



Newsletter

Summer 2008



Welcome to our new look newsletter. We hope this will be the first of many allowing us to keep you fully informed of what is happening in your society.

We would love to hear from you so if you would like to make a contribution to the next edition please feel free to let us have your comments or suggestions either by email to jo@highworthhistoricalsociety.co.uk or write to us at the address at the end of this newsletter.

Committee News

Ann-Marie Murphy has taken over the position of Archivist from Dr Bryan Lawton. The society is indebted to Bryan for the care he has taken in looking after, and in adding to our collection over the years. Bryan had expressed a wish to retire some time ago and we are grateful to him for carrying on until a new person could be found to take on the position. Our thanks should also go to Barbara Lawton here for both of them have permitted much of the ever increasing collection to be housed in their home.

There are quite a few retirements and changes due to take place at the A.G.M. Allan Mitchell gave notice at last year's A.G. M. of his intention to retire from his position of Treasurer. Allan has done a sterling job for some years in keeping an eagle eye on the society's funds. Barbara Jones gave similar notice at October's committee meeting but will be continuing with her work on the Library Displays. Barbara has been on the committee for 9 years and has always been an active and committed member. Jane Featherston will be stepping down from the committee after five years for health reasons. I know that you will all be pleased to hear that she will be continuing as our Programme Organiser. Jane took on this responsibility single handed on the death of Anne Young with whom she had worked as co-organiser. A nomination form is included with this newsletter and should be returned to J. Clark by Friday 5th September 2008. It would be very helpful

for future committee members to be able to use the internet and email, and to have some knowledge of Microsoft Word.

The Committee are delighted to inform all members that the Thomas Freke and Lady Norton Charity have awarded us a grant for the production of a website and database. Work began on this project on the 18th July 2008. See the website report on the back page.

Thanks to the good auspices of Mrs Shirley Colbeck-Smith, Highworth Library Manager and Swindon Libraries, we now have some space in the Library store. This has enabled us to bring together, for the first time, all the archives which have been stored around Highworth in attics, cellars and even under beds. The Committee would like to express its gratitude to all those who have helped in this way. Temporarily all items have been moved for archiving. See the Archivist's report on next page.

Graveyard Survey

The graveyard around St Michael's Church in Highworth was used for burials until the third quarter of the nineteenth century; thereafter interments took place at the cemetery on Cricklade Road. The gravestones in the churchyard are in various states of preservation and many, of course, are missing having broken or fallen and become buried beneath the soil and grass. Some have legible inscriptions (perhaps the more expensive memorials) and some are quite impossible to read.

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In the past there have been surveys of the churchyard graves. One early in the twentieth century was partial and unaccountably did not include some stones that are clearly decipherable today.

Another survey in 1981 was also incomplete and gave little indication of the position of individual graves.

In order for both local people and visitors to Highworth to gain more information about the churchyard and its occupants, two members of the Highworth Historical Society, Christine Suter and Barbara Jones, began in the summer of 2007 to identify and map out the gravestones. Much has been lost due to weathering, even since 1981, but a substantial amount of information was obtained.

Further work was done on the nonconformist burial ground behind the Vorda School in Brewery Street and now in the summer of 2008 the survey is being completed by investigation of the gravestones in the Cricklade Road Cemetery that were in place by 1900.

Visits to the Wiltshire Records Office in Chippenham to study the census returns and records of Births, Marriages and Deaths have added much of historical interest. The Society expects this body of work to be of significant interest to the public and intends to have the information available on its website and in the Church when it is complete.



Barbara Jones & Chris Suter, Committee Members

Our ultimate goal is to obtain a permanent history room somewhere within Highworth thereby giving easy access to all our information, but until that time we must make the best use of what we have.

Ann Marie Murphy, Archivist

New President

It was in April 2005 that Graham Tanner became President of the Highworth Historical Society. His enthusiasm, local knowledge and support, always so freely given, was invaluable. I know all members of the Society will share the regret with which we heard the news of his death last October. You will all be delighted to know that Claire Skinner, Principal Archivist at the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives at Chippenham, has agreed to become our new President. Claire has a degree in English from Leicester University and a diploma in Archive Administration from the University of Wales (Aberystwyth). Initially she worked as a research assistant at the University of Reading on the Location Register of English Literary Manuscripts and Letters. Claire then moved to the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester where she remained for twelve years working as an archivist and later as Senior Records Manager. She moved to Wiltshire in 2003 and in January 2006 she took up her new post at Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office to become Principal Archivist Access to Archives where she manages ICT for the whole of Heritage Services and on the retirement of John D'Arcy took over line management of the archive team.



Claire lives at Chippenham with her eight year old son and is currently Secretary of the South West region of the Society of Archivists, and plans to take over as their Chair in the autumn.

Oral Histories

The oral history tapes are made up of interviews carried out in the late 1980's and 1990's and are an invaluable insight into life around Highworth in the past as remembered by the people who live here. Currently about 20 people have been interviewed and we are extremely grateful to them for sharing their memories with us.

Up until now they have been stored on their original cassettes but as time marches on we were concerned that the tapes would deteriorate rendering them useless. We have now transferred all the data onto CD's to ensure that they remain available for the future. The original cassettes will be stored in our archives together with a player, but for research purposes we will now only release them on the new CD's. While we were transferring the data we also converted the files into a format which will enable us to upload selected sections of the interviews onto our new website at a later date, so watch this space...

If any member would like to hear any of the interviews please contact the Archivist for a list and availability.

Paul Newton-Smith, Committee

Archivist Report



We are currently looking at all the various items held by the society which until now has been difficult because it has been spread around various locations in the town.

We have been fortunate enough to get the loan of some office space which has meant that everything can now be brought together for the first time enabling us to record everything

in detail. The aim of this is to get to the position where all our artefacts, photographs, records etc are available for everyone to access. We want to be able to make information available in as many ways as possible, for instance, by appointment with the archivist or on the internet.

It is important that the general membership of our society is involved in the ongoing development of our archives and if anyone feels they can make a contribution please contact the archivist. Contact details can be found at the end of this newsletter. In the meantime, could we please ask you to complete the Membership Questionnaire that was included with this newsletter and return it as soon as possible to enable us to compile a list of members who are willing to assist in compiling our information.

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Wiltshire Local History Forum

The Wiltshire Local History Forum are holding their annual open day on Saturday 4th October starting at 10am at the Bromham Village Social Centre.

Admission is £7.00 and includes tea and coffee.

This year the theme is MUSIC IN WILTSHIRE'S HISTORY.

Programme:

- 10.00 Welcome
10.10 - 11.00 English music and the local historian with John Chandler.
11.00 - 11.25 Coffee.
11.30 - 12.15 West Gallery music and musicians in Wiltshire with Alan Dodge.
12.15 - 1.20 Lunch.
1.30 - 2.15 John Marsh & Benjamin Banks: Salisbury's musical life in the late 18th century with Ruth Newman.
2.20 - 3.05 Wiltshire's historic pipe organs: are their futures secure? with Christopher Kent.
Tea

Further information can be obtained by calling 01722 328922

Tickets must be booked by 26th September from: The Wiltshire Local History Forum, Tanglewood, Laverstock Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire. SPI IQJ

Cheques payable to Wiltshire Local History Forum. Tickets can be collected at the door. If you wish to have your tickets in advance please include a stamped addressed envelope with your order.

Jo Clark, Chair

Treasurers Report

The society is in a healthy financial position with funds of around £7,800. We are however now beginning to see some changes in expenditure. On a positive note we are spending on items such as a stand for publicity material and the website which will assist in raising our profile. These are important ventures for the society in its role of researching and promoting interest in the history of Highworth and the surrounding area. Not such good news is an increase in costs. For example, the hire of the Community Room is now £9 per hour, having risen from £7 per hour last year - an increase of 28%.

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Evening Lectures

In general we are well placed to finance the future work of the society but we will need to ensure that income is kept in line with ongoing operating costs.

I am pleased to report that the Freke Norton Charity has agreed to fund most of the cost of the development of a website for the society. This is an exciting venture but at a total cost of £9000

(including design, software packages and PC etc) would not have been possible without a grant. They have already provided funding for stage one of the development.

Membership subscriptions for 2008/09 will remain at £5 per member but the method of collecting will be different this year. We will not be visiting your homes as we have done for the last few years, instead cheques should be posted to me at the following address:

Allan Mitchell, 7 The Willows, Highworth, Swindon. SN6 7PG
Membership cards will be issued at the AGM on Monday 29th September. Cheques should be made out to 'Highworth Historical Society'. Please do not post cash. You may of course pay at the meeting if that is your preference. Please be aware that as the society year does not start until 1st September cheques will not be presented for payment before that date although of course you may send them to me as soon as you wish.

At the AGM it will be proposed that the annual subscription be increased to £8 per annum with effect from September 2009. The subscription has been held at £5 for 12 years so we have had a good run for our money. £8 means that each talk costs just £1 which I am sure you agree still represents excellent value for money.

Allan Mitchell, Treasurer



DON'T FORGET...

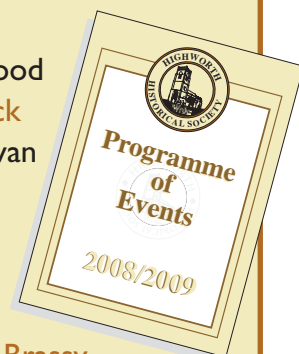
NEXT MEETING

Monday 29 September 7.30pm - Council Room
AGM followed by
talk on 'Sundials' by Mr Tony Wood

All meetings to be held in Highworth Council Room unless otherwise stated.

Meetings start at 7.30 pm.

September 29th 2008	Sundials	Anthony Wood
October 27th 2008	The Cotswold Way - 100 Years of History	Stephen Black
November 24th 2008	History of Burbage Wharf	Peter Donovan
December 2008	TBA	TBA
January 26th 2009	Swindon You May Have Missed	Mike Stubbs
February 23rd 2009	Remembering Swindon's Sons of the Great War	Mike Sutton
March 30th 2009	Great Western Welfare in Swindon	Mr. R. Palk
April 24th 2009	The Suffragettes. Votes for Women	Beatrice De Brassy



Town Trails

A town trail will be included on our website. This can easily be printed off by anyone interested in doing a potted tour of Highworth on their own. During the Festival weekend conducted town tours will be taking place.



Tour guides will be Colin Dawson, Bryan Elkington and Dr. Bryan Lawton. A Youth Time Tour has been especially compiled for the Highworth Festival by Fiona Christopherson, Jane Hunt and Jo Clark. Look out for this on our stall.

Bryan Elkington has been looking after our master on Town Tours for the last eight years and is continually working on updating it.

Do please let him know of any new information which you may have on places, houses or people who once lived in them.

Highworth Festival 2008

The Historical Society will be having a stall at the Highworth Festival this year. As it is 125 years since the opening of the Highworth Railway it is intended to have the main display on this theme.

Working together with the committee of The Highworth Festival there will also be a display of photographs in the United Reform Church. This will feature people who we are having difficulty in identifying and is being done in the form of a questionnaire. Any member who would like to help or be involved on the day do please get in touch using the contact number at the bottom of this page.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held on the **29th September, 2008 at 7.30 pm** in the Community Room of the Council Offices. The following change to the Constitution will be proposed at the next A. G. M.

Honorary members of the Executive Committee shall stand for re-election after a period of three years following the date on which they came into office. After a second three year term following the date on which they came into office honorary members of the executive committee must stand down for at least one year. A retiring committee member may be co-opted onto a sub-committee. Currently the Constitution reads:- Honorary members of the Executive Committee shall retire from office together at the end of the annual general meeting next after the date on which they came into office but they may be re-elected or re-appointed.

An increase in subscriptions from £5.00 per annum to £8.00 will be proposed. This, if adopted would begin in 2009.

Website Report

For the past few months the committee have been looking at the possibility of creating a new website to allow members to carry out research, view photographs and documents online and to keep up to date with what is happening within our society.

Until now the main obstruction to this was the cost as the creation of a site of this type is very time consuming and takes a lot of organising, but the good news is that after much research we have now secured a grant to proceed thanks to the generosity of the Thomas Freke and Lady Norton Charity. This has allowed us to purchase the equipment and expertise that will be required to both build and maintain the site and we can now report that we have placed an order for the work to be carried out by Pastiche Web Studio who are based in Shrivenham. They have now started the preliminary work and hope to have something to show us in the near future....watch this space!

Prior to starting work we spent a very interesting day with the Chipping Campden Historical Society who have had their own site up and running for a while now. They were only too pleased to share with us all the information we need to create a site of our own and we have used their knowledge as a template to work on.

Our site will primarily be a resource allowing all members and the public access to the records and documents held by the society. Obviously, it will be some time before all photographs etc. will be online but the hope is that the site will be available soon and will be updated and expanded as we go.



We want our new website to be used by all members of our society and want to ensure that it is something that is informative and fun to use. We would welcome any suggestions as to what you would like to see included and would ask you to email or send your comments and questions to the chair of the society. You will find the contact details at the end of this newsletter.

HELP REQUIRED. One of the most time consuming aspects of building our website will be the inputting of all the data. Anyone who has access to a computer and a bit of spare time can compile the information so please contact us if you can help. No special skills are required, just lots of enthusiasm!

Paul Newton-Smith, Webmaster

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