



Newsletter

Summer 2009



Number 2

Hello and welcome to our Summer 2009 newsletter. It's been an exciting year for Highworth Historical Society and we hope that you've enjoyed the various events and lectures. However, we're always open to comments and suggestions so, if you'd like to make a contribution to the Society or have any ideas for us, contact us by e-mail to jo@highworthhistoricalsociety.co.uk or write to us at the address at the end of this newsletter.

Committee News

There are three new faces on your committee Gillian Miller, Kay Brown and Jim Mitchell who have all been co-opted on during the course of the year. Kay produces the excellent newsletters which have been appearing recently. Gillian and Jim have both already been contributing to the society with brilliant ideas and plenty of enthusiasm.

Chris Suter has stepped down as Secretary but is remaining on the committee. Chris has been an active member of the committee for the last three years and is responsible, together with Barbara Jones, for the ongoing Graveyard Survey.

There are also two retirements from the committee, Ken Loveday who has been our Treasurer for the past year, and Colin Dawson who has been on the committee for the last six years. Although Colin is leaving the committee, he will still (and will always!) be our railways expert! Our thanks go to all of them for the sterling work they have done for us over their period in office. As you are aware, Jane Featherston stepped down as a committee member but intended to continue as programme organiser. However, she wasn't able to continue with that responsibility and the job of organising our programme of speakers has been ably managed by Joanne Cook and Gillian Miller.

Society News

Highworth History Day

On Saturday 13th June, we ran Highworth History Day at the Council Rooms. We were overwhelmed with the attendance and particularly delighted to see so many young people enjoying the various displays and competitions. It was such a resounding success that we are hoping it might become an annual event.

Among the many items on display were details of recent archaeological discoveries made in Highworth, histories of three local houses (all formerly pubs!) and a large aerial photograph of Highworth which visitors were invited to guess the year it was taken. One of the many highlights of the day was the Highworth Town tour, which took in various sights, culminating in a visit to the tunnels and ice house at Westrop Cottage.

In the evening, a concert by the popular folk group Tinker's Bag, took place in St Michaels's Church and, again, this was very well attended and enjoyed by everyone who went along. Over the course of the day, we signed up many new members and

continued...

JC





sold several books. Subsequently, there were features about the event in the Swindon Advertiser and the Highworth Link, giving us much-needed publicity and raising our profile. Colin Gunn won the 'Guess the Year' competition (1981). A photo of The Malt Shovel pub was donated to us as well as sale particulars of a property in Hannington owned by the Hussey-Freke family.

We would like to thank all those who came along - those who purchased books, became members, identified people in the old photos on display, brought along artefacts for us to view and especially those who donated wonderful maps, guides and photos to our archive. In particular we would like to give a big thank you to all those members who donated cakes and helped with the refreshments.

KB

Visit to Richard Jefferies' Farmhouse at Coate



In July 2009, members visited Richard Jefferies' farmhouse, gardens and museum at Coate. Richard Jefferies, writer and naturalist, was born in 1848 at Coate and died young in 1887 at Goring by Sea, Sussex. He was a prolific writer, publishing over twenty books both natural history and novels, including his famous boys' adventure story, Bevis. Jean Saunders of the Richard Jefferies Society gave an excellent

talk on his life, followed by a beautiful video

of the local countryside called Jefferies Land.

Highworth Historical Society will be paying another visit to Richard Jefferies house next year.

JMC

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. 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

Wiltshire Local History Forum

Industrial Archaeology Symposium 2009 9:30am Saturday, 7th November, 2009

Come along and find out more about the industrial archaeology of our rural county at this one day Symposium. Starting at 9.45 the Symposium, chaired by Pamela Slocombe, will include talks by a number of local historians, including:

Bricks and Brickmaking in North Wiltshire by Mike Stone
The MSWJR by Neil Lover - The social history of the Andover to Cheltenham railway which travelled via Marlborough and Swindon.

The Oriental Fibre Mat and Matting Company at Highworth, 1870-2005 by Dr Bryan Lawton

Wiltshire Airfields by Bob Clarke
Secret Underground Cities by Nick McCamley
The schedule includes a break for lunch. The Symposium is being held at the Wharf Theatre, Devizes. Booking is essential. Contact the Bookings Secretary on 01380 727369. Cost: £9.00

FUNDRAISING LECTURE: Henry VIII 2:30pm, Saturday, 21 November, 2009

Dr David Starkey, CBE, well known historian, author, broadcaster and TV presenter will be giving the fundraising lecture this year. This lecture will be held at Devizes Town Hall. Cost £15. Booking recommended. Contact the Museum on 01380 727369.

Oral Histories

Now that the society has been able to purchase a small digital recorder, work has started recording the memories and details of the life and times of the people of Highworth. At the end of July we paid a visit to Newburgh House to talk to the residents and hear their views on life in Highworth over the last hundred years. A small questionnaire was left with each person so that if they wished, they could jot down the events they remembered. The questionnaires are to be collected later to give people a chance to think about it and then some more oral histories will be recorded.



Joanne Cook and Gillian Miller

Fairford History Society

Fairford History Society have organised the following meetings in the Farmor Room at Fairford Community Centre. (All meetings start at 7.30pm):

2010 September 17th – The Polish Hostel in Fairford by Alicia Swiatek Christofides.

2011 November 19th – Glos Archaeology Sites & Monuments Record.

2012 February 18th – Ashmolean Museum.

Monumental Inscriptions

Over the last year Barbara Jones and I have recorded the memorial stones in the Cricklade Road Cemetery (with a cut off of about 1900) These are now on the Society's web-site. At the moment we are working on



Hannington and Inglesham churchyards. Hannington has provided us with an interesting story which we are researching at the moment. Hopefully we will be able to "reveal all" shortly. We have also discovered details at Inglesham which may produce another "story"

CS and BJ

HHS 40th Anniversary

Your Historical Society will be 40 years young in 2012! We would like to commemorate the event and are looking for ideas of how to do so. Suggestions so far have been to photograph all the Highworth inhabitants outside their homes and record them for posterity, or



to place blue plaques on certain buildings, similar to the one in the Market Place. We'd love to know what you think about these ideas and whether you have any suggestions of your own. Do let us know.

Evening Lectures 2009 / 2010

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

September 28th 2009	AGM with address by Claire Skinner
October 26th 2009	A Victorian Rector and Nine Old Maids
November 30th 2009	Steam on Wiltshire Roads
December 14th 2009	Margaret Fitzgerald, Lady of Sevenhampton
January 25th 2010	Trades and Occupations of North Wiltshire
February 22nd 2010	Welsh Love Spoons
March 29th 2010	Ladies and the Vote
April 26th 2010	History of Wiltshire Police

Meetings start at 7.30 pm.

Mike Boyes
Peter Donovan
Jo Clark
Mike Stone
Bob Browning
Paul Booy
Paul Sample



Highworth Year of Culture 2010

2010 has been designated a Year of Culture in Highworth and various events will be taking place throughout the year. We will be staging a May Day and Mediaeval Market. Listen out for further news at our lectures, in our newsletters and on the website.

Missing Book

Between June and July of last year one of our members borrowed the society's copy of 'With Britain in Mortal Danger: Britain's Most Secret Army of WWII'. This was needed recently for research purposes. It's so easy to overlook and forget a book, but would whoever has it please be kind enough to return it to our archivist Ann-Marie Murphy.

Treasurers Report

We will be coming round to collect subscriptions for 2009-10 membership on Thursday 27th August and membership cards will be issued at the same time. Don't worry if you're not at home that day – you can still



pay at the AGM if you prefer. Payment should be by cheque, please, payable to Highworth Historical Society. As you know, membership is now £8 for the year – where else can you have a night out for just £1?!

DON'T FORGET..

NEXT MEETING

Monday 28 September 7.30pm - Council Room
AGM followed by
adrees by our President Claire Skinner

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 28th September 2009 at 7.30 pm in the Community Room of the Highworth Town Council Offices. After the business meeting refreshments will be served.

Present Committee 2008 - 2009

Officers: Chairman Jo Clark
Treasurer Ken Loveday

Elected members: Paul Newton-Smith Website
Colin Dawson Railways
Christine Suter Monumental Inscriptions
Joanne Cook Oral History and
Programme Secretary

Gillian Miller, Kay Brown - Acting Secretary and Jim Mitchell have all been co-opted onto the committee during the past year and will be standing for election at the A.G.M.

Archivist: Ann-Marie Murphy
Monumental Inscriptions: Barbara Jones

Jo Clark is in the second year of office in a 3 year term.
Ken Loveday and Colin Dawson are both retiring from office.

The constitution allows for a minimum of 3 and maximum of 6 elected members. The current committee has 4 elected members of whom 3 are willing to stand again.

After the Annual General Meeting there will be an address by the society President Claire Skinner.



Recruitment Drive

WE WANT NEW MEMBERS!!!!

We are looking to recruit new members to our society so who do you know who would like to come along and join us? We would like to see many more new faces in 2009 so why not invite some friends to join you at one of our monthly meetings or to one of our trips or events. It's great value and as you can see, there is something here for everyone.

With admission at only £1.50 for a guest at our monthly lectures there really is no excuse to stay at home!



For information on membership fees and benefits please contact us on the number opposite or visit our website. Alternatively, speak to one of the Society officers who will be only too glad to help.

Website Report

The society website has been up and running now for quite a few months and we have received lots of praise from all sorts of people which is very gratifying.

The site is currently getting between 350 and 400 hits per month, which is not too bad for a fairly new website and not all visitors are based here in the UK! So far we have been visited by people from 29 different countries so we can now truly say we have gone international!

By far the most popular areas are the photographic galleries, so if you have any images you would be willing to share with the world please let us have a copy and we will include them in our photographic archives. We will of course look after your originals very carefully and return them to you once they have been scanned.

The Spooky Website is also very popular and we would love to expand this section so please send us your spooky stories of Highworth and beyond. We would love more tales from the villages around Highworth and also stories from more modern times, so if you live in a haunted house, let us know.

For the future we are compiling stories and folklore about the more colourful characters from our town as well as any other strange or humorous 'goings on' which will be compiled in a new section to be headed 'Weird and Wonderful Wrdc', so once again, if you have any information, don't keep it to yourself!



As we said in the last Summer Newsletter, we want our 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.

Paul Newton-Smith, Webmaster

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