sheep from the vicar of Hunsdon and was sentenced to death.

William Burgess and John Cresswell were found guilty of burglary at the home of Mr Camp in Stanstead Abbotts. They stole 3 shillings and were both sentenced to death and executed on 14th March 1800. They were hanged near Cats Hill and about 10,000 people attended the execution. (More details of Stanstead Abbotts convicts will appear on the website)

Ken answered a number of questions and was warmly thanked by Chairman Ian White. *Terry Collins*

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.

The SALHS Committee May 2015

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Hon. President | Ron Dale |
| Chairman | Ian White |
| Secretary | Lynne Heraud |
| Treasurer | Glenis Collins |
| Archivist/Historian | Ray Dixon |
| Archivist/Facebook | Andrea Coppen |
| Public Relations/ Vice Chair | Bob Hunt |
| Newsletter | Terry Collins |
| Parish Council Rep | Julia Davies |
| Committee Members | Linda Gifford Gerald Coppen Rob Gifford |

Website Manager Brian Johnson
General enquiries email
Admin@salhs.org.uk

Forthcoming events

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|--|
| May | 12th 2017 | AGM and Talk/Discussion with Richard Atkins |
| June | 9th 2017 | The RAF in Hunsdon by David Gibbs |
| July | 14th 2017 | From Bear Skins to Beer Making by Keith Fitzpatrick Matthews |
| August | 13th 2017 | BBQ Members Only |
| September | 8th 2017 | Children of The Working Poor by Eileen Wallace |
| October | 13th 2017 | 14th Century Ware by David Perman |

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm

Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included