

The Work and History of the Enham Trust: Liz Cosgrove, February 2014

The Work and History of the Enham Trust was the subject of the February meeting of the Historical Society. Liz Cosgrove, the speaker, is Community Events Coordinator for the Trust and Enham's Historian.

The talk, illustrated by old photographs and a short film, described the origins of Enham. In 1918 a charity was set up; a 1,000 acre estate in Knights Enham was purchased and adapted to house, rehabilitate and retrain soldiers returning disabled from the First World War "with the effects of amputations, neurasthenia, shellshock or fever". By the end of 1919 there were 150 men in residence.

Enham was able to provide a home and employment; the qualification to live there was that the "settlers", as they were known, were suffering permanent disability. Initially they were occupied with estate work and farming, but later this was expanded to include other activities, including a thriving basket-making workshop. As the need to care for the disabled from WWI eased, Enham expanded their work to the care of TB patients.

In 1945 public subscriptions in Egypt raised the equivalent of £6m in today's money, to thank Britain for ridding their country of Axis forces; most of this was given to the Enham Trust, which had received many disabled soldiers from the North Africa campaign. As a mark of gratitude the name of the village was changed to Enham Alamein.

Enham Industries developed into a substantial undertaking and during World War II made a significant contribution to the war effort producing barrage balloons and Nissen Huts. Since then the variety of work has expanded and, among other activities, Enham is now a preferred supplier for school furniture in Hampshire; provides a packaging and storage service; and gardening services.

Today the Enham charity provides housing, support and employment opportunities to a wide range of disabled people. In addition to the 90 who live on site, help is provided for 6,000 people a year. Since 1919, ¼ million people have benefited from help provided by the Trust, ranging from getting disabled into work to assistance with direct payments for care. The work of the Trust is now supported by 95 volunteers.

Numerous artefacts were available for examination after the talk, including a reproduction of Monty's diary, an impressive bell from El Alamein railway station and the visitors' book from the El Alamein Club.

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Visit To Hampshire Records Office, Winchester, March 2014

A number of artefacts relating to Hurstbourne Tarrant had been put out on display. The first was a very large (10'7" x 8'1") Tithe map dating from 1837. Historically tithes had been paid in kind to the church, or in some cases to lay people after the reformation. The Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 provided that tithes should be paid in money, so the value of every dwelling and parcel of land had to be assessed. A survey was carried out and each holding was given an apportionment number which was shown on the tithe map. A separate register listed the landowner, occupier, use, name, acreage, and titheable value. Three copies of the map were produced - one lodged with the tithe commissioners, the other two with the diocesan registrar and the parish. Members of the Historical Society spent some time examining the Hurstbourne Tarrant map and noting changes in the village over the past 176 years.

Two mediaeval parish registers were also on display, accompanied by bound volumes of Victorian translations which could be handled and read. These recorded William of Wykeham's Bishops Registers of 1366 including institutions, benefices, heads of religious houses and hospitals, ordinations, wills and crown writs. They also recorded some amusing peccadilloes including mention of punishment of a nun for "unseemly behaviour", in that she refused to wear her veil and insisted in sitting with people in the congregation instead of in the choir.

The archivist also unrolled the Philpot family tree drawn up in 1620; beside the name of each member of the family is shown an illustration of their personal coat of arms.

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The life of William Cobbett: Barbara Biddell, April 2014

In April the Historical Society enjoyed a fascinating talk on the life of William Cobbett (1763-1835) by Barbara Biddell, Chairman of the Cobbett Society. Today Cobbett is probably best known for his 1830 book "Rural Rides", an account of a series of rides on horseback in the 1820s in which he combines brilliant political polemic with a colourful and accurate account of the English countryside. He championed traditional rural society against the transformation due to the Industrial Revolution, drew attention to the miserable conditions of labouring people in the early 1800s and believed that poverty was caused by bad government and corruption of the ruling classes. Cobbett became a radical politician, the foremost political journalist of his age, and eventually an MP. He had a remarkable but somewhat erratic career, veering from mixing with Prime Minister Pitt and Caroline, the estranged wife of George IV, to bankruptcy and prison.

Son of a farm worker in Farnham, at fourteen William Cobbett ran away from home; he enlisted in the 54th Regiment of Foot and was posted to Canada. He quickly rose to the rank of Sergeant-Major but was disillusioned with the army, finding many of the officers incompetent and corrupt. Returning to England he obtained an honourable discharge but after a failed attempt to get the officers court marshalled he fled to France. In 1792, with war between England and France imminent, he sailed to America. He became a successful journalist, highlighting the atrocities committed by the French during the Terror and by the French forces advancing across Europe. Denouncing those in America who sympathised with France, two libel actions forced Cobbett to leave in 1800. He returned to England a hero; William Windham, a member of Pitt's Cabinet, recognised the value of Cobbett's satirical journalism and helped provide capital for the "Political Register", a weekly newspaper which Cobbett began in 1808 and continued for the rest of his life.

Having achieved his ambition to run a weekly newspaper, Cobbett felt secure enough to pursue his other objective, to live in the country and own land, buying Batley House on the Hamble. However, triggering one of the swings of fortune that beset him, in 1809 Cobbett published an article in the Political Register in which he protested about the flogging of some militiamen at Ely, was prosecuted by the government on a charge of sedition and sentenced to two years in Newgate. During this time sales of the Political Register fell and his estates were not well managed; as a result he left prison heavily in debt.

However his career as a political journalist regained momentum, urging labourers to press for Parliamentary reform using non-violent tactics. In 1817, faced with growing labour unrest, the government introduced a series of repressive measures, among them one which prohibited assemblies of working men. Cobbett spoke out against the suspension of Habeas Corpus at a public meeting in Winchester and then, fearing further imprisonment for both debt and political agitation, fled to America where he continued to write the Political Register. In 1819 Cobbett returned to England and announced his intention to stand for Parliament, convinced of his unique ability to deliver the country from all its ills. However with the expenses incurred by his unsuccessful attempt to win a seat at Coventry he was forced to declare himself bankrupt. He did finally achieve his ambition to become an MP in 1832 but was too old at 69 to adapt to parliamentary ways and found the late sittings exhausting.

Rural Rides was originally published as a series of articles in the Political Register and now enjoys the distinction that it has never gone out of print. Hurstbourne Tarrant (referred to as Uphusband) is mentioned twenty-six times, due in part to the fact that Cobbett stayed with Joseph Blount at Rookery Farm House on Hurstbourne Hill, where he was given "free quarter"; much of Rural Rides was written there.

Cobbett possessed not only a biting wit but also a personal magnetism. His achievements were outstanding. His writing contributed enormously to the education and self-confidence of the labouring people. He also left us with a detailed description of the England of his day.

The geology of the Hurstbourne Tarrant: Dr Dave Ellis, May 2014

In May the Historical Society was treated to an insight into the geology of the Hurstbourne Tarrant area in a talk by Dr Dave Ellis, senior geoscientist at Norwegian oil & gas company Statoil. Entitled "The Geology around Hurstbourne Tarrant -from ancient continents, warm seas and glaciers to flooding and tracking" the talk was illustrated by photographs, maps, tables and charts.

Starting almost literally at the beginning, Dave Ellis explained the formation and movement of continents over the past 300m years. This provided a very helpful overview of the geological development of the earth before focussing on the immediate area.

The chalk in our area was laid down during the Cretaceous period 145-66m years ago, being formed of calcium carbonate deposited by the shells of marine invertebrates. The strata of permeable chalk which now form our aquifers are interspersed with layers of impermeable flint. At the end of the Ice Age, rivers from the melting ice scoured out the valleys which converge on Hurstbourne Tarrant and it is the variation in arrangement of the geological formation of our valleys which explains why the recent flooding varied from one area to another.

Shale gas tracking, currently a hot topic in the press, is surrounded by much inaccurate reporting and comment, but it was reassuring to know that NE Hampshire would not be suitable due to the geology of the area.

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Jane Austen: Elizabeth Proudman, June 2014

The June Meeting of the Historical Society was the first of two devoted to Jane Austen. The speaker, Elizabeth Proudman, is a lifelong devotee of Jane Austen and Chairman of the Jane Austen Society. Touching only briefly on the novels of Jane Austen, Mrs Proudman described in detail the history of the Austen Family.

Jane Austen was born in on 16 December 1775 at Steventon in Hampshire. She lived an uneventful life as part of a close-knit family at Steventon, Bath, Southampton and Chawton. Jane was mainly educated at home by her father and older brothers as well as through her own reading. She had unfettered access to her father's library as well as that of her uncle, Warren Hastings.

Jane's parents were members of substantial gentry families. Her father George was descended from a family of woollen manufacturers which had risen through the professions to the lower ranks of landed gentry. For much of Jane's life he served as rector of Steventon in Hampshire.

She had six brothers, all but one older than her, and one sister. Cassandra was three years older and remained Jane's closest friend and confidante throughout her life. It is thanks to the existence of a considerable volume of letters between them that so much is known about Jane. A small portrait by Cassandra is the only likeness we have of Jane. Of all her brothers Jane felt closest to Henry, the Austen's fourth son, who after failing as a banker became a clergyman and also his sister's literary agent. His large circle of friends and acquaintances provided Jane with a view of social worlds not normally visible from a small parish in rural Hampshire.

Rev Lloyd, rector of Deane near Steventon, had been a friend of George Austen at Oxford and the girls of the two families became close friends. After Mr Lloyd's death in 1792 his widow moved to Ibthorpe House with her daughters Mary & Martha. They stayed in touch with Jane and Cassandra, and the Austen girls were frequent visitors to Ibthorpe. Jane's eldest brother James succeeded his father as vicar of Steventon and after the death of his first wife, married Mary Lloyd at St Peter's Hurstbourne Tarrant in January 1797. (Sir George Young is a descendent of James Austen). In 1828 Martha became the second wife of Frances, the fifth brother.

Jane's father died in 1805 leaving the family in a precarious financial situation; they stayed with various members of the family and in rented accommodation. In 1809 Jane's third brother Edward offered his mother and sisters a more settled life - the use of a large cottage in Chawton village. There she lived a very quiet life and seems to have been relieved of some household chores, giving her the opportunity to become productive as a writer once more.

All of her published novels were set among the landed gentry. In order of publication they were: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride & Prejudice* (1813); *Mansfield Park* (1814); *Emma* (1815). *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published posthumously in 1818. The order in which they were written is somewhat different; *Pride & Prejudice* (originally entitled "First Impressions") was begun in 1796.

In 1816 Jane began to feel unwell; she died in Winchester on 18 July 1817 at the age of 41. Henry, through his clerical connections, arranged for his sister to be buried in Winchester Cathedral. The epitaph on her tombstone praises her personal qualities and the "extraordinary endowments of her mind" but does not explicitly mention her achievements as a writer.

Cassandra had long considered what to do with the papers in her possession but two or three years before her own death decided to burn many of the letters, confident that she was doing her duty to her sister.

Anna Lea Merritt: Dr Olive Maggs, September 2014

In September the Historical Society enjoyed an illustrated talk on Anna Lea Merritt, an American artist who lived in Hurstbourne Tarrant. The speaker, Olive Maggs, is an art historian, lecturer and author of a book about the work of the artist.

Anna Lea Merritt was born in 1844 in Philadelphia, but spent most of her career in England. She lived at The Limes on Hurstbourne Hill for over 40 years until her death in 1930. Although the house was later burnt down, the studio in which she painted still exists in the garden of what is now Hill House. She was well known in her time as a painter of portraits and allegorical themes and was able to sell enough of her paintings to make a living. Her best known work is *Love Locked Out*. This picture, painted in memory of her husband Henry Merritt who died three months after they were married, depicts a nude youth trying to force open the door of a mausoleum. In 1890 it was the first painting by a female artist to be acquired for the Tate Gallery.

Later she was commissioned to paint murals to decorate the newly built church of St Martin in Blackheath, near Guildford. This was a notable achievement on two counts; firstly because the painting of a monumental mural by a woman was unprecedented. Secondly because the painting was executed in the newly developed durable and stable water-glass technique known as "Keim's process: there is no other known example in this country of the use of this technology. The commission gave Merritt the opportunity, credit and fame for which she strove. By working in a public place she helped raise the profile of women artists at the end of the 19th century. She fell into art history obscurity during the 20th century only to be rediscovered in the 1990s by feminist art historians. Olive Maggs treated her audience to detailed images of the Blackheath murals.

Anna Lea Merritt counted many well-known artists among her friends - including Whistler, Burne-Jones, Watts, Leighton and in particular Holman Hunt, whose wife Edith was a particularly close friend.

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Visit to Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere, October 2014

In October a group of members of the Historical Society, together with several very welcome visitors, visited the Sandham Memorial Chapel in Burghclere. Alison Paton the curator spoke about the origin of the chapel, its construction and decoration. She then gave a detailed de-scription of each of the remarkable set of paintings by Stanley Spencer which cover all the walls from floor to ceiling.

The chapel was built as a memorial to Lt Henry Willoughby Sandham, who caught malaria while serving abroad in the First World War and succumbed after returning home at the end of the war. Because he was no longer a serving soldier his name was not eligible to be recorded on any war memorial, so his sister Mary and her husband Louis Behrend financed the building of a chapel to accommodate an epic series of paintings in his memory.

The work took Spencer six years and was completed in 1932. The series of paintings chronicles Spencer's everyday experiences of the war rather than any scenes of action, and is full of personal and unexpected details. It is dominated by the Resurrection scene behind the al-tar, in which dozens of British soldiers lay the white wooden crosses that marked their graves at the feet of a distant Christ. Spencer spent most of his war service as a medical orderly, first at Beaufort War hospital in Bristol. Having volunteered for the field ambulance he was posted to 68th Field Ambulance in Macedonia in August 1916 and a year later became an infantryman in the 7th Battalion of the Royal Berkshires. Drawing on these first-hand and traumatic experiences Spencer has created a set of stirring and powerful images which are not easily forgotten.

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World War 1 Hospitals - A Theatrical Performance: Jane Glennie: November 2014

On Armistice Day this year we were treated to a highly entertaining historical performance which brought to life the experiences of someone who survived the sinking of not one, but two ocean vessels: the Titanic and the Britannic. Dressed in a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse's uniform, Jane Glennie transported us back one hundred years by playing the part of Violet-Jessop whose memoirs re-cord the experiences of a long career at sea. Written in the 1930s, these have been published as a book entitled "Titanic Survivor".

We were informed that Violet started life as a 21-year-old stewardess in 1908 working on the Royal Mail line, preparing a "man-frightening wardrobe" to deter unwanted advances. By 1912 she had been promoted to the position of first class stewardess working for the White Star Line whose liners travelled across the North Atlantic. On boarding the Titanic that year, she expected to have an uneventful journey looking after the cabins, clothing and flowers of wealthy ladies making the Atlantic crossing. When disaster struck, she was one of the lucky members of crew who were placed in a lifeboat.

When war was declared two year later, Violet volunteered and trained in the VAD. Working as a nurse, she exhausted herself in 1916 and suffered an infection to her hand. She then started work on one of the Titanic's sister ships, the Britannic, then being used as a hospital ship. This set off to pick up wounded soldiers from Malta, but less than ten days into the voyage it suffered an explosion. Violet was ill-prepared to get in the lifeboat, having returned to look after a sick nurse and then to pick up her toothbrush from her cabin. If anything, this experience was even worse than the sinking of the Titanic. Violet suffered an injury to her leg and a fractured skull, which went undiagnosed until many years later. She carried on working at sea after WW1, retiring to Suffolk to be near her nieces and write her mem-oirs. Violet died in 1971 at the age of 84.

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Members' Talks, December 2014

Mike Nash

At the December meeting of the Historical Society, Chairman Mike Nash came armed with a Bronze Age sword which he had made on a course at Butser Ancient Farm, an archaeological open air museum. He described the process and talked about the development of weapons and materials of this era. He highlighted the interesting fact that bronze swords continued in widespread use for several hundred years after the start of the Iron Age. A probable explanation was the ease of manufacture of bronze and the difficulty of making iron swords which were not brittle.

Mike also demonstrated real-time views of the sky at night with a "Night Sky" app on his iPad.

Andy Watson

This was followed by Andy Watson who presented views available on a Windows or Apple computer using the "Google Earth" application. He demonstrated this with a fascinating 3-D video showing aerial views of Hurstbourne Tarrant and the alignment with the landscape of the rising sun at the winter solstice, as seen from St Peter's Church.

Paul Symes

To conclude the evening, members adjourned to the small bar at the British Legion where the boards listing people who served in the two World Wars are now displayed. Originally in the old Church Hall, the British Legion is clearly the right and proper place for them. Paul Symes, who had organised the re-erection of the boards, spoke briefly about their history.

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