

# **Leighton Buzzard and District Archaeological and Historical Society (LBDAHS.org.uk)**

## **News Sheet 4 - May 2007**

### **Summer 2007**

The Society will be running field activities at Church Avenue, Leighton Buzzard and at our site at Heath and Reach and possibly at other sites. Please contact Bernard Jones, Site Director, (376550) for details of places and dates.

### **Leighton Buzzard Past - 12th September 2007**

A profusely illustrated talk by Colin Holmes. Photographs from yesteryear.

### **Living History Day - All Saints Church - 13th October 2007**

This year the theme is "Popular Pastimes" so if you have pictures of people indulging in popular pastimes please contact Maureen Brown (374050) as we need them for our display.

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### **Footpaths through the ages - 10th January 2007**

In this well-illustrated talk, Dick Denton "took us on the recent "Beating of the Bounds" of Heath and Reach. He told us of the land grab by Leighton Buzzard in the Shenley area and showed us parts of Battlesden and Potsgrove. He showed us local places where it is possible to believe you are miles from anywhere and told us of the Sheep Lane settlement which today is represented by the Fox and Hounds (Flying Fox) and a row of houses, one of which is the converted Sheep Lane Chapel.

### **Charters, with reference to Winslow - 14th February 2007**

Julian Hunt set the scene for his talk with an illustrated introduction to the history of Winslow, its pre-enclosure landscape and the impact of enclosure on both the landscape and the buildings of the town.

The town's prosperity as both a market town and farming community is illustrated by the number of buildings which either are, or have been, public houses and farmhouses.

Julian then introduced the two Winslow charters, the first dated 792 and written in Latin, the second dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century and written in Anglo-Saxon. Both charters describe the bounds of Winslow, the later one giving much more detail. Using the 10<sup>th</sup> century charter's instructions and 20<sup>th</sup> century slides of landscapes, buildings, landmarks and maps, Julian took us on a tour of the bounds of 10<sup>th</sup> century Winslow, demonstrating that many of the geographical features, landmarks and field/farm/area names which were in use then are still in existence today,

thus making our tour possible and emphasising the continuing importance and uses of such ancient documents.

#### **The Narrow Gauge Railway and the Sand Industry - 14th March 2007**

In his talk Tony Tomkins told us that it was the availability of cheap war surplus rails and petrol powered locomotives at the end of World War I which led Arnolds to create a narrow gauge railway to transport sand from their pits to distribution points. He explained how the railway seemed to have bypassed the usual regulations governing this sort of thing. At its height the railway formed an extensive network but over the years it contracted and eventually became the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway.

At the end of his talk Tony asked members if they could help with a mystery concerning the building of a stable block with a date stone of 1918. It is situated at the Stonehenge end of the line and rumoured to have been built by German prisoners of war. Unfortunately there is no supporting evidence. Can members find any? ([apt4ts@supanet.com](mailto:apt4ts@supanet.com))

#### **How to read old documents - 11th April 2007**

Joan Schneider introduced *Italic Hand* (the handwriting used by the gentry and from which present day handwriting has developed) and *Secretary Hand* (the handwriting mainly used for public documents). She illustrated some of the abbreviations and old letter forms used in Secretary Hand which can baffle beginners and emphasised the need to build up an alphabet of letter forms used in the document to be read and the importance of correctly identifying each letter. Those attending took part in reading various local documents illustrating the history of the Pedders of Yellow Farm, Tilsworth, as well as old legal documents relating to an attempt to poison a queen and King Henry VIII's reasons for wishing to annul his marriage to Anne of Cleves.

#### **AGM - 11th April 2007**

This was attended by 31 members. The Officers presented their reports which had previously been circulated to the membership. These were approved. The Constitution was then ratified by the meeting. A proposal that subscriptions should be raised to adult £8, family £10, OAP £5, student £5 and institution £20 was approved.

A number of suggestions were made from the floor including that the Society should become a charity.

Copies of Transactions were distributed to all members who were present. Subsequently, copies were distributed to those not present, by hand and post.

#### **May Fayre - 7th May 2007**

Despite a wet morning with some heavy showers the Society made £300 with a pick-a-ticket stall. This is a wonderful achievement and we thank all those who contributed prizes and helped on the day, in particular Joan Horne who collected many of the prizes, folded the tickets and organised the day.

#### **La Grava: Bedfordshire's Best Kept Secret - 9th May 2007**

Evelyn Baker spoke to an enthusiastic audience of 55 LBDAS members describing some of the findings from her dig at Grovebury or La Grava. The site proved to date not just from the Medieval Priory established there by Fontevrault Abbey but to show man's presence there for many thousands of years. The splendid priory buildings welcomed royal visitors, including

Edward I and II, during the 13th century and 14th century. Now it has all been quarried away. Evelyn's detailed report on the dig is due to be published in the near future. Perhaps it will help us to establish just when the present town of Leighton Buzzard arose and what its relationship to La Grava was.

#### **Sandstone Building Survey**

A number of our members have participated in this project and we are now collating the results. We thank all those who gave up their time to do this research.

#### **Sand Pit Survey**

Bernard Jones and Barry Horne have been doing this research on behalf of the Greensand Trust.

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### **Chairman's Remarks**

Our second year started with a series of extremely interesting and well attended talks, the audience for the May talk when Evelyn Baker spoke about La Grava: Bedfordshire's Best Kept Secret, was a record 55. Joan Schneider's talk in April on How to read old documents, a subject one might think a bit specialised, attracted 46 people.

'Transactions', published in April and distributed free to members, has received many favourable comments from outsiders as to its quality and range of articles. As Editor I would like to thank all contributors and encourage people to write something for No 2 next year.

Once again our fundraising activities have produced useful income to support our activities.

Don't forget to look at the website for the latest programme of events, copies of old News Sheets and publications.

I would like to thank all those who give so willingly of their time and talents to make LBD AHS the success it is.

Please continue to support your Society by attending the events and spreading the word amongst friends, relatives and work colleagues.

Barry (bhorne@globalnet.co.uk)

(Hon Sec Bernard Jones, 01525 376550)