

## Reports on our past lectures November 2013

29 November 2013

Our last Friday meeting of the year is given over to short talks by members. This year the following were featured:

### Armigerous Ancestors by Janet Smith



The story starts with a scrap of paper with a coat-of-arms on it, apparently belonging to one of Janet's ancestors. How do you find out about a coat-of-arms?

The College of Arms in the City of London is the obvious place to start but they charge a hefty fee (£600 was quoted to Janet). Next she tried the Society of Genealogists and attended a course on heraldry, and via this she was able to find a 19th century reference book. Using the description of the arms in medieval French she found that it was indeed associated with the name of her ancestor (Burchell) though it did not appear to be his to use. Like many - an estimated 50,000 people and organisations - he seems to have used it without any authority whatsoever!

### Postboxes by Chris Oliver



Chris had recently visited the British Postal Museum in Debden. This contains a collection of unusual boxes and Chris showed a selection of photos of them.

These included a Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee box and the short-lived blue Airmail boxes. Various experimental designs had been tried over the years including a combined post box and stamp vending machine built into a telephone kiosk.

In 2015 a new postal museum will open at Mount Pleasant with items from Debden and public access for the first time to the Post Office Underground Railway.

### Samian Puzzle by Pamela Greenwood



Roman red samian pottery has been found on the Thames foreshore over many years. This was mostly manufactured in east, south and central Gaul.

Pamela showed and discussed several particularly interesting pieces from our area. One has a spiral design, but looks like a manufacturing error. One may have an image of Apollo and others show lions, a raven and a deer.

It is possible to match the more distinctive designs to particular potters such as a sherd with vine leaves found in 2013. Such highly decorated pieces are sometimes found in wet places so it is thought they may have been deliberately offered to local deities.

## Topping out the Uniform by Keith Whitehouse



Keith brought along two historic artefacts: a rusty metal box containing a mystery object and ... a slide projector!

He began by showing slides of the 26th Middlesex Rifle Volunteers (Cyclists) which, in 1908, became 25th Battalion, London Regiment (Cyclists). Over many years, Keith had been collecting uniforms belonging to one of the Battalion's early members, Major (later Colonel) Gilbertson Smith.

Having spent nearly 20 years assembling his collection, Keith had just days before been to an auction at Bonhams in London where he made a very exciting acquisition.

Opening the metal box, Keith revealed Colonel Smith's very own grey cloth helmet, dating from 1878.

*Colin Jenkins*