Prestbury Local History Society

November 2013

Chairman: Michael Cole. 01242 517192. email: tatchleybooks@gmail.com
Secretary: Norman Baker. 01242 583187. email: njb123@talktalk.net
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The Civil War Comes to Prestbury

(Photo: Michael Cole)
NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held on January 27th 2014 at 7.30p.m.at the W.I. Hall.

Our Constitution states, “The A.G.M. shall be held in January each year. Fourteen days notice shall be given to members of the Society. The quorum shall be one quarter of the paid-up membership of the Society. Nominations for the Committee shall be in writing, signed by the nominee, and given to the Secretary before the meeting. Votes for elections shall be on forms provided for the purpose and signed. Any questions arising at this Meeting shall be determined by a majority vote.

“The Committee shall consist of 6 to 8 members including the Honorary Officers: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer. All members of the committee are to be elected by the members of the Society at the A.G.M. The members of the Committee shall serve for one year and be eligible for re-election.”

The committee meets at least four times each year and is responsible for the running and administration of the Society.

WE NEED NOMINATIONS PLEASE.
The following appointments were made in 2013:
Chairman Michael Cole
Secretary Norman Baker
Treasurer Peter Annesley
Committee members Roger Beacham,
Tony Noel
Lynda Hodges,
David Jones (Now appointed as Archivist)

THERE ARE OTHER VACANCIES which do not necessarily involve being on the committee:

A PUBLICATIONS OFFICER
to ensure that meetings are publicised locally and that the Newsletter is produced.

A WEBMASTER
to run and improve our website.
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2014

are due before the AGM.
The subscription remains at £10 and entitles the member
to attendance at all of the meetings.
We would be pleased to have your ongoing support.

Please make cheques payable to ’Prestbury Local History Society’
and send to our Treasurer;
Mr Peter Annesley,
The Thatched Cottage,
Deep Street,
Prestbury,
Cheltenham. GL52 3AN

TRAFFIC JAM ON WINDYRIDGE ROAD

The track through Morality Farm from Swindon Road to Swindon Lane.
Now Windyridge Road.
Prestbury’s Civil War History

On 4th and 5th of September 1643 the Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux, arrived on the top of Cleeve Hill, then most commonly called Prestbury Hill, with a Parliamentarian army of some 15,000 men of the Trained Bands of London and other assorted roundhead regiments, to relieve the siege of the city of Gloucester.

After firing a cannonade to alert both those besieged and besieging and after a terrible night of high winds and torrential rain the bulk of the army began it's descent into the villages below, Southam and Prestbury, before marching on to Cheltenham and eventually Gloucester.

The Parliamentary Army camped at Prestbury for a while and, on leaving, left a garrison of some 150 or more occupying the manor-house formerly belonging to the Bishop of Hereford. Royalist soldiers had been in Prestbury just before the Parliamentary Army arrived, and tradition has it that fighting took place in Prestbury as well as Cheltenham.

To celebrate the 370th anniversary of this important event in our history a small group of members of the Sealed Knot, an English Civil War re-enactment society, accompanied by a few locals performed drills and presented arms of the time at The Plough and Royal Oak.

The Plough was used as a base for the Parliamentarian pike men and musketeers during the weekend of the re-enactment, who marched on to The Royal Oak, proudly flying a royal flag and proclaiming “God save the King” (Charles 1) on its message board, to search out any royalist stragglers left behind in the retreat, a little cameo of an event, which just might actually have happened nearby during those dreadful times in 1643. Both pubs occupy sites of 17th century origin, though they may not have been pubs then and certainly didn't look as they do now, though some of Mill Street and The Burgage probably still does.

David Jones
MORALITY FARM
latterly known as Windyridge Farm.

I am grateful to Chris Thorndale who got in touch recently to share some information and photographs of Morality Farm which he knew well in his childhood. The farm was in fact a market garden. It was run by George Thorndale until his death in 1929 and by his brother from 1929 until the early 1960s. Although the family lived ‘offsite’ in Swindon Road, George’s brother lived in the farmhouse on Swindon Lane. The market garden covered the fields between them. So was partly in Cheltenham and partly in Prestbury.

All types of vegetables were grown, plus strawberries and sweet peas etc. There were glasshouses on the farm where salads were grown. The produce was sent to Birmingham Wholesale Market and Mr Thorndale also sold produce from his two greengrocery shops in the Lower High Street.

Cider was produced on the farm and sold to public houses in the area. The market garden was for a time the biggest producer and supplier of cider in the area. The apples came from neighbouring farms and were supplemented with apples from the Apperley area.

Chris also said that that Cheltenham North RFC had their first Rugby Pitch on the farm thanks to his Grandfather.

Eunice Thorndale amongst the sweet peas. The houses in the background are on Swindon Lane.
SOME RECOMMENDED READING

If you are new to local history research then the following books will be of help to you:

**Researching and writing history, a practical guide for local historians.** Dymond, D. (1999)

**English Local History, an Introduction.** Tiller, K. (1992)

**Local History in England** Hoskins, W (1984)


The books may be available through the library or on the bookshelves of the Local Studies library, or still in print.

Reading for pleasure (Christmas is coming!)

**The Illustrated History of the Countryside.** Rackham, O

The Booker short listed ‘Harvest’ by Jim Crace is a good read. It is set in an English manor in the 16th Century when the villagers were faced with enclosure.

I have recently downloaded free copies of:

**Norman’s History of Cheltenham** by John Goding. 1863. The book is so old that it is history itself but has some interesting material and illustrations.

**Place Names of Gloucestershire.**

**Life on the English Manor** by H S Bennett. (1937) A very good description of life as it was experienced by serfs and freemen living on a manor in the 13th and 14th centuries.

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**THE WEATHER VANE ON THE BARN OF HOME FARM.**

According to Braunnoltz “The weather vane on the barn is 14th century and came from Musselburgh town hall, Scotland. The farm owner, Mr. Chamberlayne put it there in 1967.”

Photo kindly supplied by Geoff North.
Researching for my talk on March 25 I have been finding any number of loose ends, false trails, and inconclusive lines of enquiry.

But I’ve also uncovered a great number of untold stories about discoveries in this area. It doesn’t make any sense to limit the talk to sites that are within the acknowledged boundaries of the parish. ‘Prestbury’ is the creation of Saxon powerbrokers who divided the English countryside into what they regarded as self-sustaining communities, and assigned them to well-connected ‘Lords of the Manor’ — in our case the Bishop of Hereford. He also got Sevenhampton, which is in effect the continuation of the Prestbury portion going eastwards, over the escarpment.

Prehistoric communities recognized no such boundaries, so I intend to treat the territory in the way they would have perceived it — extending from Nottingham Hill, overlooking Gotherington and Southam, southwards to Battledown, including both the vale, where Prestbury’s village centre is now located, and the hill top, where the earliest settlers have left their most enduring mark.

There are an amazing number of prehistoric monuments in this area, some of them not very well known. There have also been a number of chance finds both in the village and on the hill. So if any of our members can provide me with information (or even hints) on some of them it would be good to include them.

The most troublesome search concerns a round barrow, probably Bronze Age in date, but possibly earlier, whose location is well recorded in specialist literature, on land near to the quarry on Piccadilly Farm (where all the annoying motorcycle noise comes from). Has anyone a photograph of this barrow? It is now surrounded by barbed wire and is hidden within a recent plantation. Does anyone recall seeing it before all these changes were made? There’s no record of any finds from excavation there. But just five minutes walk away, on land belonging to Northfield Farm, is the remnant of another round barrow, overlooking the vale of Severn, in which there was what looks like a family burial: an adult male, ditto female, and a child, about nine years old. The latter two had their skulls broken before burial, but the male was whole and undamaged. What kind of mystery lay buried there?

Has anyone any information on chance finds of flint tools? Mr. Patrick Barrett, who lived for many years at Upper Hill Farm, found many flakes and even some apparently finished arrowheads on land near the radio masts, which he donated to Cheltenham Museum. I am trying to persuade the curator to let us see them — that’s what they are there for! But it is taking some time, and there is some doubt about whether they can find the most important items. These would include a leaf-shaped point, fashioned from flint, which could be contemporary with the Neolithic long barrows — notably Belas Knap which, after recent re-calibration of the radio-carbon data, is reckoned to have been constructed about 3900 BC. A formidably ancient period, yet I believe evidence will show that it was a time in which life in this area had many similarities with our more recent farming history.

And what of the Prestbury Long Barrow? The investigation is still ongoing.

Michael Cole, Chairman, PLHS. (November 2013)
THE PROGRAMME FOR 2014.

January 27
AGM.
PRESTBURY IN MAPS. Norman Baker

February 24
FRED ARCHER. Kevin George

March 24
PREHISTORIC PRESTBURY. Michael Cole.

April 28
HOW THE TRAMS CAME TO PRESTBURY. Lynda Hodges

May 19
RESEARCH EVENING

June 23
VILLAGE WALK

September 22
THE DE LA BERE ESTATE IN PRESTBURY. Michelle Rees

October 27
THE VILLAGE WAR MEMORIAL. David Jones

November 24
TUDOR COTTAGE. John White (Plus additional speaker)