# Reports on our past lectures in 2022

## 28 January 2022 (Online via Zoom)

### 12th Nick Fuentes Memorial Lecture

### 'Crossing the Divide: Roman activity in Putney and Fulham'

Alexis Haslam, Community Archaeologist at Fulham Palace

Alexis Haslam gave a fresh overview of archaeological work on the Roman settlements of Putney and Fulham, using evidence gathered mainly from excavations in the last 50 years by Wandsworth Historical Society and by those working in Fulham. He compared the life of the two settlements on opposite banks of the Thames and demonstrated that the river was not a barrier in the past.

Roman Putney, a life-long passion of Nick Fuentes, dates from the mid-1st century AD into the early 5th century, whereas evidence, so far, from Fulham, particularly from excavations in Fulham Palace's Walled Garden, dates from the 3rd century onwards. Both settlements flourished in the late 4th century.

Alexis discussed what the finds from both settlements might mean and how the two might relate, examined evidence for the local Roman road systems, and raised the possibility of continuity of settlement in the area into the early medieval period.

An altogether stimulating and thought-provoking talk which will lead to further research.

*Pamela Greenwood*

## 25 February 2022 (Online via Zoom)

### 'Making a living from the River Thames'

James Wisdom, Chair of Brentford and Chiswick Local History Society

Using a series of engrossing contemporary paintings, engravings and photographs James showed us a River Thames teeming with activity: fishing boats, pleasure boats, boats carrying ballast, boats ferrying horses and carts from one side to the other, even a few hardy swimmers, all of it a very far cry from the almost empty space it has become in recent times. James divided his talk into sections covering a number of topics. He began by looking at the movement of cargoes and goods, first by means of man- horse- and sail-power, but yielding to steam and diesel in more recent times. Specific craft developed to carry goods - the large western barges that were capable of transporting heavy loads (and passengers), as well as the smaller trows. Many craft were powered with large sweeps or often just poled up and down stream - craft had in some cases to be 'pushed' upstream once above Richmond. Others, lighters and spritsail barges for example, often had sails that could be

shipped to pass under bridges. Moving on to the passenger trade, we were shown Rowlandson's *The Miseries of London*, in which foulmouthed watermen accost prospective passengers at Wapping Stairs. The better-off waterside dwellers had their own stairs and, presumably, more biddable watermen. Upstream, tilt-boat passengers might have the luxury of a canvas covering to shelter under. There were recognised ferry points along the river too, few of which remain - these could be used by pedestrians, riders and even carts and horses carrying goods. They were profitable ventures and in time came to be relinquished in favour of toll-bridges, such as those at Putney and Kew. Eventually all of these were taken over by the Metropolitan Board of Works and became the toll-free crossings of today.

Fishing was always a trade - and the double-ended peterboats, with a well admidships to keep the catch fresh, plied their trade into the nineteenth century, although they are now, sadly, extinct. There was some seine-netting, but passing boats and seiners did not mix well. Eels were in abundance and eel-bobbing was one of many trades passed down through families. The transport of ballast in spoon-dredgers was a huge business, balancing the movement of essential coals upriver. More recently, sewage and waste has been moved down the Thames on barges, although it is no longer discharged at sea.

All this activity necessitated boat-building, and the Thames was lined with yards turning out the specialist craft required for the various trades and for the growing leisure market. Thorneycroft was the big employer until it moved to larger premises in Southampton and many others have also gone, including the enormously successful post-war yard of Jack Holt on Putney Embankment. Holt designed numerous light plywood dinghies for hobby sailors and his building remains as a reminder. This topic lead on to the consideration of leisure on the Thames over the years, which ranged from the Boat Race, innumerable rowing clubs, regattas (all ideal opportunities for gambling), steamboat day trips upriver to the delights of Kew and Hampton Court, even floating musical events.

Winding up with a fine William Wiley depiction of the river, James stressed that we should be in no doubt that, despite the picturesque images we had seen, the lot of a Thames worker was grindingly hard year in year out.

*Celia Jones*

## 25 March 2022 (Online via Zoom)

### 'Roman Road Infrastructure South of the Borough Channel: an alternative model'

Becky Haslam of AOC Archaeology

Rebecca Haslam discussed a new interpretation of the Roman roads and their junctions in the area around Borough High Street following the results of excavations over the last 10 years or so. This included some suggested changes in alignments and a 'new' road, one focussed on a ford at Westminster.

Y-junctions, the meeting of 3 roads, have their own Roman goddess, Trivia, a goddess of boundaries, city walls, doorways and of crossroads too. Swan Street, one of the sites in this area in Southwark produced many wells backfilled with special deposits including flagons and dead dogs. It is a very unusual and odd site.

Rebecca suggests that the 'new' road was a dry land route towards the ford and Westminster, constructed before the bridge was built, perhaps just for the conquest period. This fascinating talk suggests that there should be more investigation and analysis where 3 Roman roads meet and of their immediate surroundings.

*Pamela Greenwood*

## 29 April 2022

## 'Wandsworth Common's history revealed by maps'

Philip Boys

Philip's talk began with a brief history of the maps covering the common - from John Rocque's of 1746, showing the area as a much larger tract of land, right up to the Wandsworth Borough Council's map of 2006 revealing how diminished and scattered the remnants are.

He then looked at the northern corner and the lake known as the 'Black Sea', the area which in the nineteenth century was leased from the Spencers by the Wilson family of Price's Candles, who had landscaped it as can be seen in a delightful map of 1868 in which almost every tree is included. After looking at various other features of this area, including the gravel pits either side of Trinity Road, Heathfield Cottages and what is now Neal's Nursery, Phillip then concentrated on a large 1640 map of 'Allfarthing Manor and Wandelsworth Common' now in Surrey Archives. The manor was given to Endymion Porter by his great friend Charles I and the mapmaker was Peter Gardiner, who chose to orient it east-west, with the Thames on the left-hand side, probably because the manor lands adapted best to this format, but causing Philip considerable confusion to begin with.

This map shows in great detail the shipping on the Thames and the Wandle, the various fields and what each produced: willow, wood, grazing land and so on. There are very few houses as this was a mostly agricultural landscape. In order to understand how the map relates to present-day features, Philip began to draw in all the modern roads, trees and areas of water. One striking feature is the fact that the dog-leg bend in Garratt Lane was already a prominent feature in 1640. Several of the present-day lanes - Burntwood, Garratt, Allfarthing, Nightingale - can be seen and, most delightfully, Garratt Green has survived almost intact. Philip also pointed out that the wedge-shaped bits of land all around the common today were more than likely the drove roads (or drift lanes) where cattle and other livestock were driven up to the common-lands to graze.

Finally, Philip looked at a small tract of land of approximately 40 acres marked 'Allfarthin Peece' on the easternmost part of the map, the only bit of Allfarthing Manor on the common. Ultimately this was acquired by Magdalen College, and the eastern part of it is what is now known as the 'Toast Rack' development that so noticeably impinges on the western side of Wandsworth Common.

*Celia Jones*

## 27 May 2022

### 'Native' neckrings?: New research on torcs from south-eastern Roman Britain in their national and European context

Michael Marshall, Senior Finds Specialist, Museum of London Archaeology

Michael Marshall introduced us to Roman neckrings and recent discoveries and ideas about their use and significance. Neckrings belong to an Iron Age tradition, for example the large gold torcs from Snettisham. Previously considered to be 'conspicuously absent' from SE Britain in the Roman period, diligent research among archaeological finds and museum collections has revealed a good number and that they show regional patterns in form and decoration.

Many have been found in burials. While Iron Age torcs might be of precious metals, often very heavy, and most common during the 3rd-1st centuries BC, they become fashionable again in the Roman period from the mid-1st century AD. Now largely made of bronze or brass, occasionally of iron, these neck rings are lighter in weight and more suitable for everyday wear.

Beginning with an in-depth look at the local woman buried around AD 45-65 at Harper Road in Southwark with a cut neck ring laid beside her feet, Michael Marshall compared this find with the variety of others from Southern Britain and beyond. Theories about their reappearance include local people asserting their identity - neck rings were worn by both men and women over a wide area of Europe in areas conquered by the Romans, and possibilities of ritual significance. Regional decoration styles may also match that of pottery, bone weaving combs and that on other types of jewellery, such as bracelets.

*Pamela Greenwood*

## 24 June 2022

### "Putney and Roehampton in 1665: reconstructing a seventeenth-century community"

Dorian Gerhold, WHS

This talk was about research done some years ago by Dorian, using the Hearth Tax records for 1665 to work out who lived in Putney and Roehampton at that time, and how the community functioned. The Hearth Tax records were in some cases full

house records so the information can be matched with data from manor court rolls and parish registers to give occupations, who paid for a pew in church, who received poor relief, and in particular in 1665 who died of Plague. The Nicholas Lane map of 1636 was used to overlay the data and provide a pictorial view.

In 1665 there were 210 households in Putney and 61 in Roehampton. With the number of hearths ranging from 57 in the grand house of The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire down to one in a humble labourers cottage. Both sides of Putney high street had large houses. If the Parish of Putney is compared to others in London it is shown to be in the top tier by houses with more than 10 hearths. Its prosperity was mainly due to being within easy reach of London by water. The largest proportion of employment in Putney, were those involved in river transport. At the time of this survey it was also becoming an important centre of market gardening with strip fields enclosed in the 1640s. Its proximity to London meant it could not avoid the plague in 1665 with 80 deaths recorded, although this was a much smaller proportion of the population compared to deaths in Wandsworth.

Dorian showed a number of paintings and old photos in his talk as a number of houses from 1665 survived into the era of photography. The full details of this research are to be found in Wandsworth paper No. 16. See the publications page for how to purchase.

*Colin Jenkins*

29 July 2022

'A skeletal portal to the past!' on the work of an osteologist and more'

Jelena Beklavac, Curator (Human) Osteology, Museum of London

Jelena has spoken to the society several times before so this talk was an overview of the work of an osteologist through descriptions of a number of archaeological projects in which she has been involved.

She began by explaining how the department of osteology came into being with support from The Wellcome Foundation, who are better known for their interest and support for the history of medicine. One of the earliest sites she was involved with was the Spitalfields Market excavation, from which a very large number of complete skeletons were retained in store. Later excavations have had to undertake sampling due to the lack of storage space, but that brings problems of what selection criteria to use. It is always possible that future advances in analysis may require something that was not kept at the time.

The excavation of the former Royal Mint site was of particular interest because of a plague burial ground from the fourteenth century that can be very precisely dated. This meant that those skeletons found would have died of plague, hence allowing researchers to see if it left any visible evidence in the bones.

Later work that Jelena covered included her analysis of the bodies buried in St Brides Church Fleet Street. Here many coffin plated survived so named individuals could be identified. More recently she was involved in a project on the effect of industrialisation on London's health which she talked about to the society on the 1st April 2016.

*Colin Jenkins*

## 30 September 2022

## 'The Royal Star and Garter Home, Richmond'

Laura Irwin, Museum of Richmond

This talk was written and due to be delivered by Victoria McGrath of Richmond Museum, but at the last minute her colleague Laura Irwin kindly took over the presentation.

We began in the early 18th century with the first mention of the original inn, on land owned by the Earl of Dysart at the top of Richmond Hill, with the suggestion that the name 'Star and Garter' may be derived from the fact that the Earl was a member of the Order of the Garter. Over the years the site developed into a fashionable and imposing hotel, reaching its peak at the end of the 19th century. Thereafter its fortunes waned, and by 1913 the building was for sale. However, in 1916, under the patronage of Queen Mary, the Red Cross reopened it as the Star and Garter Home for Disabled Soldiers.

It rapidly became clear that the luxury hotel was unsuitable and it was demolished and the present building, designed by Edwin Cooper and funded primarily by the British Women's Hospital Committee, opened in 1924. From the start this was to be a 'home' rather than a hospital and most of the patients were long-term residents with spinal injuries; every effort was made towards rehabilitation and the latest medical and therapeutic techniques were employed. The royal surgeon-general Sir Frederick Treves was the first medical director and after the Second World War the pioneering neurologist Dr Ludwig Guttmann of Stoke Mandeville Hospital was closely involved with the Home: in 1948 under Guttmann's auspices residents of the Star and Garter took part in the forerunner of today's paralympic games - and won the archery competition.

From the start members of the royal family have been closely involved with the Home: Queen Elizabeth was the Patron from 1953 and Princess Alexandra is their President. Over the years gyms, baths, occupational and speech therapy treatments were added to the Home, and workshops for shoemaking, clock-making and embroidery were established, as well as a bar, cinema and library. From a life-expectancy of two years for men with spinal injuries in the early years and an average age of 22 in 1916, by 2020 the average age of residents was 88. This change in the care needs of elderly residents, together with changes in care home legislation, made the Richmond home no longer a viable proposition and in 2014 the building was

sold for luxury flats. However, the Star and Garter lives on, still adapting to its residents' needs, and is now successfully re-housed in three separate locations at Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe.

*Celia Jones*

## 28 October 2022

### 'Archaeological human remains from the River Thames: perspectives from Barnes to Battersea'

Dr Nichola Arthur

Dr Nichola Arthur, now an anthropologist at the Natural History Museum, gave an overview of the hundreds of human remains, mainly crania found in the river Thames and on the foreshore during the last couple of hundred years. The majority date to the Bronze and Iron Ages.

She discussed how the bodies might have got there and when, the people's age at death and the preponderance of males. Until recently, mostly crania have been retrieved, particularly by dredgers in the past, but now finders are more systemic and are spotting other bones and even teeth. As part of her research, she has been matching up cuts, marks and holes in the head with the weapons or tools that might been used and considering the types of attack and killing as well as other aspects of the lives of these people in the past. The last part of her talk focussed on local finds, from Barnes to Battersea, and the concentration of discoveries in Putney and Barn Elms.

*Pamela Greenwood*

## 25 November 2022

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

### The Visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, by Neil Robson

First was Neil Robson, who, in George IV Goes to Edinburgh, celebrated the bicentenary of George IV's visit to Edinburgh in August 1822, which was organised with great enthusiasm by the king and Sir Walter Scott, and greeted with similar, rather unexpected enthusiasm in Edinburgh. There was a levée, a drawing room and a state procession. The king revelled in the chance to wear 'exotic' costume, but the success of the visit - the generally perceived 'Scottishness' of the event, the display of the royal regalia, the rehabilitation of clan tartans - was a game changer and left a lasting legacy in Scotland.

## The Westminster Terminus Railway (planned), by Nigel Black

Nigel Black spoke on the Westminster Terminus Railway planned to run between Clapham and Westminster and the subject of numerous acts of Parliament during the 1850s and beyond, both enabling and then cancelling the project (several were not repealed until 2013). The 1848 Exclusion Zone decreed that there were to be no new termini in central London and this effectively scuppered the plan, but in fact the Zone was breached several times very soon afterwards). It would seem that the only existing evidence of the project is Wandsworth Common Station.

## New Light on Old Finds, by Pamela Greenwood

In her talk, New Light on Old Finds, Pamela Greenwood described the re-examination and re-interpretation of several of the Stone Age finds from Wandsworth. A piece of metal (similar to an item excavated in Brentford) can now be identified as a handle for a whip or goad after comparing it to illustrations on contemporary coins. Parts of a rotary quern found at the Barn Elms dig of 1974 seem now to have been deliberately and very thoroughly destroyed and spread about and their provenance now established as from Spilsbury in Lincolnshire, rather than Lodsworth in Sussex.

## Newly Discovered Images of Putney and Wandsworth, by Dorian Gerhold

Finally Dorian Gerhold showed Newly Discovered Images of Putney, including a very early photograph of the original Putney Station (looking very like the present Barnes Station), the Tomalin family of Cambalt Road enjoying a lively game of bowls and the Putney builder William Bishop with his wife and family. A watercolour of 1823 now in the V&A depicted Charles Bicknell's house on Putney Heath. Dorian also found new images from recent saleroom catalogues, eBay, the London Metropolitan Archives and even a direct email with a picture, dated 1846, showing a view probably drawn from an upstairs window in Miss Lewis's School in Werter Road.

*Celia Jones*