



# Newsletter

Summer 2010



Number 3

**H**ello and welcome to our Summer 2010 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](mailto:jo@highworthhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or write to us at the address at the end of this newsletter.

## Medieval Mayday Market

Residents of Highworth and surrounding towns and villages were invited to don their not-so-glad rags and come along to the Medieval May Day Market in Highworth on the first of May. The High Street, Sheep Street and the Market Square were closed to traffic for the day whilst the revelry and celebrations took place.



Following the official opening by the Mayor of Highworth who arrived on horseback at 10am, there was a full programme of events for this family day including jugglers, puppet shows, Morris dancing, pancake tossing, maypole dancing, a fancy dress competition and madrigal and folk songs. At the same time, market stalls included sales of honey, cakes, pottage, sweets and

cheese and there were demonstrations from bee-keepers, fletchers, bodgers, spinners and weavers. You might have had your future foretold by the soothsayer, purchased a remedy for your ailments



from the apothecary, bought a hog roast lunch or threw rotten fruit at local villains in the stocks. The day's events culminated in a bicycle jousting competition between teams entered by the local hostelries, eventually won by the team from the Rose and Crown pub – congratulations to them! We were very lucky in that the sun shone for us all day and the rain held off until the festivities had finished. Subsequently, there were features about the event in the Swindon Advertiser and the Highworth Link, giving us much-needed publicity and raising our profile. Following the success of the Medieval May Day Market, Highworth Town Council are sponsoring a May Day celebration every year.



## Exhibition on Highworth Railway Branch Line

Another event that took place in May was the exhibition of the Highworth Railway Branch Line held in the United Reform Church.

Our resident Highworth Railway expert, Colin Dawson, was on hand to answer any visitors' questions and, indeed, also provided many of the exhibits on display. One visitor, in particular, was delighted that Colin was able to immediately direct him to the site of the Stanton Fitzwarren Station after he had previously been unable to locate it himself, despite many trips there.

## Egg Saturday

Egg Saturday precedes Shrove Tuesday and HHS celebrated in style when we held a Coffee and Pancakes Morning in the Community Room. A crowd of almost 60 people filled the pavement in the High Street to watch Andy Sears toss a pancake for 1 minute 48 seconds! The sweepstake on the Tossing Time was won by Margaret Ayres and she was awarded with a meat voucher, generously donated by our butchers. The Community Room had a continuous flow of customers who enjoyed freshly cooked pancakes despite the best efforts of the noisy fire alarm system to drown all conversation!



## Visit to Richard Jeffries' House



Due to the popularity of the visit last year, we arranged another visit to Richard Jefferies' House at Coate. As well as a very informative talk by Jean Saunders, members were treated to a viewing of a film of a Richard Jefferies event, filmed in 1948, that was recently discovered in an attic!

## Isambard Kingdom Brunel

May saw the visit of Isambard Kingdom Brunel to Highworth in what proved to be highly entertaining afternoon and evening performances which included plenty of audience participation. His motto was, "Just because it hasn't been done before, doesn't mean that it *can't* be done" and actor David Hall as IKB went on to delight audiences with illustrations and demonstrations of how the tunnel under the Thames, the Clifton Suspension Bridge, the Great Western Railway and the SS Great Britain and Great Eastern, amongst others, were engineered.



## Swindon at War - Central Library



We were invited to join other local history groups and organisations with a display at the Swindon at War Exhibition at the Central Library in Swindon in June. Our display was very well attended with visitors to the event and our air-raid siren was especially popular with the younger visitors! We also forged links with some of the other groups there, particularly the Swindon Society and the Rodbourne Community History Group. We are hoping that these links will, in future, benefit our members.

## Tour of Inigo House

Claire and Peter Burke kindly invited members of HHS to their home, Inigo House in the High Street, for a tour of the house and gardens. This was very popular and we are hoping to be invited again in order to accommodate members who were unable to attend this time.



## British Library Web archiving Programme

We are delighted and very proud to have been approached by the British Library for our website to be included in their web archiving programme. The British Library select and archive websites to represent aspects of UK documentary heritage. They will develop presentation mechanisms to keep the Highworth Historical Society website, amongst others, permanently accessible as hardware and software change over time. As a result, these websites will be preserved for posterity and will remain available to researchers in the future.

## Committee News

Since the last A.G.M. your committee members have been exceedingly busy. I, together with Paul and Jane, were heavily involved with the planning and organisation of the hugely successful Medieval Market and May Day event and the production of our very professional brochure. Weren't we lucky with the weather on that day!

In June we took part in the 'Swindon at War' event held at the Central Library in Swindon and this month we look forward to having a presence at the Battle of the Bands.

Only last week I heard from Swindon Central Library - Local Studies who are exploring the possibility of setting up a Swindon History Forum/ Network and would like the society to become involved. More about that as we receive further information.

Jim, our Treasurer, as you would expect of a good Scot, is keeping an eagle eye on our finances. In addition, assisted by Jacky Clark, he is working hard on putting together the paperwork for our Gift Aid claim which should be going in to the Inland Revenue shortly.

On top of her duties as Secretary, Kay has been actively involved in all the projects in which we have participated this year. She also produces the society's informative newsletter each month.

Joanne and Gillian work hard at putting together our Speaker's Programme and on the oral histories. Gillian organised the two fun pancake tossing events and the enjoyable and very well received 'Evening with Isambard Kingdom Brunel'. Chris continues with her



work on the monumental inscriptions in the area and Ann-Marie works quietly in the background on our archives. Thank you all for your hard work throughout the year.

Jacky Clark and Jane Hunt were co-opted onto the committee in October last year and will be standing for election this year. Jacky brings a wealth of knowledge relating to Family History research and has run several tutorials on this subject in the Library. She is currently researching Highworthians who fell in the First World War. Jane is an Highworthian born and bred and contributed to the recent display in St Michael's Church on May 1st this year. She created the splendid timeline which you all saw and I was most grateful for her constructive comments and support in putting the display together.

Because the society is becoming increasingly busy it has been decided to resurrect the position of Vice Chair and Jacky Clark has agreed to stand for this position. I have completed my first term of office and will be standing again at the AGM.

The setting up of our highly successful website is now complete and we have now purchased all the items for which we had a grant from the Sir Thomas Freke and Lady Norton Charity. We are indebted to the Charity for their generous grant and a letter expressing our thanks has already been sent to them.

### Stop Press

Very brief details as we haven't yet seen the full publicity blurb. It is intended to hold an exhibition at Steam on the life of Alfred Williams on the evening of Friday 12th November and Saturday 13th November 2010. Various local groups will be contributing to this event. It is understood that the Friday evening event is to be a musical! More on that as we receive further information.

### Archivist Report



The archive continues to be logged and sorted with new items donated from time to time. Also we have purchased books and magazines which are of local historical interest, as well as collating programmes and other information relating to local events. These items include Details of the Sale of 10 Cottages and Gardens in Highworth and Blunsdon dated October 9th 1907 and Sale details for Hampton

Turnville and Hampton dated August 26th 1889.

We have also assisted in many exhibitions and displays such as Highworth Year of Culture, Swindon at War and a display of Highworth Light Railway held in the United Reform Church.

### Evening Lectures 2010 / 2011

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

**Meetings start at 7.30 pm.**

September 27th 2010	AGM with lecture by Brian Lawton
October 25th 2010	The Polish Camp
November 29th 2010	Brothers of the 9 Old Maids
December 20th 2010	Magic Lantern Show
January 31st 2011	It was so gloriously exciting
February 28th 2011	Clayton de Wyndt - A Local Family
March 28th 2011	Railways of Wiltshire
April 18th 2011	Family History

Alicja Christofides  
Mike Boyes  
Patrick Furley  
Peter Donovan  
Desne Rose  
Michael D. Rumsey  
Jacky Clark



We have also been involved in many areas of research ranging from Family History or House Histories for members of the public from all over the world.

We are also now able to supply artifacts on short term loan to other historical organisations or schools for specific projects.

### Data Protection

Members of the Highworth Historical Society are hereby informed that, for the purposes of record only, details relating to their membership are stored electronically.

Under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998, it is necessary that all members be advised of this fact. Members are further advised that in the event of their objecting to their details being so recorded, they should notify the Secretary without delay.

### Treasurers Report

It's that time of year again.

We will be coming round for your subscriptions on the evening of Tuesday 7th September and issuing membership cards at that time. Payment by cheque is preferable and cheques should be made out to the Highworth Historical Society.

Membership is £10 for the year and I hope you agree that this represents excellent value for money. Your subscriptions contribute directly to the running of the society and are greatly appreciated.



### Thank You ....

We would like to thank all those who came along to these events – to those who became members, those who purchased books, pancakes, cakes, raffle tickets, sweepstake entries, those who made cakes and pancakes, those who helped with the refreshments, those who donated raffle prizes and all the people who helped with the organisation, publicity and smooth running of these events. We couldn't have done it all without you! We hope you were happy with our efforts.

## DON'T FORGET...

### NEXT MEETING

Monday 27th September 7.30pm - Council Room  
AGM followed by  
Lecture by Dr. Brian Lawton

## Annual General Meeting



# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Registered Charity No: 1001376

The Annual General Meeting of the Highworth Historical Society will be held on Monday 27th September 2010 at the Community Room of the Council Offices commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The business of the meeting will be to receive the annual report of the Executive Committee as Trustees, to receive the accounts of the Society for 2009/2010, to elect the members of the Executive Committee and to transact any other business on the agenda to be circulated at the meeting.

Proceedings and election of officers will be in accordance with the Constitution.

Nomination forms for the elections may be obtained from the Chair by post at 6 Copper Beeches, Highworth, SN6 7BJ or by email. This should be signed by the proposer, the seconder, and the nominee and reach the Chair by:

**Saturday 4th September 2010.**

A copy of the accounts may be obtained prior to the AGM from the Treasurer at Inala, Lechlade Road, Highworth upon receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

**Following the AGM there will be a talk by Bryan Lawton entitled A Highworth Miscellany.**

## BBC History of the World Project



Our members (you!) have been invited to take part in the BBC's History of the World Project. Most people have at least one object in their life which

has some history to it. In many cases, it will be a personal story but there will be objects that have impacted on the lives of many people. A History of the World wants to gather digital images of these objects along with their stories.

Among the intriguing items and stories that have recently been listed on the BBC's website, are: a toy Batmobile car that shoots matchsticks, a tobacco tin from WW1, a sampler of Adam and Eve made in 1808 and originating from Chorley, a Sadler's Wells theatre programme from 1931, a jam jar recovered from Hiroshima and a fragment of the Berlin Wall. All the items have interesting stories attached to them and we're sure that you can come up with something equally fascinating! Do contact one of the committee members to join in with this project. If enough people are interested, we will set up a session where you can bring along your items, tell us the story behind them and have them photographed for submission to the BBC website. To view the website visit:

[www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld)

## Website Report

The website has continued to grow as more and more people submit information relating to the history of Highworth and the surrounding villages.

I have also been busy working in the background ensuring that the site is submitted to the various search engines such as Google to make sure people can find us. This seems to be paying off as we are not only getting visitors from our local area and the rest of the UK, but from all over the world as well!

The number of visitors to our site is also growing, with approximately 700 visits per month and we had our best month in May with 937. The total number for 2009 was 6191 and as of today we stand at 5882, so it looks as if we are going to do even better this year.

The areas that people visit seems to remain fairly constant as the top 5 rarely change. They are:

1. About Highworth
2. Photo Galleries
3. Town Trails (both adult and childrens)
4. Archive Section
5. Links Page

The Spooky section also seems to be very popular so please keep sending those stories in.

For the future I hope to add a lot more information into the archives area with topics such as The Seige of Highworth and House Histories. Another section I would like to add is another photographic section showing pictures taken at the various exhibitions and functions that we as a society put on or attend.

As you have no doubt read elsewhere in this newsletter we have been approached by the British Library for our website to be included in their web archiving programme, something we should all be proud of as a large number of members have contributed to the site in one way or another.

I am always looking at ways to improve our website so if anyone has pictures or documents I can copy, or stories to tell of their lives in Highworth I would love to hear from you.



## Were your family at school in Highworth?

The Educational Records from Highworth that are kept in the county archives are going to be available for you to look at. Claire Skinner, the Principle Archivist from the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, as well as our President, will be giving a talk at 10.30 and will help you access the records.

Do come along and see what went on in Highworth's schools.

**30th October 2010  
United Reform Church  
9.30am to 12.30pm**

## CONTACT US

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