

# Reports on our past lectures in 2014

31 January 2014

## 4th Nick Fuentes Memorial Lecture

### 'New discoveries from the Mithras Temple site - The archaeology of Bucklersbury House/Bloomberg Place'

Michael Tetreau and Jessica Bryan, Museum of London Archaeology

A talk in 2 parts, firstly Michael described the archaeological background to the site as it has first been dug in the 1950s following the destruction of this area in the blitz of World War 2. At that time the Temple of Mithras was first discovered and large parts removed. These were reconstructed in front of the new Bucklersbury House but not above the original location and in a different orientation. When the new building is finished the temple is to be reconstructed in a new display space very close to, but above its original site and in the correct orientation.

The 1950's building has now been demolished thus allowing a new dig. Surprisingly large amounts of undisturbed archaeology survive in between the columns that supported the previous building. The site is a waterlogged one lying in the valley of the Walbrook so preservation is very good.

Jessica described the current dig and showed many pictures of the site and the finds. Timber in the form of wall bases, drains and fences survive. Leather shoes have not rotted away and writing tablets have been found with legible writing. There are thousands of small finds such as coins and pieces of jewellery, surely making this one of the most significant London digs of recent years.

*Colin Jenkins*

28 February 2014

### 'The excavation of medieval London waterfront properties, from Swan Lane to Billingsgate'

Dr John Schofield, historian and archaeologist of medieval and Tudor London

Dr Schofield has recently retired as an archaeologist. He is now going back to complete the research and publication of sites dug on the edge of the river in The City of London. The talk focussed on the area near Billingsgate market excavated in the 1970s and 1980s. Evidence was presented of medieval timber revetments and the gradual reclamation of land southward from Lower Thames Street. He is putting information online about these sites at The City of London Archaeological Trust.

*Colin Jenkins*

28 March 2014

### **'The Heritage of Tooting Common'**

Hannah Pemberton, Parks Development and Fundraising Officer for Wandsworth Council

Wandsworth Council's Parks Service won initial funding from the HLF for a project to explore the cultural and natural heritage of Tooting Common. This involves restoring biodiversity and habitats, unravelling its historical mysteries, conserving and restoring heritage features, teaching people about the Common's rich past and biodiversity and providing new volunteering opportunities AND skills that people can use in the future. Initial funding was awarded to Wandsworth Council to develop these plans and later they successfully applied for a full grant which funded the project to 2019.

One of the three pilot projects was of particular interest to WHS members - The Common Story project focused on producing a historical research report of Tooting Common's history and provided training for volunteers who were interested in learning researching and archiving skills. Volunteers did not need to have any experience, just lots of enthusiasm, as training was given. Attached at the time was an expression of interest form.

*Colin Jenkins*

25 April 2014

### **'Battersea in the frame - a short cinematic history'**

Aileen Reed, member of the Survey of London team and the Cinematic Geographies of Battersea project

The talk consisted of a presentation describing how cinema films shot in Battersea can be used as valuable records of the area, in particular during the 1950's and 60's. Aileen showed a number of film clips to illustrate the point. The project has its own website with a downloadable mobile phone app.

*Colin Jenkins*

30 May 2014

### **'Kings Cross Goods Yard: An Historical and Archaeological Approach'**

Rebecca Haslam of Pre-Construct Archaeology

The King's Cross Goods Yard was in operation for just over 100 years between 1850 and 1980. It was built by the Great Northern Railway Company (GNR) whose Chief Engineer, Joseph Cubitt, had kept a detailed account of the building work. But PCA's recent archaeological dig had shown that his account was somewhat idealised: the

strata of soils clearly showing a different order of events. It was an example of archaeology trumping the written historical record. The major re-development of the site, which is still continuing, had retained many of its original features: that, in conjunction with PCA's dig, meant the station was now one of the most well preserved and one of the best understood.

*Janet Smith*

**26 September 2014**

### **'Zeppelin nights: London in the First World War'**

Jerry White, acclaimed author of books on eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century London.

Professor Jerry White, distinguished London historian and author of *Zeppelin Nights: London in the First World War*, gave a moving yet entertaining talk on the early German air-raids on London. From the day after war was declared, he said, there was a widespread expectation that the Germans would attack London from the skies. This represented a completely new kind of warfare and would bring war to Britain and its civilian population as never before. The first raid took place in the Stoke Newington and Dalston areas on 31 May 1915, killing 7 people. Among the casualties was a 3-year old child, Elsie Leggett. Four more Zeppelin raids took place later that year. Anti-aircraft naval guns were positioned in London's parks and on tall buildings, but the authorities decided that no public warnings should be given to avoid causing mass panic. More Zeppelin raids followed in 1916, mostly in north and east London, ending on 12 October when an airship was shot down.

Later air-raids were carried out by Gotha bi-planes, which were capable of carrying up to two tons of bombs. Private homes, schools and railway stations were among the buildings hit. By the end of the war, 668 people had been killed and 1938 injured in air-raids on London. Because the numbers were relatively small, said Professor White, nearly all the casualties had their names recorded in the press, making it possible to research their personal stories in a way that would not be possible in the Second World War when the number of casualties ran into the tens of thousands.

*Janet Smith*

**27 June 2014**

### **AGM followed by 'Streatham's History through its Built Environment'**

Brian Bloice, Chairman of the Streatham Society

In an entertaining talk, Brian traced the history of Streatham from Saxon times, when it boasted three manors, right up to the present-day with the recent re-opening of the leisure centre and ice rink. For centuries Streatham remained a largely rural place in Surrey, becoming a popular spa resort in the 18th century when its medicinal

waters were much prized and then undergoing intensive development by the Victorians between 1870-1890. Among the grand houses of Streatham were Streatham Park, the home of the Thrale family (no longer extant) and 94 villas on Leigham Court Road, of which only 20 remain. Park Hill, built by Henry Tate in 1829, still stands and is open for guided tours twice a year.

*Janet Smith*

**25 July 2014**

**'50 years on the Foreshore' - marking WHS's half century of recording the local foreshore**

Pamela Greenwood, WHS Chairman

For the past 50 years the WHS has been conducting a survey of the Thames foreshore - believed to be the longest continuous observation exercise of its kind. Looking back to 14 August 1964, the first day of the survey, Pamela Greenwood showed pictures of some of the most outstanding finds over the years: Mesolithic flint blades (8000-6000 BC); 60 samian jugs and bowls from the Roman era; and a 17C jug, complete with cork. In 1971 a 'once-in-a-lifetime' find had been made of an Iron Age sword, now on loan to the Museum of London. Of continuing interest was the discovery of a single line of 23 timber-posts, most probably the remains of a Roman fish-trap. Pamela said that the accumulated archive - of photographs, as well as finds - represented an exceptional record.

*Janet Smith*

**31 October 2014**

**'Lions on Kunulua - excavations of Early Bronze and Iron Age periods at Tell Tayinat, Hatay, Turkey'**

Fiona Haughey from the project

This talk was given by someone who has worked on this site for a number of seasons. It is located in Southern Turkey, near the Syrian Border. The talk covered the civilisation that flourished there around 1000 BC. The most spectacular finds being a pair of ornately carved lions in basalt forming a column base and the top half of a statue.

*Colin Jenkins*

**28 November 2014**

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

## Social History from a Battersea War Memorial by Jean Davidson



The Sacred Heart Church in Trott Street, North Battersea has a war memorial with 60 names from the First World War. Unusually only the name is given, no regiment, rank, or age of death. This makes tracing these men particularly difficult but using a variety of archives Jean has compiled backgrounds for 42 of them.

Interestingly one man died in 1919 and one in 1920 but were still included on a WW1 memorial. From the 42 identified, 4 were sailors. Most of the men enrolled early in the war before conscription was introduced and only 4 out of the 42 were in locally recruited regiments.

## Travels in Kurdistan by Dorian Gerhold

As part of his work Dorian was able to visit Kurdistan. This talk was about a short visit to Erbil, A city dating back 7000 years and featuring a 30m high citadel. Dorian also visited the remains of a nearby aqueduct built in the reign of the Assyrian King Sennacherib between 703 and 690 BC. The availability of a good water supply makes some scholars think that the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were at Nineveh rather than Babylon.

## The gas mantle industry in Wandsworth by Mike Grahn



The gas mantle was invented by the German chemist Welsbach in Vienna in 1885. The development was then continued with significant financial support from an Englishman Williams. The manufacture of gas mantles in Britain became centred in Wandsworth. The Volker company were in Garrett Lane and later the Welsbach company built a factory in Earlsfield. At its peak several thousand people were employed and the industry in Wandsworth continued until the 1970s by which time gas lamps were found only in a few heritage locations.

### Restoration of Fulham House and an interesting portrait by Keith Whitehouse



Fulham House was built in 1735 on the site of an earlier house dating from the middle ages, the cellars of which were retained. In the 19th century the house became army property and by the 1980s was a Territorial Army centre. In 1988 the army planned to demolish it but due to pressure from the Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society the army were persuaded to restore it. Money was found to restore not just the interior but to recreate the former ornamental entrance gate and surrounding railings.

As usual Keith brought along an interesting object to show us. This time it was a portrait of the 5th Earl Spencer in the uniform of a major in a Volunteer Northampton Regiment. Originally sold framed in 2010 it came up for auction more recently without the frame. It is likely that the original purchaser wanted the frame as that was more interesting and valuable than the picture.

*Colin Jenkins*