

Leighton Buzzard and District Archaeological and Historical Society (LBD AHS.org.uk)

News Sheet 11 - May 2009

Dates For Your Diary

May 13th 2009 - An 18th century love affair - Sue Baxter

Three eighteenth century letters from an ardent lover (who happens to be a clergyman) to his well-connected (but un-named) lady love are discovered beneath the floorboards of a North Bucks Manor House in the 1990s, together with a letter from the lady's mother criticising him in the strongest terms and urging her daughter to sever the connection.

They are handed over to the Record Office in Aylesbury and a search through the archives of four counties ensues to find the identity of the lady and to discover what more can be found out about the star crossed lovers.

9th September 2009 - Leighton Buzzard and Linslade videos and photographs - Colin Holmes

October 14th 2009 - The Virtual Sand Museum - Carmela Semeraro

November 11th 2009 - Leighton Buzzard at War - personal recollections

December 9th 2009 - Round up of the year

All talks are at St Barnabas Church Hall, Waterloo Road, Linslade & start at 8pm unless otherwise advised. Everyone welcome. £2 for non-members

Fieldwork - 2009

We have not yet finalised a programme of field activities. It is our intention to excavate in Leighton Buzzard itself to investigate its early history. Unfortunately the areas behind the buildings fronting the High Street are a concrete jungle so no test pitting I'm afraid.

It is our intention to continue our test pitting programme in Heath and Reach.

If you wish to dig a test pit in your garden please get in touch so we can give you a short course on how to go about it.

Our Site Director, Bernard Jones, is convalescing after an operation so you had better contact me, Barry Horne, on 01525 221219 until further notice regarding field activities.

Trowels suitable for archaeological work are the 4" WHS trowels. These are available over the web. One such site is: hobuk.co.uk/acatalog/Special-Use-Trowels.html. Their price is £15.28 including VAT. Another site is archtools.co.uk.

Research Forum

This new venture, launched to encourage people to become actively involved in local history research, has got off to a good start. Three areas of research are being pursued at the moment. The largest team are studying Leighton Buzzard and Linslade place-names and their derivation. During this study the team have studied maps (ancient and modern), documents and previous studies. Another group are studying the baptism, marriage and death statistics using published copies of the registers. A smaller group are attempting to investigate "Linslade: The Victorian boom town. Where did the people come from?" using the census returns.

A number of afternoon Forum meetings have been held at St Barnabas Church Hall. Initially these were working meetings but we are now at the stage where the work is carried out at people's houses and the Library. Future meetings of the Forum will probably concentrate on reporting work in progress and results. Joan Schneider attended one meeting and told those present about her researches into the History of the nearby village of Tilsforth and the sources used.

The group made a visit to Leighton Buzzard Library Local History section where Hilary gave a very talk and notes.

Progress so far is very encouraging and we would like to see more people joining in this hands-on activity.

Summary of Past Events

"New Discoveries in Leighton's Past" - Paul Brown - January 14th 2009

Paul told us about the new information which came to light while he was writing his latest book, "Leighton Buzzard and Linslade: A History", and how the history of the area is being constantly rewritten as new facts come to light and old facts are reinterpreted.

"Mystery Photographs of Leighton" - February 18th 2009

The Society held an evening devoted to mystery photographs of the town and district. Where and when were they taken? What and who do they show? Members and members of the public brought along their own mystery photographs for people to try to identify them.

"Leighton's Treasures" - James Collett-White - March 11th 2009

James told us about the wealth of material held in the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives in Bedford and how it can be used to discover the history of the town as well as streets, individual buildings and people.

Visit to Bedfordshire and Luton Archive Records Service - March 12th 2009

This was a morning guided tour of the archives by two members of staff. Many documents and maps relevant to the area were laid out in the search room. We are grateful to BLARS for their time.

The Ordnance Survey - Mike Clarke and AGM - April 8th 2009

Mike, a retired Ordnance surveyor, told us about the Ordnance Survey from a personal perspective and about the training and work to produce the maps with which we are all familiar in the days before modern techniques. He told many amusing anecdotes of his life as a surveyor and I'm sure many of us still chuckle at his description of him pedalling furiously down an RAF runway on his bicycle, to measure its length, while members of the public looked on hoping to see the latest secret aeroplane. He told us of his quest to locate the bench marks on the buildings of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade which are shown on the large scale maps. The coming of the digital age has rendered them unnecessary to the Survey.

Chairman's Remarks

We started the year with a series of interesting and well attended talks.

After a faltering start due to illness the Research Forum got under way and some people are enthusiastically pursuing lines of research. I believe it is team activities such as this which will be the bedrock of the Society's future. The results will also form the basis for future articles in Transactions.

Volume three of Transactions was published in April with a good mix of articles. I am grateful to all the contributors.

Once again I would like to thank all those who give so willingly of their time and talents to make LBD AHS the success it is. It is you, the members, who are the key to our success. Thank you for your support.

Barry (bhorne@globalnet.co.uk)

(Hon Sec Bernard Jones, 01525 376550)