

WICKHAM HISTORY SOCIETY REPORTS 2016/17

20 MILLION BRICKS

Our talk on April 4th to 48 members and visitors was given by Dr Carolyne Haynes, a retired architect, who has spent the past five years becoming 'passionate about bricks' and helping Bursledon Brickworks in its objective to become the country's leading brick museum and award winning example of industrial archaeology.

The first part of her talk concerned the history of the making and use of bricks for building. Prior to the Roman occupation, brickmaking was primitive and stones and flint were used where permanence was needed. The Romans brought the key skills needed for regular standard-shaped bricks and tiles, and also for lime mortar, which continued in the Saxon period after the Romans departed. The Saxons however lost Roman brickmaking skills and into Medieval times brickmakers were still brought into the country from France and Holland. The first real English bricks date from Polstead in 1420, and the use of bricks as opposed to timber accelerated rapidly after the Great Fire of London in 1666. Further growth brought the Georgian period of classical design, and then the very ornate Victorian era needing a whole range of ornamental bricks.

Turning to the process itself, Carolyne explained the need for sand as part of the clay mixture, and the high production rate called for. Women on the production line had to make about 4 bricks a minute and there was no pay for anyone until 1000 bricks were made each day. There certainly were "Victorian conditions" for women and children alike.

The origin of the Bursledon Brickworks dates from Edward Hooper in 1851, who became Hooper and Ashby – a group of stores and merchants along the south coast. They found a site for a new brickworks in 1896 with deep reserves of clay, at Lower Swanwick-with ideal transport connections by rail and river. Over the next 75 years the production of bricks rose to many millions per year until in 1974 under ownership of the Redland Group a combination of depletion of clay reserves and health and safety issues, closed the brickworks.

The foresight of Hampshire County Council a few years later rescued the site from utter dereliction and a preservation trust was formed to attract lottery and other funding to begin restoration by an army of volunteers, many being ex-brickworkers. Now the massive sheds house a museum, much of the restored machinery, a variety of steam engines and a small gauge passenger railway. Visiting details on www.bursledonbrickworks.org.uk

A HISTORY OF BRIDGE STREET – 7th March 2017

46 members and residents of Bridge Street came to hear Geoff Phillpotts' talk on March 7th on Bridge Street.

Geoff took those present on a virtual walk in time up Bridge Street – starting with the original fording place and mill – probably dating back to pre Domesday. We then looked at our first group of “known” buildings – The Barracks, Dale Cottage and Warren Cottage which, together with the Mill were there in the early 1500s. Wickham was lucky in securing a dendrochronology grant from the Hampshire Buildings Survey Group to date the Barracks to the year and even the likely season – the autumn of 1495.

As we walked up Bridge Street we advanced in time to the Civil War and to one of the first brick buildings in the village – Queens Lodge. Recent research suggests this may have been built before the Civil War, not in 1648 as supposed. Queens Lodge is also special in the survival of almost complete records tracing ownerships upto the present day. We then travelled another few feet and a hundred years onto Blanton, a beautiful Georgian building of 1771. We finally reached Bridge Street's most unusual building- Ivy Lodge, the original village school with its flint facing. Wickham would look very different today if the Victorian passion for flint had replaced all our Georgian frontages!

Finally Geoff looked at what would have been going on in Bridge Street in the Victorian period. It would have been a noisy commercial centre, with tin makers, straw hat makers, a violin shop, a saddlers, the Mill, an alehouse, the Brewery and, of course, the School. The Borough Court Hayward would have been taking straying pigs and geese to the Pound by the Church, and the carriages and carts struggling up the Hill would have added to the noise and activity. It was definitely not the largely residential street it is today.

The talk ended by answering the two questions on the meeting advertisement: “Why is the Barracks called the Barracks?” and “How many names has Bridge Street had?” Come along to our meetings if you want to know the answer!

Saxons in the Meon Valley – 7th February 2017

A record attendance of 85 members and visitors came to hear Nick Stoodley’s talk on February 7th. Nick is a Research Fellow at Winchester University and Lead Archaeologist on the Meon Valley research. He is looking particularly at the earlier period of Saxon settlement from the Roman military withdrawal in the 5th century to the mid 7th century, the project was supported by South Downs National Park and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

There were three questions Nick hoped the research would help answer. One was whether the types of finds would clarify whether the Meon was settled by the Jutes. Unfortunately the jury is still out – nothing specifically Jutish has been found to support an early historical reference saying that the areas was settled by Jutes called the Meonwara,

The second question was whether the Saxons used existing Roman and pre Roman settlements in the valley or avoided them. The evidence here is more convincing. Finds at Meonstoke, West Meon and elsewhere show Saxon, Roman and pre Roman settlement on the same sites.

The third question was more broadly about the Saxon settlement pattern in the valley. The Meon Valley research has shown an intriguing pattern. No early Saxon settlement has yet been found south of Soberton. The earliest known below Soberton is Titchfield in the late 7th century. This pattern of settlement higher up river valleys is repeated elsewhere in Hampshire and it appears that the Saxons may have initially settled on chalk land – perhaps because their ploughs could not cope with the heavier clays.

This finding is supported by place name evidence – more Romano British names, like Wickham or Portchester are found lower down the valley, suggesting longer British occupation. Nick suggested work in Wickham could help show if the theory was correct.

The research project, now formalised as the Meon Valley Archaeology and Heritage Group, is taking on wider archaeological research of the Roman and pre Roman periods too. The Group has undertaken new work at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke finding a very unusual Roman hexagonal Temple and a Baths site. Volunteers are welcome !

NEXT MEETING:

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, 7th March at 7.30pm at Wickham Community Centre. The subject is “**A History of Bridge Street**”, speaker: Geoff Phillpotts.

For more information go to: www.wickhamhistory.org.uk

My Mayoral Year – 6th December 2016

On December 6th the Societies combined to have a joint meeting addressed by Councillor Angela Clear to tell us about 'My Mayoral Year'. About 50 members attended a highly entertaining account of Angela's year in Office as Mayor of Winchester

Angela started by thanking all the Wickham residents who voted for her in the election for Winchester City Council in 2015. Although it had already been suggested that she might stand as a candidate as Mayor, this was entirely dependent on her becoming a Councillor and then Deputy Mayor. Before embarking on this path, Angela and her husband Peter had to confront the fact that the Mayoralty year would be a more than full time job for both them – and so it turned out to be.

She would become the 816th Mayor of Winchester – following in the footsteps of two previous Wickham Residents who reached the same position – Brian Hall and Therese Evans.

Mayor of Winchester is the second most senior Mayoralty in the country, second only to London. The Mayors are also senior to Lord Mayors – London of course has both.

Abbey House is the official residence for the Mayor, a welcoming venue for meetings, entertaining visitors and general relaxation. It also houses the office of the Mayoral secretary, who arranges the diary, which contained nearly 600 events in Angela's year in office. From there the events for the Mayor's charity work are organised – in this year Angela chose three hospices- Countess Mountbatten, Naomi House and the Rowans.

These were really hard work to organise, particularly to get 'bums on seats', but by the year end produced a donation of £10,000 for each. On Christmas Day she visited the Royal County Hospital, meeting the staff and patients and acting as part time disc jockey in the radio station.

For economy reasons use of the Mayoral car is limited and so Angela and Peter drove themselves in their own car on most visits, adding to the demands on their time and energy.

Angela demonstrated the latter during her talk, donning her scarlet robes and showing her Past Mayor's badge and recounting a variety of stories and experiences about this unique year.

Angela emphasised what an honour and privilege it was to have been Mayor and how much generous support she had from both the many contacts she made during the year and from the residents of Wickham

Copenhagen and Trafalgar – The Wickham Connection – 1st November 2016

Mike Hollis gave us a very authoritative account of the lives of two eminent naval officers at our meeting on November 1st.

Richard Grindall (1750 – 1820) joined in 1772 as a volunteer Able Seaman on Captain James Cook's second expedition. He moved through the ranks to become a 'Tarpaulin' officer in 1776 and served in several ships until given command of HMS *Thalia* in 1783.

He lost an arm in action against the French off Brest in 1795 and thereafter used a combined knife and fork to eat. Just before Trafalgar he was given command of HMS *Prince*, an old and very slow vessel. During the battle the rest of his division overtook him and he arrived in time to assist survivors and tow ships damaged in the subsequent storm.

He was given a Knighthood as a result, and made Rear Admiral, but never had a sea command again. He died in 1820 and is buried with his wife and two sons in St. Nicholas Churchyard, Wickham.

Captain James Robert Mosse (1745-1801) joined the Service as Captain's servant aged 11.

In a later posting he was briefly captured by the Americans but became Midshipman in 1771, rising to become Captain in 1799 of HMS *Sandwich* on which the trial of the Nore mutineers was held. In 1801 in the Battle of Copenhagen, in HMS *Monarch* he led the British fleet in line across the Sound of Copenhagen, under fire and constrained by sandbanks, but was killed shortly after issuing his first orders. (Mike gave us a vivid account of the conditions on a gundeck during the action).

Nelson's Commander, Hyde Parker, at this point signalled Nelson to withdraw, which the latter ignored with his telescope to his blind eye.

James Mosse was buried at sea, but there is a memorial to him (and Captain Riou) in St. Pauls Cathedral – and in St. Nicholas Church Wickham. His wife and children are buried in the Churchyard.

A New History of Wickham– Tuesday, October 4th 2016

The Chair, Geoff Phillpotts welcomed over thirty History Society members, including eight new members, to our first meeting of 2016/2017. Appropriately we started our year with an overview of Wickham's History. That is a challenging task and we are very lucky that we have Brian Barrett who has a great grasp of key events in Wickham's development and the ability to weave it together into a story of the village's development.

Brian kept the audience hard at work with a series of quizzes aimed at identifying key events and people in Wickham and filling in a time line from the iron age on. There was general agreement that the Village Charter in 1268/9 that led to the development of Wickham Square was one example of a key event. On the other hand Brian made the point that, while William of Wykeham may have been very famous, his actual involvement and impact on Wickham was minimal.

Brian identified key points, like the Charter, in Wickham's development. He challenged our assumption that Wickham developed on the East side of the Meon by the Church and Old Manor House on the Glebe – pointing out the suitability of the geology and river terrace on the west side of the river where the current village is today. Was there always a settlement there too ?

He took us on a trip to Cornwall, because of the importance of the Rashleigh family. They were Tudor entrepreneurs from Cornwall with interests in shipping and mining and bought the Manor in the eighteenth century. The Church still has to consult the family on the appointment of a new Vicar today.

Other key dates and events included the construction of the railway, the move of the Manor House to Rookesbury and the construction of Council houses in the twentieth century, which Brian suggested was probably the most significant change the village has experienced so far, more than doubling its size. A subject for a future talk perhaps ?