



Newsletter – September 2014

(www.lbdahs.org.uk)

The Society is expected to hit the national headlines this autumn with the publication of our new book “The Secrets of Q Central – How Leighton Buzzard Shortened the Second World War”. We are working on the proofs now for the History Press. Many members of the society have contributed to the book, from those who have done a lot of original research to others who remember the events as they happened. What began as a research project to describe the ordinary life of the town while the country fought for its life has turned into a revelation about how the specialist units based here made a remarkable difference to the war effort.

While much of the book is about local life this is the book blurb that will bring it to national attention: “Leighton Buzzard, a quiet market town with no military presence was chosen as the secret communications centre for Britain as the country prepared for war with Germany in 1937. When hostilities began “Q Central” attracted a dozen other clandestine operations set up to defend the country or designed to confuse and undermine enemy morale.

The headquarters of radar, RAF Group 60, also came to Leighton Buzzard to be hidden from German attack and to be close to the telephone and radio communications needed to run its vast chain of radar stations. These directed the defending fighters that saved the country in the Battle of Britain and then took the bombing war to Germany.

Close by for the same reasons of secrecy and safety were the satellite stations of Bletchley Park, the now famous code breaking centre, the Met Office at Dunstable, which gave the all clear for the D-Day landings, Black Ops units that set up false radio stations and wrote propaganda to confuse the enemy, and airfields used for dropping agents behind enemy lines.

At Q Central itself was the largest telephone exchange in the world and more than 1,000 teleprinters communicating with all the armed services in every theatre of war and directing the operations of the secret services. Now the restrictions of the Official Secrets Act have been lifted eight members of the Leighton Buzzard and District Archaeology and History Society have been able to piece together this compelling story for the first time.”

The book is being published in November and our talk that month will be about the book, its contents and one of its most interesting characters, Elsie Knocker, otherwise known as the Baroness. We will also be having a formal launch to which you are all invited and will be told of the date and time when we know ourselves.

As you can see in the programme we have a wealth of other events, research groups and talks, including a newly put together Tom Lawson slide show for the digital age, with the original commentary.

We are also experimenting with running a market stall (September 13) and taking part in the Living History Day on October 4, when we have a stall in All Saints Church. Your support and participation is always welcome.

Paul Brown, Chairman

Programme – 2014/2015

- Sep 10 2014** **Joseph Lancaster & the British Schools – an illustrated talk by Terry Ransome, a speaker from the Hitchin Schools Museum**
This talk charts the history of elementary education from pre-Victorian times as told through the story of Hitchin's historic classrooms and former headmasters. It has particular relevance for the Society in view of our recent transcription of the first Mary Bassett school logbook.
- Sep 13 2014** **Bookfair at Leighton Buzzard market – visit the LBD AHS stall**
- Sep 22 2014** **Research Group, 10.30 am to 12.30 at Linslade Community Hall, Keith Saunders Room.**
Examining and transcribing old documents.
- Oct 4 2014** **Leighton-Linslade WWI Commemorative Event**
This will include re-enactment groups, living museum, exhibits & displays - town centre, and other venues. Visit the LBD AHS display in All Saints.
- Oct 6 2014** **Research Group, 10.30 am to 12.30 at Linslade Community Hall, Keith Saunders Room.**
Examining and transcribing old documents
- Oct 8 2014** **"A Convict in the Family" – an illustrated talk by Margaret Butt**
Margaret's early Nineteenth Century ancestor, Richard Dillingham, was an Amptill criminal.
- Oct 20 2014** **Research Group, 10.30 am to 12.30 at Linslade Community Hall, Keith Saunders Room.**
Examining and transcribing old documents
- Nov 3 2014** **Research Group, 10.30 am to 12.30 at Linslade Community Hall, Keith Saunders Room**
Examining and transcribing old documents
- Nov 12 2014** **World War II Book Launch – talk by Paul Brown & Edwin Herbert**
The talk will include photographs from the book and "The Real Story of Elsie Knocker"
- Nov 17 2014** **Research Group, 10.30 am to 12.30 at Linslade Community Hall, Keith Saunders Room**
Examining and transcribing old documents.
- Dec 1 2014** **Research Group, 10.30 am to 12.30 at Linslade Community Hall, Keith Saunders Room.**
Examining and transcribing old documents
- 10 Dec 2014** **Xmas Meeting – Fire Brigade film and slides of past times in Leighton Buzzard**
- Jan 14 2015** **Pubs of Leighton Buzzard – slideshow with original commentary of Tom Lawson**
- Feb 11 2015** **Excavating Wing – an illustrated talk by archaeologist Martin Cuthbert**
Martin will describe the findings from garden test pits dug by volunteers during 2013 and 2014 in the search for Wing's Saxon History
- Mar 11 2015** **Chiltern Archaeology Dig at Princes Risborough**
Archaeologist Jill Eyers returns to the Society to describe a productive excavation in the grounds of St Dunstan's church showing evidence of activity from Mesolithic to Medieval eras.
- Apr 8 2015** **Linslade - a talk by Paul & Maureen Brown, followed by AGM**

All talks are at Linslade Community Hall (St. Barnabas), Waterloo Road, Linslade. Talks start at 8 pm unless otherwise advised. Everyone welcome. £3 for non-members. Members free.

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