

# Reports on our past lectures in 2019

25 January 2019

## 9th Nick Fuentes Memorial Lecture

### 'Reflections on fifty years of London archaeology: 1968-2018'

Bob Cowie

With the 50th Anniversary this year of the London Archaeologist founded by Nick Fuentes, archaeologists are looking back over the last half century of changes, work and discoveries in London. Bob Cowie began digging with WHS and has recently retired from Museum of London Archaeology. In his talk he covered over 50 years of archaeological history by dividing the period since 1945 into four phases.

The period from 1945 to the early 1960s he called the heroic age. This he illustrated by the work of W F Grimes and Audrey Williams with discovery of The Temple of Mithras in 1954, and Cripplegate Fort. Also significant were the excavations by Kathleen Kenyon in Southwark.

From the 1960s to the early 1970s he called the period of revolution and rescue. Huge amounts of development particularly in the City of London and the creation of new roads led to many rescue digs, often done with the help of volunteers. It is surely significant that more local archaeological societies were created in this period than before or since. The magazine Current Archaeology was founded in March 1967 and London Archaeologist in 1968. The Rescue Trust for British Archaeology was founded in 1972 reflecting the spirit of the times.

From the early 1970s to 1990 he called the period of coming of age and the rise of professionalism. Many units were set up including Kent in 1971 and the Department of Urban Archaeology at the Museum of London in 1973. The closure of Londons' docks in 1968-71 and 1980-81 made available many sites and led to a lot of waterfront work particularly in the City. Here the good state of preservation of timber in the waterlogged conditions allowed very precise tree ring dating of the timbers and hence of objects found behind the waterfront structures. There were also large amounts of work on gravel sites in both West and East London.

The highlight of this period was the discovery of the Saxon site of Lundenwic in the Covent / Garden Strand area in 1985, which was voted by LAMAS members in 2005 as the most significant site found in the previous 150 years. The Roman Amphitheatre and the Rose Theatre were also discovered at the end of the 1980s and it was the case of the Rose Theatre which led to the next phase of the story.

From 1990 archaeology became part of the planning process with the publication of Planning Policy Guideline 16 (PPG16). This brought in the principle that the developer must pay for archaeology and with it the rise of the commercial units who competed for work. Bob also noted that following the financial big bang in the City of London

the pace of building became much faster with archaeology having to be done at the same time as building work went on around. Volunteer activity reduced in this period but the Thames Foreshore programme was a notable exception in the 1990s.

Bob concluded his talk with a look at the way doing archaeology has changed mainly due to new technologies such digital photography, digital planning and mapping, GPS for accurate surveying and the storage of data in relational databases.

*Colin Jenkins*

**22 February 2019**

## **Doggett's Coat and Badge**

Rob Cottrell, Author



In an entertaining and interactive talk, Rob took us back to 1 August 1715 when a rowing race was held on the River Thames to celebrate the first anniversary of the accession of George I, Elector of Hanover. That race, organised by actor, theatre manager and dramatist Thomas Doggett, was called the Hanover Prize and the king himself was in attendance. From the second year, it was known as Doggett's Coat and Badge race; it is still contested under that name today.

The event - technically, a sculling race since the oarsman has two oars - was rowed against the tide in boats weighing up to three-and-a-half tons. Only six contestants were allowed to compete; all had to be in their first year of Freedom, having completed a 5-7 year apprenticeship to a waterman. Places were originally allocated by drawing lots but later, qualifying heats were held from Putney to Hammersmith.

The race started outside Fishmongers' Hall and finished at the Botanical Gardens, Chelsea. In the early days it took 2-3 hours to complete; today - rowing with the tide - it takes about 20 minutes. Apart from prize money, the winner was - and still is - presented with a scarlet coat (originally orange) and a silver arm badge. Rob brought with him a lovely example of the badge, shown here, and generously donated two copies of his book, *Thomas Doggett Coat and Badge* to the Society.

*Janet Smith*

**29 March 2019**

### **'WHS Foreshore Survey 2016-2019'**

Pamela Greenwood, WHS member

Pamela began by reviewing the societies work on the foreshore since it began in the 1960s. From the very long run of photos she has of the section on both sides of Putney Bridge it is possible to compare and see the changes that have taken place since that time. The most important impact on the foreshore at present is from the works for the Thames tideway tunnel.

The details of the landscape changes over the years can only really be conveyed by photographs. However she did describe some exciting new finds and brought along an almost complete black burnished ware bowl of bronze age date which was found by the late Bob Wells.

*Colin Jenkins*

**26 April 2019**

### **Old London Bridge and its houses**

Dorian Gerhold, WHS Chairman

Based on research for a new book, WHS Chairman Dorian Gerhold gave a graphic account of the houses and residents of old London Bridge (1209-1761). The bridge had about 100 houses and 500 residents in the 17th century.

Having accessed previously unseen leases and other documents, Dorian was able to reconstruct the layout of the bridge and identify the residents. All the premises had a shop at ground-floor level and the most popular trade was haberdasher. Fire was a

recurrent problem and eventually all the houses were removed in around 1760, allowing the road to be widened.

The book was been published by the London Topographical Society.

*Colin Jenkins*

**31 May 2019**

### **'The Golden Age of Thames Antiquarians'**

Jon Cotton

A talk about the heroes and villains involved with retrieving antiquities from the Thames

Jon Cotton spent 31 years at the Museum of London with 20 years as a senior curator. His talk looked at the many individual collectors over the last 300 years who helped to create the collections of early artefacts we have now. The River Thames has been the source of by far the greater proportion of the items from before formal archaeological digging and it is still producing significant finds.

He began with George Fabian Lawrence, dealer and collector who had a shop at 7 West Hill in Wandsworth. He was the agent for the Guildhall and London Museums and obtained many items including the Cheapside hoard, a rich collection probably buried at the time of the Civil War and never retrieved until it was found by workmen in a cellar under 30-32 Cheapside.

The idea of collecting historical began with the cabinets of curiosities created by such men as John Tradescant, father and son, whose collection was later acquired by Elias Ashmole and formed the nucleus of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. It was taken up by the many young men who went on the grand tour of Europe in the 18th century returning with ancient items from Greece and Rome as well as old master paintings. Jon singled out Horace Walpole of Strawberry Hill as one such.

In the nineteenth century gentlemen collectors, known as 'nicknackaterians' obtained items from the Thames foreshore following major projects such as the removal of old London Bridge and the building of Brentford Dock. Thomas Layton of Brentford built up a collection that filled his house and 32 sheds by the time of his death in 1911. Sadly the collection was sold and broken up.

Such collecting continues to the present via the Thames foreshore programmes and mudlarkers. At the end Jon paid tribute to the late Bob Wells who worked closely with Pamela Greenwood of the WHS to ensure the items he found were recorded and passed to public collections.

*Colin Jenkins*

28 June 2019

**AGM followed by a talk on 'Paul Fourdrinier, master engraver: a Huguenot life in London.'**

Peter Simpson (independent historian)

The Society's AGM on 28th June was followed by an engrossing illustrated talk about engraver Paul Fourdrinier (1698-1758) by historian and author Peter Simpson, based on his recent, impressively researched book. Paul was born in Groningen (NL), his French Huguenot parents having emigrated following the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He came to England in 1720 and the following year, married Susanna Grolleau, daughter likewise of Huguenot exiles.

He was an esteemed and prolific engraver and, from premises near Whitehall, produced plates for a wide variety of publications, including two by Putney historian Robert Wood. With his wife and members of their families, he was buried in Mount Nod Cemetery.

Peter Simpson is the author of *The Forgotten Fourdrinier: The Life, Times and Work of Paul Fourdrinier, Huguenot Master Printmaker in London*, AuthorHouse, 2017.

*Philip Evison*

26 July 2019

**'The Battersea Channel'**

Virgil Yendell, geoarchaeologist at MOLA

A talk about the ancient landscapes and finds discovered during recent archaeological work in the Nine Elms area.

Virgil told us about the Battersea Channel Project. This began following a London Archaeologist article in 2009 and now has many participants coordinated by the Battersea Channel forum.

This aim is to use data from core sampling of sediments to create maps of the prehistoric landscape. The Battersea Channel is a relic of a late glacial valley in the area between Vauxhall and Battersea dating back around 11,000 years. From the data obtained so far contour maps have been produced showing the land levels and the importance of the Battersea Eyot.

It has been possible to determine the nature of the landscape. In the Early to Mid-Mesolithic it was fenland and later wetlands. In the Neolithic to Bronze age woodland containing elm, hazel, oak and lime trees dominated before giving way to mudflats and water meadows. It is thought that the denser forest would have led the inhabitants to clear the land and encourage a move to agriculture.

The project continues as more data is obtained from the many construction sites including Battersea Power station, the Northern Line extension and the new super sewer along the river.

*Colin Jenkins*

**27 September 2019**

### **'Making [dead] friends and influencing people: local lives in Wandsworth's archives'**

Emma Anthony, Archivist, Wandsworth Heritage Service

A talk about the role of the archivist, the nature of collecting and about making the collection available to a wide audience. Prior to becoming Borough Archivist Emma has worked mainly in medical archives, including in Glasgow, and later for the Royal College of Surgeons and the Medical Research Council.

To emphasise the value of personal papers in humanising archives she showed some examples from the collection and talked about the lives represented. These are the [dead] friends.

- A letter of 1909 from Peter Churton to a young girl describing Clapham Common in the 19th century;
- A photo of Ashburton House believed to date from c1888, this is a property where Dorian Gerhold has researched the occupants;
- A letter of the 1890s from William Jackson written to his wife while on a ship heading to South America;
- A collection of photos from the mid twentieth century from Florence Turtle;
- An extract from the memoirs of Geoffrey Haines (1899-1981) in 26 volumes and full of life's little details.

*Colin Jenkins*

**25 October 2019**

### **The History of Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, the home of William Morris**

Miranda Poliakoff, Volunteer and Outreach Officer for the William Morris Society

The house at 25 Upper Mall Hammersmith was named Kelmscott House by William Morris but was built in the 1780s and is now grade 2\* listed. Miranda began by talking about 2 earlier occupiers, an inventor who developed an electric telegraph as early as 1815 (it was not taken up), and then the children's author George McDonald. He named the house 'The Retreat'.

William Morris moved there from Turnham Green in October 1878 having spent £1000 on improvements. He lived there until his death in 1896 and designed and displayed many of the famous wallpapers and fabrics in the house. He was a lover of oriental

carpets and books, and later took up weaving having set up a loom in his bedroom. Many famous people visited including George Bernard Shaw and Morris became very active in Socialist politics with the Hammersmith Socialist League holding meetings in the coach house. The Kelmscott Press was founded in 1891 and produced 52 titles, although it did not continue after Morris died.

After Morris the house was occupied by other tenants but one person who lived there for many years and was a great fan of Morris wanted to leave it to the William Morris society which had been founded in 1955. The more recent history has been complex with plans for a museum in the 1980s not being successful. A large part of the garden was lost to the A4 road and the main house was let in 1983 on a 50 year lease. Today the society has just the coach house with occasional access to the main house for society members. See their website for details of current activities.

*Colin Jenkins*

## **29 November 2019**

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

### **Legacies of Slave Ownership in Wandsworth by Jean Davidson**

By making use of the legacy of slave ownership database (as featured in the April 2015 talk), Jean has been able find owners in Wandsworth who were compensated in the 1830s. She showed that the top ten payouts ranged from £50,000 to £8,000. Very significantly this coincided with the start of the railway age so the money was often invested there. In our case in the London and Brighton Railway built according to the scheme of John Rennie. Two examples of investors she gave were Sir Edward Hyde East, a wealthy estate owner and John Deacon, a banker. This research was all done online as part of FutureLearn online courses.

### **Aspects of Pharmacy History in Wandsworth by Norma Cox**

The regulation of the pharmaceutical profession began in the mid 19th Century. The Pharmaceutical Society was founded in 1841 by Jacob bell (and others), who lived on West Hill. He was also a member of parliament but died in 1859 at the age of only 49. Norma explained that examination and registration of pharmacists were introduced which required training courses such as those at Battersea Polytechnic. As an example of a retail chemist in the borough she cited John Keall of 68 West Hill who had 5 shops. There were also a couple of pharmaceutical manufacturing companies - 'Whiffin' and 'May and Baker' for which she gave brief histories.

### **Essex House 1596 - 1872 by Dorian Gerhold**

Essex house was on Putney High Street, Sainsbury's now occupies what was its garden. It survived long enough for the exterior to be photographed but it was not thought any information had been recorded about the interior. The Victoria and

Albert Museum has part of a plaster ceiling and via them Dorian tracked down plans and sketches in Northampton Public library. These were made just before demolition in 1872 and show the dimensions of all the rooms and sketches of the ceiling, including the date of 1596. This survived the demolition as it was reinserted in the shop on the site. There it remained until 1919 when a later shop owner no longer wanted it. Fortunately a local historian of the time was able to ensure it went to the V&A. From looking at the plans one can see that Essex house had a large enough room to have hosted one of the meetings of the Putney Debates where who should have the vote was discussed.

### **Wandsworth Prison and Who Do You Think You Are by Stewart McLaughlin**

Stewart runs the prison museum just outside the main entrance. He said a little about that, but the talk was mainly recounting his experiences with a film crew for an episode of the TV programme "Who do You Think You Are". The subject Paul Merton had a Victorian female ancestor who was held in the prison so they wanted to give an impression of what it was like there at that time. They did the filming early in the morning when the corridors would be deserted. In the end some 6 hours of work was reduced to only 10 minutes in the final programme.

### **Some interesting objects by Keith Whitehouse**

As usual to conclude the evening Keith showed us a collection of objects with local connections that he had recently acquired.

A silver token of 1637 commemorating the appointment of Bishop Juxon of London as Lord High Treasurer to Charles I. This was accompanied by a letter signed by him concerning a royal pension.

A penny black with the postmark Walham Green, which is the historic name of a village in the parish of Fulham. The tube station originally had that name but was renamed Fulham Broadway in 1952.

A Mulready pre-printed letter, the contents of which are not significant except for a marginal comment by the writer about an assassination attempt on the life of Queen Victoria, so Keith coupled this with an engraving depicting what might have happened when a man fired shots at her carriage, and a letter signed by the Queen to her fellow sovereign Ferdinand II King of The Two Sicilies.

*Colin Jenkins*