

WARKWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - May 2013 Report

Members were thanked for their continued support and attendance. The society's minutes, reports and elections were approved and performed in the usual manner.

Members viewed the fine collection of artefacts brought to the meeting by various members. Much discussion was provoked by these artefacts.

The meeting and in deed the 2012-2013 season was brought to a close by distribution of the 2013-2014 programme.

WARKWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - October 2013 Report

In October, a change to the advertised venue found us at Warkworth First School for our inaugural meeting. Happily, 30 members found their way there to hear Mr R. Forsythe's wide-ranging talk on Railway Architecture. With a well-chosen collection of photographs he whisked us through stations and under bridges, into cuttings and past signal boxes, with the panache of a vintage locomotive. Trained in archaeology and a former curator of industrial museums, he was well qualified to bring insight into just one aspect of the complicated infrastructure of our early rail system.

Shots of well-known landmarks like the Forth Bridge were interspersed with long forgotten locations - water towers, goods sheds, wrought iron foot bridges still survive in quiet corners. Stations tucked away in the Northumbrian countryside, like Wylam, Haltwhistle and Scremerston, were built in a variety of styles ranging from Tudor to Gothic revival; some were built to match the landowner's surrounding estate cottages. Newcastle Station was designed by John Dobson, while St Pancras was one of Gilbert Scott's creations on a mammoth scale. Our whistle-stop journey included Scotland's Aviemore and Pitlochry, touching on the growing tourist industry and the popularity of grand Railway hotels to accommodate it.

WARKWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - November 2013 Report

In November, ensconced once more at the Sun Hotel, we were transported much further back in time to the Saxon era. The focus of Mr Phil Rowett's talk was Saxon churches of North Northumberland, which he proceeded to discuss in detail.

The background to this period is turbulent and complicated. It was necessary to consider a broad sweep of events from the Roman occupation through to the Norman Conquest, covering the spread of Christian foundations, the fortunes of war and the religious crisis which led to the Synod of Whitby. With the exception of Kirknewton, tangible evidence of Saxon churches in North Northumberland is confined to several grave markers and crosses, such as at Rothbury. In addition, Mr Rowett explained his speculations based on later records and the use of specific dedications and place names, thus building a clearer picture of the organisation and localities of early churches.

WARWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - December 2013 Report

(Report not available)

WARWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - January 2014 Report

In January we enjoyed a convivial glass of wine when we met to hear our own member, John Sellars, give a talk entitled 'Microbe Hunters', being a biographical overview of the work of early scientists. As a microbiologist himself, he well understood the significance of those discoveries which have made our world a much safer place.

The story begins in the 18th century in that atmosphere of enlightenment which encouraged scientific curiosity. Microscopes replaced magnifying glasses, thereby enabling organisms hitherto unseen to be revealed and studied.

John went on to describe the colourful life of Lady Mary Wortley-Montague who, having observed the procedure in Turkey, was able to introduce a kind of smallpox inoculation at the English court. The physician Edward Jenner developed this idea with the use of cowpox material and the practise of vaccination was born. Smallpox is the first infectious disease ever to be eradicated.

In the 19th century, John Snow became interested in the epidemiology of another dread disease; cholera. As a medical student in Newcastle he took charge of an outbreak at Killingworth Pit, noting the unhygienic conditions. Although he went on to pioneer the use of chloroform, notably administering it to Queen Victoria, he continued to observe cholera epidemics. He learned that hand-washing and clean water were essential for the control of outbreaks and was able to demonstrate this in his own Soho area, famously tracing the path of the infection from certain contaminated water sources.

Finally, we heard about the Viennese doctor, Semmelweiss, whose work with cross-infection benefits hospital patients everywhere, and Louis Pasteur, whose research made enormous advances in the study of biological chemical reactions.

WARKWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - February 2014 Report

In February Professor John Derry spoke on "Hadrian, the man who built the wall". He gave a comprehensive account of Hadrian's life, leaving us in no doubt that this was a figure whose many accomplishments marked him out for greatness. The name so familiar to Northumbrians was given flesh, revealing a personality and a life lived to the full against the turbulent backdrop of the Roman Empire.

Born in provincial Spain in AD76, Hadrian received the usual intellectual and semi-military upbringing of a Roman youth, showing an early fascination with the art and culture of Ancient Greece. A series of events smoothed his path to power; after his father's death, General Trajan, a cousin, took him under his wing. In AD96 Emperor Domitian was assassinated, succeeded by Nerva, who co-opted Trajan to share the role. Within two years Trajan became sole Emperor. Meanwhile, Hadrian spent the next years campaigning in areas around the Danube and the Rhine, and was later appointed Governor of Antioch after a successful campaign in the Persian Gulf. On the death of Trajan, Hadrian was proclaimed heir with the crucial support of the Praetorian Guard.

He began his rule with several popular moves: a tax amnesty, public entertainments, improvements in military pay and conditions. His policy became one of consolidation rather than further expansion of the empire and he spent fourteen of his twenty-one years reign travelling to the regions, showing a confident grip on power in Rome. Britain featured on his itinerary in AD122, when he built the original Tyne Bridge, naming it Pons Aelius, being his

family name. The wall was built partly as a political statement, partly as a military frontier.

However, his policy of imposing Graeco-Roman culture in Judaea met fierce resistance from the Jews whom he persecuted to the point of rebellion. This was a blot on his record but created opportunities for the Christian church to gain a hold in Jerusalem.

On a more personal note, he wore his hair curly and sported a beard in imitation of the Greek Pericles. He indulged his love of all things Greek by extensive building in Athens. His long-term relationship with his lover, Antinous, halted abruptly when Antinous drowned in the River Nile during their Egyptian tour. In his grief, Hadrian declared him a god and numerous statues were commissioned for the cult. Having no children, Hadrian adopted Antonius Pius as his successor and after him Marcus Aurelius, thus concluding a run of five good emperors and ensuring a long period of stability.

This was a high-calibre talk about an exceptional man and very well-received by the members.

WARKWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - March 2014 Report

The Society was pleased to welcome Christopher Hunwick, Archivist to the Duke of Northumberland, who illustrated his talk with some fascinating photographs of medieval documents pertaining to Warkworth. He described his working surroundings in the ancient three-storey Record Tower at Alnwick Castle and gave us a brief introduction to the on-going conservation work, which necessitates transferring each item to acid-free storage. By contrast, modern estate records are now digitised.

Among the documents shown were the grant of Warkworth Castle and Barony to the Percys in 1332, complete with the king's seal, and extracts from the Flodden Muster Roll in 1513, written in the time of the 5th Earl, known for his extravagant lifestyle. The Earl and his splendid retinue having accompanied King Henry VIII to France, he was represented by his son when the Scots and the English met at Flodden. 11 men from Warkworth and 3 from Birling appear on this list, which gives details of the accoutrements they owned and so builds up a picture of them going into battle, wearing jerkins and splinted body armour and steel helmets. As they owned their own armour, they were probably burghage holders.

During the Civil War a letter was written by the Constable of Alnwick Castle deploring the demolition of Warkworth Castle, saying that only the doors should have been removed to prevent enemy occupation, instead of which extensive amounts of stone had been removed, the first of many depredations.

In the 19th century the Duke's rooms in Warkworth Castle were restored by Salvin and a set of massive, ornate oak furniture was commissioned. There followed a good-natured exchange of correspondence between the Duke and the supplier - Saddleworth antiquarian, George Shaw, who had assured him that it was genuinely ancient. However, it has emerged that the pieces are most probably fakes, although suitable design for their setting.

From the thousands of documents in his care, Christopher Hunwick chose an interesting selection, of particular relevance to Warkworth. We relished this rare chance to see them, placed with a sure touch in their historical context.

WARKWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - April 2014 Report

'The Border Reivers' by Andrew Griffin

Calling all Fenwicks, Forsters, Collingwoods, Ridleys, Maxwells: names which carry the legacy of a turbulent past, in the border region where raiding was a way of life. Succeeding waves of invaders from the Romans onwards made little impact on this wild region; but after the trail of death and destruction left by the Normans 'Harrying of the North', there followed two hundred years of comparative peace. However, under Edward I, skirmishes between Scots and English flared up into serious conflict at Bannockburn in 1314 with victory for Robert the Bruce. Percy clashed with Douglas at the battles of Otterburn and Hamildon Hill. No matter who was in power, life in the remote borders continued to be precarious: feuding families on both sides of the border took the law unto themselves with murderous raids and cattle rustling. It was made an offence to aid and abet the Reivers and to receive stolen property, but the Wardens of the Marches had a thankless task policing such a hostile environment.

Reivers dressed for action with armoured waistcoat, long boots and a burgonet, known as a 'steel bonnet'. They carried eight foot lances, a dagger, a broadsword and a studded shield. Their sturdy horses were known as 'hobblers' and would have been ancestors of the pit ponies. It is said that the lady of the house, when supplies were low, would serve up an empty platter to the hungry men, upon

which lay a pair of spurs. They took the hint. Victims of raids were allowed six days to cross the border to find their goods and by the sixteenth century, posses could lawfully go on 'the hot trod', bearing torches in pursuit.

The only way to guard against losing your cattle, the harvest and your lives, was to build a bastle, designed to hold cattle safely at ground level and the family above, with only one immensely thick door and a trapdoor into the living quarters. Examples of these are abundant in Northumberland, along with peel towers, but after the Union of the Crowns in 1603 many fell into disuse. The Reivers were rounded up and executed in large numbers; many outlaws fled across the Atlantic and bred respectable descendants who carried on their name, such as Richard Nixon, Billy Graham and Neil Armstrong.

WARKWORTH HISTORY SOCIETY - May 2014 Report

The Society held its AGM on May 12th, when the officers were re-elected, as follows; Chairman: Diana Webber, Secretary: Moira Kilkenny, Treasurer: Anne Cashmore. In her report the Chairman paid tribute to retiring committee member Joan Hellawell, who started the Society and had been both an inspirational leader and a valued committee member over the years.

With the forthcoming World War One centenary approaching, some members have begun to research contemporary records for material relevant to our village. This will be an ongoing project. The group hopes to take part in next year's celebrations to mark the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta. Our own baron of Warkworth at the time, one John Fitzrobert, was a signatory. It is hoped to mark the occasion with a special lecture. All the towns and villages who were represented have formed a loose association, called the Magna Carta Barons, which has its own website: www.magnacartabarons.info, which includes information about Warkworth. The Society is liaising with the Parish Council over possible village and school involvement in the celebrations, which will take place in August.

The evening then took on a more informal flavour with a rousing and accomplished performance of songs by Sandra Kerr and members of Werca's Folk. Their programme centred on the theme of Women's Suffrage with an emphasis on Emily Wilding Davison, whose anniversary of death was recently commemorated. Sandra gave us a sparkling commentary on the progress of women's rights through history, interspersed with a wide variety of songs from the

nineteenth century up to those written recently by Sandra herself. The audience joined in with gusto and much appreciated the poignant combination of history and song; an ideal medium through which to portray the conflicts and tribulations of the Suffragette movement.