

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER 118

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OUR 21st BIRTHDAY PARTY

As 1992 is the year of the Society's 21st. anniversary, we thought we might do something a little different in our Summer Special Event.

Allen Turton has very kindly offered us the use of the grounds of Basing House as the venue for

A BARBEQUE AT BASING HOUSE ON SATURDAY, JUNE 6TH.

It will take place in the Walled Garden and we shall have the use of a marquee (just in case!). More details about this event later.

VISIT TO THE NEW BUTSER HILL FARM

Following Peter Reynolds' talk on the Archaeological Farm at Butser, Mary Oliver's GCSE class will be visiting the Farm on March 14th and our members are welcome to join them. Ring Mary for more details (Basingstoke 24263).

TRAINING EXCAVATION

Advance notice that Peter Heath will be organising a training excavation, probably from Sunday 12th April to Saturday 18th. More details later, but Peter would be glad to know how many people are likely to be interested (Basingstoke 27713). No experience needed.

VISIT TO BRAMSHILL HOUSE on WEDNESDAY, JULY 8TH.

An evening visit to Bramshill House has been provisionally arranged for the above date. This fine Jacobean Mansion, built for Lord Zouche, is of great architectural and historical interest; dramatically sited in a beautiful park with a herd of White Deer. As it is the Police Staff College it is not easy to get to, so do reserve this date.

FARNBOROUGH HILL SCHOOL

On the 19th. May we have been fortunate in being able to arrange with the Sister Superior for our Society to make an evening visit to Farnborough Hill School and for it to be followed by a visit to the Abbey Church. We have agreed (provisionally) to meet outside the front entrance of Farnborough Hill School at 7.30 pm.

To get there, come off the M3 at Junction 4 and go due south on the A 325 for 3/4 mile until you reach the end of the mini dual-carriageway. The School is on the left (east side). You pass the exit first; the entrance is on the left after you have passed under some beech trees just before you enter Farnborough - just by a micro-sized roundabout. As this is a busy main road I suggest we go up the drive and wait at the top.

Princess Eugenie and Farnborough Hill

Princess Eugenie was the wife of Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III) who was Emperor of France in the Second Empire 1852-70.

When the monarchy of France finally came to an end in 1848, Louis-Philippe fled the country to Claremont in Surrey. In the vacuum that was left, Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, seized the opportunity to assume his uncle's mantle, promising his country security and once again a place in world affairs.

With a view to establishing a dynasty, he wished for a wife and his choice was a Spanish lady, Eugenie de Montijo, Countess of Teba, whom he married in 1853. Three years later they had a son who became known as Louis, the Prince Imperial.

Unfortunately, although Louis Napoleon succeeded in certain diplomatic ventures, he never had the luck or the foresight or skill of his uncle, and, after some spectacular failures like the Mexican affair when his protégé Emperor Maximilian was callously murdered, he finally suffered total humiliation in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 when he was taken prisoner at Sedan. This was the end of the Napoleonic Era.

He left France and came to live at Camden Place, Chislehurst, in Kent where he was re-united with his wife and son; he was, though, a sick man and died three years later, leaving his only son as heir. The Crown Prince, in order to justify and prove himself as a worthy Bonaparte, prevailed upon his mother and Queen Victoria to allow him to take part in a military expedition against the Zulus, but in 1879 he became involved in a military skirmish and was fatally injured.

The Princess moved away from Chislehurst and found a suitable house at Farnborough Hill which had been built 20 years previously for the publisher T.G. Longman. It was a strange building in the form of a gigantic chalet with steep Gothick gables and copious bargeboarding and a tower over the front entrance. It was magnificently situated in its own grounds on a small hill overlooking the Blackwater Valley on the edge of the village of Farnborough.

She took up residence in 1880 and set about planning a memorial to her husband and son. This took the form of a mausoleum just to the south of the London to Southampton railway line. Designed by Gabriel Destailleur, it can be described as late French Gothic in the flamboyant style. It is cruciform in shape with a wide and lofty nave and a dome like that of Les Invalides in Paris (no accident). The floor is Italian marble and piers rise clear into a vaulted roof. Behind the altar is the original organ built by the firm of Cavaille-Coll of Paris.

Under the dome, in the crypt, is a chapel in Romanesque style with the sarcophagi of her husband and son together with their personal mementoes such

as the Garter banner of the Emperor from St. George's Chapel, Windsor. There is nothing cheap or lacking in taste about the construction and it has a certain sincere and solemn integrity which invokes respect.

To service the Mausoleum, a monastery was founded alongside which houses a community of Benedictine monks. In 1920, at the age of 94, the Princess paid a visit to the land of her childhood and whilst there she died. Her remains were brought back to Farnborough and placed in a large, black sarcophagus in the crypt.

We were given a photograph of a plan showing later additions to the original building which had brought it forward towards the present London Road by adding a new front. In one of the offices we were shown six or seven thin beams displayed on the wall. They appear to be decorative mouldings and could

Her home, which looks much the same now as when she was alive, is an established convent school, whilst the mausoleum now serves as the local (RC) parish church. The monastery provides the manpower for the parish and also runs a bookbinding business.

Richard Dexter

BASINGSTOKE RECORDS - PART 3

Barbara Eastabrook and I recently visited Anchor Court in London Street, now housing a motor insurance company. Inside the door is the following inscription:

The timber frame of this building is thought to be the earliest of its type still standing in Basingstoke and dates from around 1400.

There would have been no chimney. The sooted roof timbers, as well as the triangle of wattle and daub in the apex of the westerly frame, have been left to bear witness to this. The beams which are now above the front entrance were inserted into the open hall in the sixteenth century to form an intermediate floor. They have been moved forward to leave the rear as it was originally constructed.

If the westerly end is the extreme end of the building in that direction, then the whole bay at least was open to the roof, although it is possible that one division had a shelf-like floor added so that the family could sleep slightly higher than the servants and animals which were huddled below. At least they had the fire for themselves. However, the law usually was that the fire must be covered when the "Curfew" or couvre-feu (cover the fire) bell rang, so there would have been no cheerful blaze to go to bed by. If properly done, enough hot ash was left to get the fire going again in the morning.

As far as we could see, there are three bays, that is, divisions which are about 16 feet apart, as far as the builders judged a straight beam could go (it would have depended on the wood available).

Our guide, Mrs Gledhill, had made an appointment with us for the lunch hour so that we could see from floor to roof. Later ceilings had been put in at a height to suit our shorter ancestors, which must be rather difficult for a tall person. A man over six feet tall seems in danger of hitting his head every time he stands up - as one demonstrated for us.

We were given a photocopy of a plan showing later additions to the original building, which had brought it forward towards the present London Road by adding a new front. In one of the offices we were shown six or seven thin beams displayed on the wall. They appear to be decorative mouldings and could

have been from the front of the early building, from the overhang or jetty. As we went higher upstairs, we were glad to be told that the roof is now all carefully supported by invisible steel ribs, as some of the roof timbers look a bit unreliable.

I have looked into the ownership of this property, which the first references show belonged to John Shupmere, who paid 12s 0d as Quit Rent for a half year in the early 1400s. Until 1520 it is just called "Bowers". John Bowyer was an early owner who died in 1536 and his will in the County Record Office has an inventory giving details of furniture and possessions in all the rooms of his house. Unfortunately we are not sure which house he actually lived in, because he also had one in Church Street and another by Coppid Bridge (Brook Street).

In 1520 the house is referred to as "the Chekyr" (Chequer), in a complaint to the Frankpledge Court:

13 May: We present that bynethe the chekyr the by wey ys yn gt perele the whyche dyvers cartys hath bene overthowen.

(We present that beneath the Chequer the highway is in great peril, as a result of which several carts have been overthrown). If this highway to London was as muddy as that in May, the holes must have been really deep!

William Grete (died 1539), his son John (1544) and grandson William (1572), who all probably lived in the Church Street house (that is now destroyed but was once the Gazette office), owned the lease of the Chequer and farmed the mead and 23 acres belonging to it.

In 1574 it is clearly stated that the name of the house has changed: "Bowyers called the Cheker". From 1607 to 1655 the rent was paid by Mr Moore (gent). In 1679 the rent was paid by Gilbert Hether, and in 1699 by Laurence Palmer "for the Tenement he liveth in called Bowers or Jekir" (spellings were unreliable).

The fact that the house was called "the Cheker" does not mean it was always a public house, for houses in the very early days were known by pictures as children today recognise the peg for their coats in school by a picture, before they can read.

But it appears to have been at least an alehouse in 1700, with a rather bad reputation - or at least the tenant then, Joshua Hughes, had several complaints laid against him:

John Carlisle of Basingstoke ... he hath been at the house of John Hughes of this Town divers times being the sign of the Chequer and hath there seen Rogues and Vagabonds ... tinkers, pedlars, rag gatherers and wandering beggars and that very frequently and saith that about three weeks ago he came from Chinham with one of Mr Moores servants he saw about six wandering people there and saith that every week he entertaineth some of that sort of people there ... And saith that he entertained Robert Hobbs a Fellow who was condemned at the last Assizes for Felony and since executed ... and saith that he hath heard John Watts of this Town say That the said Joshua Hughes did make passes and hath seen many of these people drink there.

People required a pass signed by a J.P. to go from town to town and they also needed a licence to beg. Further, it was still against the law to harbour anyone who had no obvious means of getting a living, because they were immediately assumed to be thieves.

Robert Palmer, Blacksmith ... about a month ago Mr Spencer one of the Constables of this town gave notice to Joshua Hughes Victualler that he should not entertain Rogues and Vagabonds ... many of them have been used to stay there a week together ... Joshua Hughes useth to lodge these people in his barn for a penny a piece a night ... Robert Hobbs stayed there about a fortnight about Whitsontide and about a fortnight or three weeks about Christmas.

Thomas Burd ... Joshua Hughes entertains poor people some times half a dozen at a time ... he believes that Joshua Hughes sells by the smallest measures in town and that he hath not had for two pence above a pint and that very small too and saith that Joshua Hugues hath very little custom of his neighbours for drink or to drink there but only wandering people. There were more complaints in 1702:

George Prince ... yesterday being Sunday about 11 or 12 of the clock at none as he was coming from church he heard a great Noise & tumult in the house of John White of this town apothecary & at the door were a great many of the people of the town looking towards the door whereupon this informant went to his house & laid down his book & came forth again to see what was the matter & coming to the door of the said John White he saw Joshua Hughes come forth of that house staggering by reason of drunkenness where upon (being one of the churchwardens) he sent for the constable (but before then George Prince had taken him before a Justice - Mr Coleman - and charged him with drunkenness). Hughes examined said he went to John White to buy a pint of Vinegar - Mr White offered him a dram and he did give him a glass of strong water whether it was brandy or what it was and he had three more.

Since, right up to 1717, the Quit Rent was 12s 6d a half year, there must have been quite a lot of land with the houses. By 1717 the Chequer had become two houses: one "late Mr Robert Blunden, now John Smith, rent 5s 4d paid by him", and the other "late Robert Palmers now Mr George Princes, rent 7s 6d paid by him".

In 1741 John Smith paid 6d "for the wast ground whereon the walls of his New House is built taken out of the passage leading out of London Street into Chequer Close about a foot, two in breadth and 24 feet in length". This new house could be the one next to the house known to us as the Anchor, as the Anchor itself was certainly not new in 1741. The passage is now Sydenham Place.

The 1762 map shows a large meadow called "the mead to the Chequer" behind these houses, and this gave its name to the present Chequers Road. I am not sure when the house was first called the Anchor. It was called "the Blue Anchor" in the trade directory of 1784 ("The Salisbury Waggon call at the Blue Anchor Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, up and down).

A NEW BASINGSTOKE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY ?

Barbara & Tim Herrington represented the Society recently at a meeting at Queen Mary's College called by Terri Sandison, Regional Centre Development Officer, and Richard Croft, Head of Geography. Together with Andrew Benson-Wilson and Sue Batstone of the Basingstoke Heritage Society, we discussed the proposed setting up of a Geography Society based at QMC.

It was thought by Richard Croft that there might be an overlap of interests and a division of membership loyalties, which he was anxious to avoid. After a useful and productive discussion, we agreed to co-operate in the interchange of future programme details and, additionally, to take back to our Societies the proposal that an annual joint conference on a subject of topical and mutual interest might be organised - in the future.

We pointed out that two other groups with similar interests should be contacted, namely the Basingstoke Field Society and the Landscape Section of the Hampshire Field Club. This was accepted. It is hoped to hold the inaugural meeting of the Geographical Society in the Autumn of this year.

ODIHAM CASTLE

One of the talks given at the Day Conference (Archaeology & History of NE Hampshire) in Odiham in November last was on King John's Castle at Odiham. The following is taken from a leaflet written by David Allen of Hampshire Museums, with his permission, and relates to the results of 5 years of digs on the site by the County Museum Service from 1981-85 :-

Construction of the castle for King John started in 1207 on a bend in the River Whitewater on a 20 acre site taken from Robert the Parker. The first phase of building involved the digging of square moats and a defensive bank. The ground level then was 2.0 m below the present. On this ground buildings were constructed and cess-pits dug. There is a surviving decorated doorway.

Phase 2, between ?1216 and 1300 the great octagonal tower was built and this work destroyed Phase 1 structures, mainly because of the new circular moat dug round the tower and debris spread around from the tower construction.

Phase 3, ?1300 to 1400 saw the building of a palisade, fronted by a flat-bottomed gully. Mortar casts of the post holes have survived. A small rectangular building was terraced into the W side of the Phase 1 bank to make a lean-to structure. The gully contained dismembered horse carcasses and stone catapult ammunition.

Phase 4, 1400-1500 saw modifications to the surrounding "garden" area in the later life of the castle as a hunting lodge - which is what it seems to have been when first built for King John back in 1207.

An excellent account of life at the castle based on the diary of Countess Eleanor in 1265, together with the more usual references has been put together in a book by Patricia McGregor (ed. Barry Stapleton): "Odiham Castle 1200-1500" (Alan Sutton 1983).

Tim Herrington

A NEW BASINGSTOKE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY ?

CALENDAR
 Barbara & Tim Herrington rejoin the Society recently at a meeting at Queen Mary's College called by Terry Sanderson, Regional Development Officer, and Richard Wilson and Sue Bascorne of the Basingstoke Archaeological Society. We discussed the

Thurs 12 Mar **THE MOAT AT YATELEY HALL** Geoffrey Hoare (North East Hants Archaeological Society) FWM

Thurs 19 Mar **How Well Do You Know Hampshire?** Slide presentation by Pat & Roger Haddock

Thurs 9 Apr **HAMPSHIRE FARM BUILDINGS SURVEY** by Dr Edwin Course *

Sun 12th to Sat 18th Apr **TRAINING EXCAVATION** See page 2 *

Thurs 16 Apr **A Brief History of Thornycrofts** by members of the Thornycroft Society FWM

Thurs 14 May **AERIAL SURVEY OF NORTH EAST HAMPSHIRE** by David Graham *

Sat 16 May **VISIT TO FARNBOROUGH ABBEY** See page 2 *

Thurs 21 May **Bygones in Haberdashery** by Dorothy Locke FWM

Sat 6 June **21ST BIRTHDAY PARTY** See page 2 *

Thurs 11 June **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & MEMBERS' EVENING** *

Wed 8 July **VISIT TO BRAMSHILL HOUSE** See page 2 *

***Society function (Conference Room, unless otherwise stated)**
 HFC Hampshire Field Club
 FWM Friends of the Willis Museum

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