

# BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2014**



## SPRING PROGRAMME

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**TUESDAY JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>**

*SUTTON HOO - AN ANGLO SAXON BURIAL SHIP.*

ERIC HOLDER

**TUESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY**

*A VILLAGE IN 1913*

KEVIN CALE

(KEVIN WAS HELPED ON PART OF THIS PROJECT BY THE CHILDREN OF ROECLIFFE SCHOOL, WHO RESEARCHED SOME OF OUR ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHS)

**TUESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH**

*HORATIO AND EMMA*

IVAN ANDREWS

**TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL**

*CARRYING A COFFIN FROM SCARBOROUGH TO CUNDALL*

ANN FELL

ALL MEETINGS HELD IN BOROUGHBRIDGE LIBRARY JUBILEE SUITE AT 7.30 PM

ALL WELCOME; MEMBERS FREE

FOR DETAILS ABOUT JOINING THE SOCIETY CONTACT THE SECRETARY ON 01423 322988



## NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN JOHN WHITEHOUSE

As indicated at the AGM the Society is in good health with an encouragingly consistent number of members and guest attendees. The quality and variety of the monthly speakers has been maintained throughout the year which has doubtlessly contributed to the respectable turn-out of about 30 people at our meetings, although the “George Wright experience” attracted a record audience of nearly 50! Let us hope that 2014 is at least as successful as 2013. Thanks are due to Linda for providing this endless stream of speakers.

The Lottery funding (£10,000), to support the Langthorpe Archaeology Group’s Project is most welcome and, indeed, invaluable to the continuation of the exercise. However, it does throw up certain management challenges in so much as tight control and monitoring of expenditure is mandatory. Also, publicity regarding the Heritage Lottery Fund contribution is a stringent (and ubiquitous) requirement, hence the introduction of the HLF logo at the top of this letter. There is a small group of members that has signed up to full participation in the project but those members who would prefer to be ad hoc ‘activists’, cherry-picking aspects of specific interest, are also most welcome to come along. The inaugural meeting will be held at 7.30pm in the Coronation Hall, Milby on Tuesday 7th January. It should be an interesting ‘taster’ so please feel free to attend with no strings attached! Besides visits to museums, record offices etc there will be opportunities to go on field-walks, learn to interpret maps and aerial photographs, train to undertake oral history projects and much more! If there is anybody capable of setting up a web-site, please step forward. Press and media coverage is required periodically so any PR oriented enthusiast would be welcome to try their hand. David Barley is chairing the project sub-committee and will, I am sure, be pleased to hear from any prospective participants.

Below I will briefly review the talks we heard during the past four months.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2014, John Whitehouse.

In September John Lee gave a talk on ‘Medieval Market Towns - Boroughbridge and its Neighbours’. This was a well-researched subject that suffered from being an abstract compiled from a much larger and broader-based presentation, thereby restricting the proportion devoted to Boroughbridge itself. However, once that disappointment was surmounted there was plenty of interesting detail to keep us attentive. The most striking data concerned the way that population numbers in general ebbed and flowed due to factors beyond local control.

### Medieval English Towns



Boroughbridge was founded and grew during the 12th to 14th centuries but declined in the years 1300 to 1540 as the result of famine, punitive raids by the Scots and plague, specifically the Black Death. The population of England during this latter period fell from 6 million by some 50%. York, the only major town in the district, contained a population no greater than 13,000 people in the 13th century. Thirsk and Boroughbridge were both granted royal assent, to hold markets on set days in the week or on feast days, from the 13th century. Two points of trivia: the lead for Windsor Castle was shipped from the ‘port’ of Boroughbridge; in 1377 there were 111 taxpayers residing in Boroughbridge out of a population of some 800.



In October the AGM was followed by a presentation on 'The history and work of the British Legion' by Geoff Craggs, local president, and Ken Richardson, local chairman. The Legion started its first appeal in 1921 raising the equivalent of £3m. In pre-war years the Legion declined but in the post-war years there has been a resurgence of its fortunes especially with its links with the Iraq/Afghan ori-

enteds 'Heroes'. The Poppy Appeal accounts for about one third of total income (£132.8m in 2012) but expenditure exceeded income by £8m requiring the draw-down of reserves. Clearly more funds are needed. Comradeship, remembrance and welfare are the basic tenets around which the legion is administered. They also lobby for ex-servicemen's and POWs rights, making it a very worthy charity.



## QUERN STONES

November saw John Cruse give an unlikely talk on quern stones. 'Get a life!' could be the call but, actually, the subject was 'Roman Quern and Millstones'. The details of these relatively small corn mills and what they conveyed to the erudite historian made very interesting listening and the lecture went on by common consent for over 80 minutes. The various patterns of stones together with the limited number of areas where they can be found tell a story about Roman agriculture and military deployment. Yorkshire and the North-East contained the majority of finds; Lancashire and the south almost none at all, the main exception being around the sites of Roman forts north of Chester.



## BURTON LEONARD IN 1911

December's talk by Vivienne Ravis took us back to Burton Leonard in 1911. An analysis of that year's census revealed many interesting facts about the local families many of which are still resident today. The local history group was only formed in early 2011 and chose the census returns from 1891, 1901 and 1911 to progress their research. An early determination was to concentrate upon ordinary villagers, not gentry, and cottages/farms as opposed to more stately edifices. With many period photographs as well this was a quite brilliant talk. Her locally produced book reflected the content of the lecture and at £3.00 was a good buy. Besides the census returns, voters' lists, parish records, photographs and correspondence with former residents all yielded much useful material to the researchers. The history group is now involved with the local primary school looking at Burton Leonard during World War 2, which, inter alia, gets the pupils engaged in oral history activities, interviewing the oldest villagers. The culmination will be an exhibition at Knaresborough library. The quid pro quo is that the children teach the history group how to use the computers to support the project!



## WORLD WAR 2 PROJECT

Mike Tasker

As the centenary of the commencement of WW1 approaches the media will inevitably focus in on the horrors of this event. As with every other town in the country, the young men of Boroughbridge and district rose to the cause at that time, did their duty and paid a heavy sacrifice, as the local war memorials give witness. WW2 is of course more recent and, unlike WW1, there are still those living who have first hand memories of events of the time. This project was undertaken to put on record as much information as possible of local people's memories before they fade away for ever.

The impact of WW2 on Boroughbridge in particular was quite different from that of WW1 and in many ways much more immediate. The young men of the area either volunteered or were conscripted into the armed forces in much the same way, but the nature of warfare had seen such a radical change, become much more mobile, and of course aerial warfare had by then become a fact of life. Local men were recruited in numbers into the RAF as well as the Army and Navy.

With the rise of Hitler in Germany, the possibility of war had been anticipated for some time. At the outbreak of war, the airfield at Dishforth had already been established, along with several others such as Linton, Leeming, Church Fenton and others not far away. An army camp was rapidly established in Boroughbridge in the grounds

of Hall Square, several hotels were taken over by the military, and the town rapidly became a hive of activity in support of the war. Civil defence organisations including the Home Guard, Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Observer Corps (ROC) were rapidly set up. The Fire Service was put on a war footing, along with an Auxilliary Ambulance Service. German Paratrooper landings were expected at any time after the fall of France, fortunately they never materialised. Poison gas attacks were also anticipated and prepared for.

Special Constables were recruited, and as evacuees arrived from the big city bombing targets such as London, Leeds, Newcastle & Liverpool, the Specials were responsible along with the Local Allocation Officer for ensuring all evacuees were accommodated with local families. There were always aircraft flying over, mostly from local airfields but in the early days of the war these were sometimes German raiders.

Local area men in the armed forces were involved in active combat in all areas around the world. Some served with the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) in France, and the miraculous evacuation at Dunkirk, many with the Desert Army in North Africa in the fight against Rommel's Afrika Korps, then following up with the invasion of Sicily and Italy. Then there were those sent to Burma, fighting the Japanese through dreadful malaria infested swamps and jungles. Several were involved with the D-Day landings and the Normandy Invasion, the parachute attack on Arnhem and the final drive into Germany. There were those in the Royal Navy, fighting in the Battles of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Then the RAF, where bomber pilot Bernard Clayton DFC, CGM, DSO served with such distinction. Less well known is Duggie Loft-house, a ground crew engine fitter from Boroughbridge who survived over two years in Malta during the most intensive bombing anywhere in the world between 1941 and 1943. He came back with an incredible photographic record of the bombing there, which his son Mark has allowed the Historical Society to copy.

One of the most moving stories from the army relates to Stanley Ward from Milby who suffered severe wounds during the invasion of Sicily. Remarkably, despite the loss of his right leg and severe damage to his right hand he eventually returned to farming in Milby. There is the tragic story of the Pratt family from Aldborough who lost two sons in the war, and also had one left severely disabled from war wounds.



A lighter moment for British Soldiers in France

The Historical Society has now recorded over 100 men from the Boroughbridge area who served in the armed forces during WW2 with photographs of about thirty of them, including records of those who lost their lives. Some of these records are very brief and it is unlikely they will ever be complete, but the search continues and the records are continually updated as more information comes in. These men fought for us, some gave their lives for the freedom we all now enjoy, and it is simply unthinkable that they should not be remembered.

Many army Regiments were transient residents in Boroughbridge in those war years, including the Royal Armoured Corps Tank Regiment, Devonshire Regiment, Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, West Yorkshire Regiment, Liverpool and Scottish, Scottish Borderers, Black Watch, Shropshires and others. Also frequent visitors to the town were the Canadians from the RCAF at Dishforth. A particular spectacle was when the Scottish Regiments with their bagpipes and kilts paraded in the town.

Single young women were either conscripted into the armed forces or allocated to war work, either in munitions factories or in the land army. Military activity dominated the domestic scene throughout the war, but every day life continued despite the severe constraints of war. Many local girls married servicemen stationed in the area, both from the army and from the RAF at Dishforth, romances often triggered by the frequent dances run by the military and by local dance bands.

**Contributions to the local WW2 story would be most welcome and should be directed to Mike Tasker, tel. 01423 862896, email address [mike@multitasker.co.uk](mailto:mike@multitasker.co.uk)**

# NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

## LINDA DOOKS

### **The Dog Kennel Lane Project**

The first meeting for the Dog Kennel Lane Archaeology Project will be held in the new committee room, Coronation Hall, Langthorpe on Tuesday, 7th January at 7.30 pm.

This will be followed by a launch event in the Coronation Hall on Saturday 1st February from 10 am to 3.30 pm, when there will be a display about the project and how it will work together with details of the spring programme of research and workshops. School children from Boroughbridge Hands on the Past club will take part in an archaeological workshop in the morning from 10.30 am.

The Launch event will also include a display on the history of Langthorpe including the river history and the Brewery. The Society would welcome any additional information, finds or photographs to add to our Display. Please bring them along to one of our project meetings or on the Day. All the events will be open to History Society members. Among the things planned are: a visit to the WRCC Archive office at Morley for a guided tour of their archives (plus time for own research); an Oral History Training day; and workshops on old maps and aerial photographs.

Refreshments will be available

The sub-committee are working on the publicity for it all, which has to be vetted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, before it can be issued.

There will be a project meeting on Thursday 30th January in the Jubilee room Boroughbridge library at 2.30 pm to prepare for the above event.

Other project meeting dates are Thursday February 27th and March 27th

The next History group Committee meeting is on Tuesday 28th January 2014, at 7 30 pm.

### **Forthcoming Events**

This year, we hope to be able to attend with a small display the NYCC Boroughbridge library Health and Well-being Day on Friday March 14th , the Plot to Plate day and Aldborough and Boroughbridge Show.

We will also be including an update on our research for the Dog Kennel Lane Project.

Thank you all for your continued support and a Happy New Year, Linda

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**Interesting pieces from members suitable for the newsletter are always welcome.**

**To discuss anything you feel you would like to contribute please contact Peter Fleming by e-mail:**

**[Peter.fleming57@btinternet.com](mailto:Peter.fleming57@btinternet.com)**



