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## Notes and news

**BLHA Spring Event: 'Maps for the Local Historian', Saturday, 9 April 2011 at Maulden Village Hall, 10 am, doors open 9.45 am.** Leader: Stephen Coleman, Historic Environment Information Officer, Central Bedfordshire Council. The morning session introduces the wealth of maps available in Bedfordshire for local history, for researching a single house, historic place, village or whole parish. The full range of Ordnance Survey maps of various scales will be discussed, especially 19th century, and also historic town plans, estate maps and Enclosure and Tithe maps. You will learn how information can be derived from them – ownership, field names, boundary details, informative field patterns, past land use and evidence for landscape change – and also have the opportunity to practise interpretative skills using copies of historic maps. How maps can mislead and some of the other pitfalls which await the unwary will also be discussed. A list of useful publications will be provided and some will be available for viewing.

Lunch break 12.30 to 1.30 in the hall. (*please bring a packed lunch*), tea and coffee will be available.

After lunch (weather permitting) we go into nearby countryside and villages to compare the historic maps with what can be seen today, featuring building rows, encroachments and lost greens and putting field names into their landscape context, as archaeological and past land use indicators. We will also see how different field patterns apparent on maps are reflected in the countryside and can assist the study of hedgerow history.

We will finish by about 3 pm but will not return to the hall. Further information from Stephen Coleman on 01234 297539 (evenings). Fee £10 per delegate, to Mike Turner, 117 High St, Clophill, Beds, MK45 4BJ, cheques payable to Bedfordshire Local History Association. Please book early.

**BLHA Hon Secretary.** Expressions of interest are invited for the post of BLHA Hon Secretary which will become vacant at the forthcoming AGM on 11 June 2011. These should be in writing and be addressed to the Chairman or Secretary or to any BLHA Committee member and may be forwarded via the Editor (see p. 4).

**Calendar of Events 2011.** BLHA is compiling a calendar of *all* affiliated societies' meetings and other local history events to be updated monthly on the website, circulated to the Yahoo group and other

## **BLHA Annual Conference 2011 and AGM**

AT WILLINGTON

Saturday, 11 June 2011

Registration 9 am

AGM 9.30 am

Conference 10 am to 4 pm

The 2011 Bedfordshire Local History Association Conference will be held on Saturday, 11 June 2011 at Willington, hosted by the **Willington Local History Group**. Registration will commence at 9 am at St Lawrence church followed by the AGM of the Association at 9.30 am. The Conference will commence at 10 am.

No charge will be made for those who only wish to attend the AGM. The Conference will finish at 4pm. Lunch and refreshments are included in the Conference fee.

The theme for the day will be 'Willington from Gostwick to Godber' and it will provide an opportunity through talks and a tour to find out more about Willington, its buildings and its history. You will hear about several prominent former residents: Sir John Gostwick, who rose to prominence in the court of Henry VIII; Augustus Orlebar, vicar of Willington for over 50 years; and Isaac Godber, who set up a well-known nursery business at the start of the 20th century. There will be a chance to explore the Tudor dovecote and stables and the church with members of the local history group and to learn more about the work of the Willington group and there will be time to share ideas between the groups attending.

**Cost for the day including drinks and lunch: £17;** free parking, details to come. Closing date for applications, Saturday, 24 April. Send cheques payable to Willington Local History Group, together with your contact details, to Mr R Bollington, 2 Beauchamp Place, Willington, Beds MK44 3QA.

interested parties. Programmes by e-mail to ed.martin39@btinternet.com or to the editor (p. 4).

## The prison at Norman Cross: a 'Time Team' investigation

Series 17 of 'Time Team' was filmed during 2009, and in July of that year I was involved in the archaeological investigation of the site of a Napoleonic prisoner of war depot at Norman Cross, near Peterborough. This episode was screened on Channel Four on 3 October 2009, under the title 'Death and Dominoes: The First Prisoner of War Camp'.

During the Napoleonic Wars over 200,000 prisoners of war arrived in this country to be housed either on board prison ships, in Parole Depots, or in the numerous land prisons situated around the country, such as Dartmoor, Perth, Portchester Castle and Norman Cross. This latter prison was constructed in 1797 to house 7,000 prisoners, in response to the expansion of the conflict to include war with the Dutch.

The prison was constructed of wood and covered an area of 42 acres. The outer boundary was originally a strong stockade fence, but was replaced in 1805 with a brick wall bordered on the inside with a three-foot ditch. The prison barracks were in the form of four quadrangular courts each of about 3½ acres. Half of this area was used as an airing ground for the prisoners, while the remainder contained four wooden two-storey barracks, each about 30 metres by 7 metres, and roofed with red tiles. Each barrack housed 500 prisoners who slept in rows of hammocks, arranged in three tiers. The northeast quadrangle was eventually used as the hospital.

During the existence of this prison (from 1797 to 1814) a total of 1,770 prisoners died of various causes. They were buried in the prison grounds but there was no record of the location of this cemetery. In 1914 a memorial was erected along the Great North Road to these dead captives, and this impressive stone column topped with a bronze eagle with wings outstretched was a familiar landmark to north-bound travellers along the A1. In October 1990 the column was toppled and the eagle stolen. The Norman Cross Eagle Appeal was formed to restore the memorial, and this was achieved in the spring of 2005 when His Grace, The Duke of Wellington, inaugurated the new memorial, now sited on the A15 nearer the site of the depot.

There has always been extensive interest in the prison at Norman Cross, as it is an important part of the local history; the restoration of the memorial serving to increase knowledge of and interest in the story of the depot. Peterborough Museum houses the Norman Cross Collection, which is the finest collection in the world of bone and straw work made by Napoleonic prisoners of war.

The site of the depot is a scheduled monument, and no archaeological investigation had ever been performed there since the depot was sold off at

auction in 1816. Over the years various buttons had been found on site as the land was used for farming, but no one knew what lay beneath the surface. It was a site that cried out for an investigation, and 'Time Team' were the people to do it.



Phil Harding and Tony Robinson

I worked with 'Time Team' researchers in the months leading up to the dig, investigating the documentary evidence that would help in fulfilling the remits of the dig. These were to understand the construction of the prison; to locate the burial ground; to understand something of the lives of the men held there; and to investigate what happened on the site after 1816. These preliminary research aims evolved once the dig began. The three days spent alongside the 'Time Team' crew of Tony Robinson, Helen Geake, Phil Harding, Francis Pryor, Stuart Ainsworth and John Gator were not only enjoyable but very informative as well. My book *Hell Upon Water: Prisoners of War in Britain 1793–1815* (The History Press, 2008) had been used for much of the background information prior to the dig.

Geophysics of the site, examination of aerial photographs, the study of contemporary plans of the depot, and the historical background of the prisoners of war brought to Britain during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, were all utilised during the dig to piece together the story.

Immediately after the first turf was removed from Trench One we uncovered many interesting finds. Roof tiles, nails, padlocks and chains all hinted at the role of the site as a prison. We found many hundreds of pieces of worked bone that had been crafted for the bone models that the prisoners made to sell in the prison market. From this activity these men were able to earn money with which to better their existence, by purchasing extra food items from the locals who were allowed to trade with them. The bone that we uncovered was either damaged and not used in the model construction, or perhaps was lost during the manufacturing process.

Other finds included buttons that the prisoners lost from their clothing. One was identified as a 1792-pattern République Française button from one of the early prisoners at the depot. A button with the number '16' embossed on its surface was identified as belonging to a soldier from the 16<sup>e</sup> Régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne who served on board French warships at Trafalgar.

This was the evidence of the living prisoners. Having been involved in the restoration of the Norman Cross Eagle in 2005, I was particularly interested in locating the cemetery where the prisoners were buried. Nothing could be found in the documentary records to hint at its location, and we were relying on 'Time Team' to find the site.

Local stories were analysed to discover if anything was known about the site of the cemetery, as the original eagle memorial had supposedly been erected alongside the field that was used for that purpose. While these stories were being pursued with an exploratory trench, the only other candidate for the burial ground – the north-east corner of the depot site – was being surveyed using geophysics. This investigation showed up a large number of anomalies that hinted at possible grave cuts. Trenches were dug over some of these anomalies, and about a metre below the surface we found the remains of some of the prisoners who had ended their lives at the depot. It was not the intention to lift the bodies, but to record their position and the extent of the burial ground. As part of the filming, Jackie Mackinley (the osteo-archaeologist for this dig) and I were filmed discussing the causes of death using copies of the death certificates completed by the surgeon at the prison.



The dig provided much evidence of the construction of the prison, plus the lives and deaths of the men held there. The artefacts uncovered will eventually be on display in a refurbished Norman Cross Gallery at Peterborough Museum. The 'Time Team' investigation shown on television as part of Series 17 has brought the story to a wider audience, and has given me material for *The Prison at Norman Cross: a Time Team Investigation* that is proving to be a popular illustrated presentation. The dig itself has provided a lot of research material for my next book.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN

For details of Paul's talk please e-mail  
illustrated.entertainment@ntlworld.com or telephone  
01582 616674.

## Benjamin Rhodes of Ampthill c 1610–57: Part 2

### The dispute between Rhodes and Reeve

We now come to the dispute between Rhodes and Reeve. The Rev Hugh Reeve was instituted Rector of

Ampthill in 1600. Andrew Underwood details the breakdown between Reeve and his puritan neighbours. Reeve was an enthusiastic Laudian, but continued to minister at Ampthill, despite the burning down of his parsonage which Underwood places at 'shortly before 1640'. On 23 February 1640/41 Benjamin Rhodes presented a petition 'on behalfe of himselfe & other the Parishioners there' to Parliament for Reeve to be removed, alleging various malfeasances but especially Romanism. Rhodes' petition was followed shortly afterwards by a similar but much briefer petition from Edmund Wingate 'In behalfe of the Inhabitants of Ampthill in the County of Bedd'. The petitions were accepted. An affidavit from Wingate among the House of Lords papers shows that Reeve was deprived, and ordered to recant. He was offered a small annuity of £10 per annum from the living which was in fact discharged by 'a Noble person of the parish' – presumably Elgin himself – and he died not long afterwards in 1646.

Why was Reeves suffered to minister for over 40 years at Ampthill before Rhodes took action? As to Benjamin Rhodes' religious beliefs, Underwood detects a 'Presbyterian conscience'. If this were so, I cannot see how Samwaies, deprived of his living at Cheshunt during the Commonwealth for persisting in using the liturgy of the Church of England, could have approved of him. Furthermore Rhodes' brother Richard had been Equerry of the Horse to Charles I (BLARS LL9/6). The key to Rhodes' activity in the ejection of Reeve must surely lie with his employer. Underwood speaks of Lord Elgin's family as 'loyal supporters of the Stewarts', but they were also Scots, and the attempts by Laud to impose the English Prayer Book on Scotland were deeply offensive to many Scots. Jenny Geddes' attack on the Dean of St Giles for using the 'English' Prayer Book occurred in 1637, followed in the next year by the signing of the Covenant in Scotland. All this fits the timing of Hugh Reeve's troubles. To find an arch-Laudian filling the post of Rector at the Parish Church of the Honour of Ampthill of which he (Elgin) was Steward was perhaps the mortal affront which goaded the Earl into action. Elgin was described as 'pious, but timorous and cautious in mind' (GEC *Complete Peerage*) – exactly the kind of man to be concerned at Reeve's churchmanship and to act against Reeve through his (Elgin's) steward rather than directly.

If this theory is correct, it accounts for the delay in removing Reeve until he had been Rector for 40 years. Nothing was likely to happen till the Scottish Earl came to Ampthill, and also had a full-time Steward. Rhodes was simply doing his master's bidding.

### Death

Benjamin and Ann Rhodes died within a few hours of each other at Ampthill in August 1657 and were buried together at the entrance to the Earl's Mausoleum. The main inscription has already been extensively quoted. There remains the touching addendum on the same stone from Lord Elgin:

'Erected by this Earl of Elgin to the memory of these his deserving Servants most fitly for him at the Entrance of his

Chappel, in the designing & structure whereof as also of the monument he had sole care & oversight under the Direction of the said Lord.'

The Countess had died in 1654 – three years before Rhodes. So both the Mausoleum and her tomb 'The Lady in the Punchbowl' were designed by Rhodes and Elgin.

**Sources and further reading.** The main source is Samwaies. For Samwaies' own life and those of the 18th Earl of Oxford, the 1st Earl of Elgin, and Robert Glover see the *ODNB*. For Hugh Reeve see Andrew Underwood, *17th Century Ampthill and Hugh Reeve* (Ampthill, 2000). *The Victoria County History of Bedfordshire*, Vol III (1912), covers the Honour of Ampthill and (p. 290) Elgin's purchase of Houghton House. For the memorial formerly at Maulden see J B Whitmore's MS transcription in *Bedfordshire Memorial Inscriptions* (SoG BE/M2). For the arms ascribed to Glover and Rhodes see John W Papworth and Alfred W Morant, *Ordinary of British Armorial* (London, 1874), pp. 744, 865. For the Rode/Rodd family see the Rev Charles J Robinson, *A History of the Mansions and Manors of Herefordshire* (1872), pp. 240–242, and Lord Rennell of Rodd, *Valley on the March* (Oxford, 1958) especially Sheet 1.

RICHARD MORGAN

## Book Review

*A History of Luton from the Conquerors to Carnival*, by Anne Allsopp. Phillimore, Andover, Hants SP10 2AA. ISBN 978-1-86077-621-2, xvii + 206pp, hardback £20.

A profusely illustrated, large format (Crown 4to) popular history charting Luton's story from the early settlements on the River Lea to the multicultural town of today. The author was born in Luton, attending Luton High School for Girls before a life in education and is obviously very attached to her native place. The text is easy to read.

Chapter 1 concerns the River Lea settlement and includes sections on the stone ages, the metal ages, the Romans and Saxons. It describes how Luton became significant enough, through the mills on the Lea, to be claimed by King Edward the Martyr in AD 975 as a Royal Manor. Chapter 2 deals with medieval Luton, the coming of the Normans and the effect of these upheavals on the Manor of Luton (including a passing reference to Falkes de Breauté) and also the lives of the residents, their homes and their church, the market, the Guild and the hospitals. There are sections on important landowners, the changing society of the 13th and 14th centuries, but mainly from a national standpoint. The 15th century is hardly mentioned, but the 16th century has just over a page devoted to national events and their effects on Luton.

From Chapter 3 we get much more local detail for the 17th to 19th centuries. A general introduction covers the three centuries and then separate sections on religious belief; travel, transport and inns; life in the town, detailing professions and trades; politics and local government; and how, in the 19th century, the foundations were laid for Luton's success as a manufacturing centre.

Well-known country houses, Luton Hoo, Someries, Stockwood Park, Putteridge Bury and Wardown and their occupants, are the subject of Chapter 4 with a *cri de coeur* for Someries, possibly in danger of being swallowed by Luton Airport.

From this author's background, it would be expected that there should be a chapter on Education, and Chapter 5 tells of endowments, private schools, church and charity schools, plait schools, Sunday schools and monitorial schools. There are also sections on state provision; the Quaker Adult Schools to teach the poor to read, later

expanding to other denominations; government control; education from 1944; and the expansion of the Technical Institution of 1904 to the University of Luton in 1993 and University of Bedfordshire in 2006.

Brewing, brickmaking, hat-making, and the new industries of Luton are described in Chapter 6, prior to a review of the mid-20th century industrial situation, London Luton Airport, other 20th century employers and 21st century initiatives.

In Chapter 7 we look at Luton's role in the wars that afflicted the 20th century, preceded by two paragraphs on the Boer War. The peace celebrations of 1919 were marred by the sacking and burning of the town hall caused by resentment of food shortages and treatment of returning soldiers. It was brought to a head by incredibly insensitive decisions: to pay for the celebrations on the rates, councillors dine free, but ex-servicemen would have to pay and no women should be invited! A mob broke into the town hall, by 10pm there was a riot and the town hall was on fire and gutted. The army came to the aid of the police. There follow six sections on aspects of the Second World War and the much happier peace celebrations following that conflict.

Migration is covered in Chapter 8 with two pages illustrating how Luton attracted migrants from earliest times and during the 19th century. Descriptions of the position between the wars, the Jewish community and during and after the Second World War are followed by personal reminiscences and the effects of the new faiths arriving in the town. There is a look forward into the 21st century multicultural town and an examination of why people choose Luton as a place to live.

Chapter 9 looks at all aspects of leisure, mainly over the past 100 years, and Chapter 10 attempts a description of the town as it was and is. Something seems to have happened to the table on page 181, where four percentages have been omitted, and also to the second line on page 195 which does not make sense.

There are two appendices (one on population figures and the other on mayors and Members of Parliament), a useful bibliography and an index which, helpfully, indexes illustrations.

This is a well-written, enjoyable and accessible popular history of Luton. It is not an academic treatise and so there are no notes to interrupt the flow. There are many very interesting and evocative plates, a few of which are spoiled by a fussy design involving printing another halftone behind them and the adjoining text, which is thus made harder to read. The production values are very good: excellent reproduction, paper and binding but the text type size could have been increased a little for ease of reading. Finally a professional publisher should know the difference between a Preface (written by the author) and a Foreword (written by someone else to introduce the work). The 'Preface' by Kelvin Hopkins, MP, falls into the latter category. \*\*\*\*

TED MARTIN

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