

HALBERTON HISTORY GROUP

BULLETINS 2017

HALBERTON HISTORY GROUP (Mar)

In February a few members visited the Somerset Heritage Centre at Taunton. We had pre-ordered documents we felt would be of interest which were quickly produced for us. These included Poulett Estate papers which mention properties in Halberton including some tenancy surveys from the 17th Century; some Wyndham documents from 1608 detailing a dispute over the course of the leat feeding Moorstone Barton; also documents relating to Spicelands, the Quaker Meeting House.

A gem that we discovered was a book published in 1840, written by a lady who had previously stayed at Halberton Rectory. It had a lovely collection of paintings done in 1797, mostly of the interior of the rectory but also three general views of the village and some sketches of local children. We were astonished to find this previously unknown record of Halberton from over two hundred years ago.

There was a good attendance for our A.G.M. in March. The officers all agreed to stand again and this was confirmed. Our Treasurer, Peter Nicholls will stand down at the end of the year and Tim Hugill kindly offered to fill in until next year's A.G.M.

Our summer outings will begin with a visit to Sutton Barton on 20th April and on May 25th we will be visiting St. Andrew's Church with possibly a trip to the top of the tower. As part of the May Festival the Twose Room will be open on the afternoon of Sunday 14th from 2 to 5 pm. Everyone is invited to come and find out more about Halberton and its surroundings.

We have a photocopier/printer in the Twose Room on which we can run off copies for anyone during our usual opening times for a modest fee. This might save you a trip to Tiverton and is not just for history documents.

HALBERTON HISTORY GROUP (May)

In April Ian and Yta Bachelor invited us to visit Sutton Barton and we spent a very interesting evening being shown around. Ian explained the history of the house, built by George Quick Pedlar in 1866, and the various changes made in the use of both the buildings and of the farmland. We heard that two of the fields are still called Rifle Range and Target Field – names believed to date to the time of the Napoleonic War when a military camp was set up nearby. After the tour we were able to examine a wealth of deeds, etc. One of these set out terms for lease of the property for the next two thousand years!

Members who had offered to help with manning the History Room in the Village Hall attended a session when we ran through the various items held so they would be more familiar with the resources and better able to help visitors. It was decided that from now on regular opening would be restricted to Friday mornings from 10.30 to 12.30 but that anyone could still make contact to arrange to come on a day and time convenient for themselves. This would be more flexible than the present commitment of opening for two sessions every week. A rota of volunteers is being drawn up.

We recently had a visitor who lived in one of the oldest farmhouses as a child. She recalled that when she arrived in 1945 the toilet was in the back yard, baths were taken in front of the fire and although the house had some electricity, upstairs this had only been installed in the guest bedroom so the family went to bed by candlelight.

For our June event we have been invited to visit Berry, at Chevithorne, and in July we are going to the Dunkeswell Heritage Centre, opened by the South West Airfields Trust on Dunkeswell Airfield only last September. It was a base for the American Air Force during WW2. Car sharing will be arranged for this trip and non-members are welcome to come with us. For more details on time etc. please make contact as below.

HALBERTON HISTORY GROUP (July)

In May we met at St. Andrew's Church. We looked at items including a transcribed copy of the old registers up to 1837, inscriptions copied from memorial stones in 1770 and a document obtaining more ground for the churchyard in 1885 signed by the then Vicar, Edmund Ironside Gregory. There were records of making up the Church Path. This showed how things that were once the responsibility of the incumbent fell to the newly established parish council. (The very first council meeting was held in the school on 31st December 1894.)

Rosalie told us about her family's long connection with ringing the bells. At one time three generations of the Vinnicombe family were all ringing and her Grandfather, William Vinnicombe, was the Tower Captain for many years. Then Alison Sharland led some members up the narrow tower steps to the bell ringing chamber. She explained how bells are rung and how heavy they are. A few had a chance to try and toll one themselves. She showed us the charts from which the changes are called. Although she assured us it all became second nature after a time we thought it looked very complicated and extremely hard work.

On the Sunday of the Halberton Festival we opened the History Room. Among the visitors was a lady who knew something of the Holloway family who owned Town Mill during the mid 1800s. It seems that Enoch Holloway was married twice and had 12 children by each of his wives! We were able to help one lady who had long been wondering about her parents' connection to Ash Thomas.

In June we spent a very enjoyable afternoon at Berry, Chevithorne, home of member David Maunder. It was a lovely, sunny day so we were able to wander around the garden from which there is a glorious view right across to Sidmouth Gap and the tower of Halberton church could just be seen rising behind some trees. David gave a short talk on 'burn marks'. His interest in these arose when he found strange marks on the lintel over the inglenook. They are marks, often about 3" high in the shape of a flame, which

have been deliberately burnt into the wood. Usually dating from the mid 16th to late 17th century they are thought to have been made to keep away evil spirits or witches (who might come down the open chimney). Similar marks can be found all over Europe and even in the Eastern USA.

We were sad to learn of the recent death of Les Davey who had provided the Group with lots of pictures and stories about his childhood in Ash Thomas. In WW2, as soon as he was old enough, he joined the Home Guard and went on to join the Coldstream Guards. After getting married he lived at Pethertons for many years before moving to Tiverton. Les spent his working life at Stenners. Retirement gave him the opportunity of spending more time studying local history. He always had a good tale to tell and we are very grateful for the information he passed on.

Joy Wooding Tel: 820325 email: historygroup@halberton.org

HALBERTON HISTORY DAY

A date for your diary – 4th November, 2017

11.00 to 3.00 at Halberton Village Hall

Come along with your old photographs & memories

HALBERTON HISTORY GROUP (Sept)

In July we visited the Dunkeswell Airfield Heritage Centre. In WW2 this was one of three airfields constructed on the Blackdown Hills. It was a base for aircraft whose role was to combat the U-boats which were devastating shipping in the Atlantic. Initially occupied by RAF Coastal Command, from 1943 aircraft US Navy aircraft were stationed there and it became the only US Navy Base in Britain (known as Mudville Heights until better road infrastructure was put in place).

The visit commenced with a short film explaining background events and then we had a chance to look around at the comprehensive collection of items which the S. W. Heritage Trust has managed to get together. Everything from uniforms to aircraft instruments are on display together with information panels describing life on the base, some of the many hazardous missions flown and also the impact on the local area.

In August we visited another of the historic farmhouses in our parish, listed grade 2*. The owners showed us around and speculated on all the changes to the layout made over its history which dates back to at least the mid-17th century. The evening finished with tea and delicious cake.

The months of July and August have been a very busy time with visitors to our History Room. They came from places Spain and Wales as well as nearer to hand, all looking to find out more about family connections to Halberton. We have heard of people who went to Cornwall to be tin miners and to South Wales to be coal miners. Also more details of Arthur Twose who went to Spain to set up a factory. We have come across another property which no longer exists – Shilcroft on the lane up to Yeo Farm.

HALBERTON HISTORY GROUP (Nov)

At our October meeting we enjoyed a talk by John Maunder about the history of the family firm started by his Great Grandfather at his Witheridge farm in 1879 and passed to *his* son Lloyd in 1898. At the beginning produce was taken by pony and trap to Lapford Station from where it was sent to London by train. As business increased this was no longer viable and in 1913 they moved to Tiverton Junction, very near the mainline station. The first Lloyd Maunder shop was in Tiverton, and soon others followed, mostly in Devon. A lot of the meat went to Sainsburys for their shops all over the UK. John recalled the time when Mr. Sainsbury told his father of the new-fangled idea from America of shops where people could help themselves off the shelves – they thought it would never catch on!

There was a steady stream of visitors to our History Day at the Village Hall in November. We hope that they found something of interest among the many photographs and items on display. The lady featured in our advert in the last issue was Elizabeth Saunders who for the last years of her life lived at Hopkins Cottage, off the High Street, and died there aged 104 in 1926. She had been a Bible Christian preacher born at Rackenford. On some Sundays she would walk from there to preach at Halberton and on to Sampford Peverell, walking home on Monday. She married Luke Saunders, a Sampford Peverell mason.

The small device on show was for weighing eggs when they were graded by weight. It was aptly placed in front of a picture of ladies who worked at Nicholls Egg Packing Station, by Greenway House. A lot more names were given for the school pictures which were on show. Irene Andrews from the Devon Heritage Centre was on hand to give advice on the safe keeping of old documents and possibilities for researching house and family history. Refreshments were ably taken care of by Kathleen Saunders. If anyone missed the exhibition and would like to look at some of the pictures please get in touch as below.



The History Room has again been busy over the past two months. Visitors from Canada were related to Charles Howe, licensee of the Swan Inn 1907 to 1917, just before it became the War Memorial Institute. Besides the photograph of Elizabeth Saunders, as a complete coincidence from another source came a photograph of Hannah James, who died at Hopkins House in 1931. Her family name was Coles and they gave their name to that row of cottages and to the lane opposite.

We have acquired photographs of the Scorse family outside Top-n-Tails at the time of King George VI's wedding in 1937 and the later bungalow which replaced it. For an enquirer we were able to locate the site of 'Buey' Lane Cottage which turned out to be the Local pronunciation of 'Bowhay'.

There is no meeting in December and we will start the New Year with a general meeting on 11th January. We would like to have more members – there is no commitment – so why not come along and see what we are all about?

Joy Wooding Tel: 820325 email: historygroup@halberton.org