

## *Hertfordshire Association for Local History*

(Charity Number 280449)

# News and Events

Autumn 2019



### Dates for your Diary

Saturday 9 November 2019	Symposium: <i>Local History, Landscape and Archaeology</i>
Saturday 9 May 2020	HALH Spring Meeting and AGM
Saturday 14 November 2020	Symposium: <i>The Country House at War</i>

## HALH Symposium 2019

### *Local History, Landscape and Archaeology*

This year's symposium will be held on **Saturday 9 November 2019** at **Woolmer Green Village Hall, Hall Lane, Woolmer Green SG3 6XA**. The programme is still being finalised, but it will certainly include the talks described below. Further details and a booking form can be found on page iv.

History and archaeology both have a common subject: the human past. The principal difference would seem to be, superficially, the source data employed: physical remains in the case of archaeology, the written word in the case of history. Archaeologists and historians often have different perspectives which can lead to poor use of each other's data. In landscape studies, both sources of data can be valuable. Relic field systems revealed by excavation or geophysics, extant field systems, enclosure awards and historic map data – all these can help in providing a balanced account of how the agricultural landscape developed. In this symposium we aim to present some examples of where the two types of study have come together to examine aspects of Hertfordshire's rich past.

#### **History, archaeology, local history: a strained relationship? (Kris Lockyear)**

Kris Lockyear became interested in archaeology when he visited Verulamium on a school trip aged 10 in 1975. He joined the Welwyn Archaeological Society (WAS) in the same year and has remained a passionate archaeologist ever since. He excavated with WAS, and also worked on the St Albans Chapter House site in 1978, and at Wroxeter Roman City with Phil Barker every summer from 1980 to 1984. He took a BA at Durham, an MSc in Computing and Archaeology at Southampton, and a PhD at UCL. These were interspersed with three years in commercial archaeology. He has been on the staff of the Institute of

Archaeology, UCL since 1996, and also runs the Welwyn Archaeological Society and the Community Archaeology Geophysics Group. He has excavated or surveyed sites in the UK, Poland, Italy, Romania, Iraq and the USA.

In his talk Kris will take, as his starting point, the work of Richard Reece, the famous Roman archaeologist and numismatist, who once published a paper entitled: *353, 367, or 357? Splitting the difference or taking a new approach?* In this paper Reece provided a critique of attempts to write narrative history from archaeological evidence, especially for Roman Britain. Kris will explore the strengths and weaknesses of both historical and archaeological data, and attempt to show where they can be complementary or contradictory.

website: [www.halh.org.uk](http://www.halh.org.uk)

**Gobions and Beyond: archaeology and garden history in Hertfordshire**  
(Tom Williamson)

Tom Williamson is Professor of Landscape History at the University of East Anglia and has written widely on landscape archaeology, agricultural history, historical ecology and the history of landscape design. Born in Hertfordshire, he has devoted much time to studying the county's landscape, often in association with Anne Rowe. He is the author of *The Origins of Hertfordshire* and, with Rowe, of *Hertfordshire: a landscape history*.

In his talk Tom will discuss what archaeology, in particular analytical field surveys, can contribute to our understanding of the history of gardens and designed landscapes in Hertfordshire. He will then focus on the earthworks of Charles Bridgeman's great gardens at Gobions near Brookman's Park. He will also range more widely, looking at a number of sites across the county.

**A late medieval tile kiln at Buntingford Road, Puckeridge**  
(Mark Hinman)

Mark Hinman is Director and Regional Manager for Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA). He has worked as a professional archaeologist since completing his degree in 1985. He has managed and directed a wide variety of archaeological projects covering all periods from 5th millennium BC to the modern period in Britain, Europe and the Middle East. Throughout his career Mark has worked extensively throughout the Midlands and East Anglia and now works out of PCA's Cambridge office.

In his talk Mark will recount how in 2011 archaeological excavations at Buntingford Road, Puckeridge revealed the presence of a well-preserved tile kiln. Local historian Katherine Shreeve had undertaken the translation of court rolls for the area and thanks in large part to this work, the team, with Katherine, was able to closely relate the remains of the kiln with the documentary sources. The historical documentation highlighted the presence of a tile kiln in the area of the site during the first half of the sixteenth century, while the dating of the archaeological evidence supported a late medieval/early post-medieval timeframe for the site's production period.

**Why local historians need to be archaeologically literate**  
(Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews)

Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews was brought up in Letchworth Garden City. He gained a degree in archaeology at the University of Lancaster in 1980, and subsequently worked as an archaeologist for North Herts District Council from 1985-90, then for Chester City Council until 2004. He then returned to Hertfordshire where he now works as curator of the North Hertfordshire Museum. His many projects have included a book entitled *Abusing the Past – Bad Archaeology*, published in 2011, in which he seeks to counter the infiltration of popular culture with supposed mysteries. For some years now he has also been running a website on this theme.

In his talk Keith will pose the question: why do so many local historians not use archaeological data and repeat discredited ideas? He argues that it's partly due to a failure by archaeologists to communicate their anonymous, fragmentary and highly localised data. Archaeologists also naively use documentary sources, place-names and the facts they learned as background history decades ago. But, he claims, the problems work both ways: the wild extrapolation from limited data, the view of prehistory as unknowable or filled with invading Celts, the reliance on data from local enthusiasts – these things all too often characterise the work of local historians. Keith will show how we all need to communicate with each other. Historians need to know what a 'HER' is (Historical Environmental Record) and archaeologists need to learn how to approach texts critically.

**Henry VIII's fishponds at Hunsdon**  
(Anne Rowe)

Anne Rowe is a freelance historian of the Hertfordshire landscape. She has conducted courses on landscape and garden history for the Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education and leads research for the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust. She is also President of the East Herts Archaeological Society. As mentioned above, she has worked with Tom Williamson on a number of research projects and co-authored, with Tom and Andrew Macnair, *Dury & Andrews' Map of*

Hertfordshire. Anne admits to having an obsession for parks and has written *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* (2009) and *Tudor and Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire* (2019).

Anne's short talk will focus on some impressive earthworks in one of the three parks owned by Henry VIII at Hunsdon. A series of dams in the valley of the Hunsdon Brook had been noted as early as 1989, but it was only when examining documents in The National Archives at Kew in 2016 that the history of these earthworks came to light. The documents were royal accounts detailing the massive expenditure incurred by Henry VIII from 1525 in remodelling and extending a fifteenth-century brick tower house and altering its gardens and parkland at Hunsdon. Built originally by Sir William Oldhall, this was to become a favourite royal palace and was visited by King Henry on at least six occasions, usually during the summer months. Other documents revealed that, in addition to hunting deer, Henry VIII was also a keen fisherman.

### **The Kelshall Hoard (Phil Kirk)**

Phil Kirk lives in Hitchin. He worked in the gloving industry in Hitchin for 40 years, but now runs his own landscaping firm. He has been an amateur metal detectorist since 2004.

In his talk Phil, assisted by fellow detectorist Dave Wheeler, will describe how in October 2014, while investigating a farmer's field at Kelshall near Royston, he discovered a bronze Roman urn. Two weeks later he and a team of archaeologists returned to the site, whereupon they discovered a Roman grave containing a number of artefacts believed to date from 205 to 215 AD. They included a silver denarius from the reign of Emperor Trajan, three second century copper-alloy coins, and a quantity of Roman glass, including bottles, glasses and two mosaic glass dishes possibly made in Roman Alexandria. These artefacts, known as the Kelshall Hoard, were later bought by North Hertfordshire Museum.

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## **Future Events**

### **Spring Meeting and AGM**

The next HALH Spring Meeting and AGM will take place on Saturday 9 May 2020 at the Civic Centre, Welwyn. The Lionel Munby Lecture will be given by Dr John Baker, Associate Professor in Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham, who is an expert on the study of English place-names.

### **Summer Visit**

The HALH Summer Visit of 2020 will take place at Pirton, near Hitchin. Pirton has a very interesting and complex history. It was already a sizeable settlement at the time of the Domesday Survey and saw a major planned expansion during the twelfth century. A castle was built there during the reign of King Stephen and its motte and two baileys form a substantial earthwork. The fortunes of the village declined in the later medieval period, but conditions improved from the seventeenth century onwards and during the mid-Victorian period its population grew to 1,000.

The HALH Spring Meeting and AGM of 2019 was held at Pirton and Helen Hofton of the Pirton Local History Group led a guided

walk around the village during the lunch hour. Many of the visitors were keen to hear more and so Helen has agreed to conduct a longer guided walk around the village for the HALH Summer Visit of 2020. The date has yet to be confirmed, but will be announced in the Spring 2020 issue of *News & Events*.

### **Symposium**

The HALH Symposium for 2020 will take place at the Memorial Hall, Tewin on Saturday 14 November 2020. The theme is still under discussion, but one possibility is 'The Country House at War'. During World War Two many of the country houses in Hertfordshire were taken over for the war effort, and some of them have an intriguing story to tell – for example, Wall Hall (used as an army administration headquarters); Aston House (used by SOE for producing explosives to be used behind enemy lines); Salisbury Hall (used for the production of the prototype DH 98 *Mosquito*); Hatfield House (used for the first Civil Resettlement Unit, which helped British prisoners-of-war make the transition back into civilian life). Further details will be given in the Spring 2020 issue of *News & Events*.

**HERTFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY  
40<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM**

Saturday 9 November 2019

10.00 - 16.30

Woolmer Green Village Hall, 4 Hall Lane, Woolmer Green SG3 6XA

**Local History, Landscape and Archaeology**

The programme will include talks on:

- History, archaeology, local history: a strained relationship? (*Kris Lockyear*)
- Gobions and Beyond: archaeology and garden history in Hertfordshire (*Tom Williamson*)
- A late medieval tile kiln at Buntingford Road, Puckeridge (*Mark Hinman*)
- Why local historians need to be archaeologically literate (*Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews*)
- Henry VIII's fishponds at Hunsdon (*Anne Rowe*)
- The Kelshall Hoard (*Phil Kirk*)

Tickets £12 for HALH members; £15 for non-members. Tea and coffee will be provided, but this year we shall not be offering lunch. Some people like to bring a packed lunch, but there are also pubs nearby.

To order tickets please complete the form below and send by 26 October with your cheque (payable to the HALH) and an SAE to:

Ruth Jeavons, 44 Necton Road, Wheathampstead, St Albans, Herts, AL4 8AU  
Tel: 01582 629 516; Mobile: 07847 429492; Email: ruth.jeavons@ntlworld.com

NB. Tickets, programme & directions will be posted in October. If you require a receipt before then, please supply an email address or a second SAE.

**APPLICATION FORM**

Name .....

Address .....

Tel. No. or email address .....

Name(s) for badge(s) .....

Please send ..... tickets at £12 and/or ..... tickets at £15

Please book a display table for ..... Society

Is your society involved in events or activities which you would like to see featured in *Herts Past and Present*? If so, please contact either:

*Ruth Jeavons, 44 Necton Road, Wheathampstead, St Albans, Herts AL4 8AU*  
(email: ruth.jeavons@ntlworld.com); or

*Philip Sheail, 41 Cowper Crescent, Hertford SG14 3DZ* (email: philip.sheail@gmail.com)  
(Deadlines: third week of January, July)