Battle and District Historical Society

JOURNAL

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BATTLE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1950 to encourage the knowledge and study of local history within Battle and the surrounding area, through:-

A Winter Programme of illustrated lectures by specialists in their subjects. Lectures take place in St. Mary's Church Hall in Battle at 7.30 pm on selected Fridays from October to March.

A Programme of day or half day visits to places of historic or architectural interest.

An Annual Commemoration Lecture of the Battle of Hastings 1066 and participation in a service in St. Mary's Church.

A free annual Journal with reports on lectures and visits.

Free admission to the Battle Museum of Local History, and access to the Society's Library that is housed in the museum.

Membership of the Society's Research Group in the active study of all aspects of local history. No experience is necessary, new members are especially welcome.

Publication of local history guides.

The Society is affiliated to the Sussex Record Society.

To join the Society complete the application form on the end page.

Battle and District Historical Society

Charity No.292593

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Vice Presidents- Mr. J F C Springford CBE, MA
Miss. M Millar MA
Dr. D Nicol

Committee 2007-8

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Miss. M Millar
Dr. D Nicol
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Mr. J Springford

Chairman's Report 2007-8

I became Chairman of the Society at its last AGM and begin by recording my warm thanks to the members of the Committee all of whom have been most helpful in carrying forward the work of the Society.

Special mention must be made of Julie Ede who has been the indefatigable Lecture Co-ordinator for eight years. She has therefore been mainly responsible for the programme of excellent lectures we have enjoyed in the new century. Sadly due to ill health she is no longer able to carry on in this role but fortunately is willing to continue to be a member of the Committee.

Malcolm Stocker my predecessor who has been most generous with his time and knowledge in helping me has volunteered to act as Lecture Co-ordinator for the year 2009-10 while continuing to edit this Journal.

Joanne Lawrence to our regret wishes to retire from the Committee. As our Publicity Officer she has been highly successful in getting our activities reported in the local press. She with our Vice-Chairman Trevor Devon and Nick Hollington have organised the successful programme of visits described elsewhere in this Journal. We are grateful to Trevor Devon and Nick Hollington for being willing to continue to arrange and promote this programme which involves a lot of hard work. The Committee would like to reiterate that these visits are open to non-members although members will pay less for these enjoyable outings!

The thanks of all members are owed to the three officers who do the essential work without which we could not continue. Diane Braybrooke as Membership Secretary is always to be depended on in keeping our Membership records up to date and reliable and with suggestions for recruiting more members. Neil Cleophane-Cameron our Secretary is exemplary as a producer of Minutes and keeping the Chairman up to date. David Sawyer our Treasurer manages our finances so well that at a time of rapidly rising prices we are able to keep our subscription at the bargain rates of £10 single or £15 double.

Two men who gave notable service to the Society, Alan Denny a former Chairman and Peter Moore who was the re-invigorator of our Research Group, have died this year. On behalf of the Society I expressed our sympathy to their families. We remember with gratitude their contribution.

In January we were able to congratulate our President Professor John Gillingham on being made a Fellow of the British Academy. In March at the end of the lecture programme for 2007 Alan Kinnear who had acted as our volunteer recording engineer for some twenty years retired. His generosity skill and exertions for so long a time clearly called for recognition and he was presented with a case of wine which he has assured us has given him much pleasure. The occasion was made particularly pleasant by the speech of our Vice-President Dr. Nicol in making the presentation.

It has been another successful year but as I think I am the oldest member of the Committee I feel I can add a word of concern. The Committee and the Society as a whole do not have enough young (or at any rate younger!) members. New members of any age are always welcome but it would be encouraging if we could be reinforced by youth. We live in or near a place famous in history and we owe it to our ancestors and to our successors that Battle is aware of its past in the future.

Richard Moore Chairman


CLV

IDENTITY AND STATUS IN THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY
THE ICONOGRAPHIC AND ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

Dr Michael Lewis 12 October 2007

The purpose of this lecture was, Dr Lewis informed his audience, to examine the extent to which the designer of the Bayeux Tapestry had used artifacts copied from earlier sources to distinguish between various individuals. There are 58 scenes on both sides of the Channel, 627 characters, 33 buildings, 32 ships, 738 animals, birds and beasts and other examples of life in the second half of the 11th Century, when, it is believed, the Tapestry had been produced. He informed his audience that the Tapestry had been worked in 9 conjoined strips of embroidered linen and measures 68 metres.

His slides illustrated the difference between the English who were depicted with a moustache and the Normans with shaven heads, although this distinction was not consistent throughout the Tapestry, for example Eustace, a Norman, is shown with a moustache. The clothing also helped to illustrate the status of the individual, with the diagonal line, tassels and square brooches possibly being copied from ecclesiastical contemporary figures. The weapons shown were mainly broadaxes and round shields illustrating an Anglo-Saxon origin and only the Normans were depicted carrying bows. The use of horn for drinking is also an illustration of an English custom. There are 177 horses in the main frieze of which 163 horses are Norman, 11 dogs and a hawk. We were told The Domesday Book indicates that a hawk was valued at £10, so it is likely that only the elite could afford them.

Dr Lewis told us that it was likely, in his opinion, the tapestry had been manufactured in different workshops. The outline would have been sketched by a designer, possibly using illustrations from manuscript exemplars and it was then left for the embroiderers to complete the details, possibly again using borders from a "model book". He was also surprised that there were no depictions of any previous battles. Possibly Bishop Odo, who is usually acclaimed to be the instigator of the Tapestry, had indicated exactly what he expected it to portray.

It was fairly obvious from very early on in his lecture that Dr Lewis had put a tremendous amount of work in obtaining many statistics from this well known tapestry. In my opinion, the audience was left gasping at the amount of information he had then given us.

Diane Braybrooke

WITHOUT LET OR HINDRANCE — The History of Passports

Martin Lloyd — **26 October 2007**

An entertaining anecdotal and informative talk Martin Lloyd, who spent twenty-three years in HM Immigration Service, traced the history of the passport from its early origins to the present day EU document.

The word passport has obscure origins; was it derived from the French words 'passer' and 'porte'? When the first passport was issued cannot be established, presumably not before the invention of writing. There are references to passport-like documents in Ancient Egypt and in the Bible and the Roman Emperors issued 'tractorium' that permitted unhindered and speedy travel for their messengers throughout the Empire.

The Saxon and Norman Kings controlled immigration and emigration into England by issuing a King's Licence which proclaimed that the bearer had the personal permission of the monarch to travel. Magna Carta recognised the importance of international trade, Clause 48 decreed 'all merchants shall have safe and secure conduct to go out of, and come into England and stay there and pass, as well by land and by water'. Clause 50 extended this right to ordinary people. Its effect however was limited as John and succeeding monarchs did not feel bound by it. The King's Licence was difficult to enforce and easily evaded by using uncontrolled minor ports.

Many early documents were not called passports but 'Laissez-passer' or safe conduct pass and by the fifteenth century the pass or 'sauf conduit' was recognised and honoured. Whereas a passport was issued by a country to permit an inhabitant to travel, the safe conduct pass was issued by a country to its enemy representative for the purpose of negotiations. This eventually led to the establishment of foreign ambassadors and the concept of international law. The word 'passport' is first found in English law in 1548 regulations regarding soldiers during war.

The opening up and expansion of the known world in the seventeenth century resulted in a greater use of passports which led to the setting-up of authorities to check that travellers were properly documented. In England this authority was the Clerks of Passage. When the French Republic was proclaimed in 1792 passports and similar controls were swept away as contrary to the ideals of the revolution. However this was soon found to be an impracticable concept and passports for internal and external travel were reintroduced three years later. In contrast a century later a British

traveller could circumnavigate the world with a single handwritten document with a description such as, 'English gentleman travelling on the Continent with his wife and servants'. It was the Industrial Revolution that caused Britain to rethink its passport system. No longer the privilege of the few but a necessity for the merchant middle class it eventually led to the replacement of the handwritten document with a standard pre-printed form. In the Far East, China and Japan were closed societies and had no need for a passport system for travel abroad but did control internal travel of the population.

By the end of the nineteenth century passports were still pre-printed single sheets of paper with handwritten details of the bearer. Only in the twentieth century did Britain add details of age and occupation. Such documents could become obscured by frontier endorsements and easily forged. The invention of affordable photography with the popularity of the 'Carte de visite' at the end of the century led to the introduction of a photograph of the bearer fixed to the passport. The first British passport designed to include this was issued in 1915. After the Great War the League of Nations called for a uniformed style of passports issued to identical standards. In 1921 Britain produced the classic dark blue passport booklet which was to remain in production with modifications for seventy years. Described as 'perfection itself' it was recommended by the League as model for other countries to adopt.

More recently the European Union has aimed to do away with the differing passports issued by member countries and replace them with a common EU version. New developments, machine readable passports, so called bio-data information will inevitably bring changes to the present-day passport which should ease travel while enhancing security at frontiers.

On balance though taking into account their qualities and faults the speaker rather liked passports.

Malcolm Stocker

TSAR NICHOLAS II AND HIS FAMILY

Fr. T Wilson 9 November 2007

Letters, diaries and memoirs of these times from the family and their household and friends, presented by Father Terence Wilson, and his team of experts and readers.

The manuscripts dealt with the days of 1917, when Tsar Nicholas was 48, Alexandra, the Tsarina, 44grand duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Anastasia and Marie were 21,19,17 and 15 respectively, and the Tsarovitch, Alexis was 12. None of the readings were political but dealt with the daily lives, feelings and activities of the family and their household during the period.

We were shown the happenings of that year through the eyes of the Tsar, in his diaries, the Tsarina in her letters, and snippets of letters from the children. There were readings from the diary of Tatiana Botkin, daughter of Evgeny Sergeyevich Botkin, the palace doctor, as she told of the events as they were related to her by her father. There were letters and diaries of Anna Vyrubova, known as Anya to the family. Pierre Gilliard and Sydney Gibbes, tutors to Alexis and the grand duchesses, wrote of their reactions to the situation, and described the daily life of the family. John Hanbury Williams, the British military attaché, wrote of his departure, and remembered happier days. He described the Tsar as lined and white, with black lines under his eyes. As he left, the Tsar said to him, 'Remember, nothing matters except beating Germany'.

We started in the New Year of 1917 when the Tsar was Tsarkoe Selo, where he suffered a nervous collapse. He stayed there because he loved the quiet and felt peaceful in the woods.
Anya wrote that patriotism was practically extinct, and morale lower than in any other country. Tatiana Botkin, wrote of the riots in Petrograd. Her father confirmed all the rumours when he returned home from the palace, and said that it was far worse than 1905. The doctor needed to stay at the palace because the children had measles. Alarming news reached them from Petrograd and they were all very worried. He admired the Tsarina greatly for her courage.

On 22nd February General Alexeyev sent a telegram from Headquarters summoning the Tsar. He was there for eight days during which the revolution

The Imperial Family of Russia.

Standing at the back are the Grand Duchess Maria and the Tsarina Alexandra. Seated at the front are (left to right) the Grand Duchess Olga, Tsar Nicholas II, the Grand Duchess Anastasia, the Tsarevich Alexei and the Grand Duchess Tatiana.

broke out. The Tsar was told that he must abdicate 'in order to save Russia and preserve troops at the front'.

During this time the Empress had no news of Nicholas. She was said by Dr Botkin to be beside herself with worry, and Pierre Gilliard wrote that no-one could know what the Empress suffered. Revolutionaries surrounded the palace, and it was feared that they would break in. On March 3rd, news came of the abdication. 'Mama cried terribly' said Marie, but there was no bitterness or resentment. She said 'All is finished for Russia'. Officers of the palace guard were faithful to the last.
Lili Dehn, a great friend of the Empress, described the situation. There were rowdy drunken soldiers, and they could hear gunfire. The Empress was kind to her, and helped her to make up her bed as she had been taught by Queen Victoria. Even at this time, there were mauve lilacs in the room which were sent daily from the south of France.

The Tsar returned to Tsrakoe Selo on 9th March. He wrote in his diary: 'Arrived at 11.30. What a change! Sentries everywhere, even in the hall. All the children were still in bed so we had lunch and dinner in the playroom' Pierre Gilliard wrote that the Tsar's return was a day of rejoicing. It was a great comfort to be together so that they could share their troubles. The Tsar was very tranquil, and became the anchor which supported all the others.

On Maundy Thursday Count Benckendorff, the marshall of the court, wrote that family and friends kept Easter, including the Good Friday procession and midnight mass, and invited the commandant and chief of the guard to take dinner with them. At dinner the Tsar presented each of the 135 servants with porcelain eggs.

The family became involved in gardening. Pierre Gilliard describes how they created a garden in May and by June had many vegetables. The Tsar helped the servants to create their own vegetable garden. He was a very outdoor person, and spent time cutting wood for the next winter.

Count Benckendorff describes an entertainment which Alexei gave, showing films on a cinematograph he had been given by Pathé News. He describes Alexei as very intelligent, with a great deal of character.

On 7th July the family were removed to Tobolsk in Siberia. Anya wrote that they behaved as if they were going on holiday. The journey took six days,

ending with a river steamer. Many people turned out to welcome them. They were eventually installed in the governor's house. The Empress carried out a clandestine correspondence with friends, including Anya, letters being smuggled out by devoted friends. She wrote that Nicholas was marvellous, the children good and brave, and Alexei was an angel. She said 'one by one we lose everything.' She wrote that she was knitting stockings for the children, and that the Tsar's trousers were faded and darned. At Christmas the children all wrote letters to Anya, thanking her for letters and presents.

On the Tsar's feast day, 6th December, he was given three pies, one of which he gave to the men of the 4th Regiment who were on duty. Sydney Gibbes described a farce which the children acted and which caused great hilarity. He said it was vulgar and very funny, and that it was the last happiness that the Empress ever enjoyed.

Pierre Gilliard described the Christmas festivities. The Empress and the grand duchesses had been preparing gifts for all the household and servants – the Empress had knitted them all waistcoats. They went to Church on Christmas day.

Father Wilson allowed us to read other letters, and to see his album of photographs of the family.

Jill Clare

SIGNIFICENT ASTRONOMICAL EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

Guy Hurst 11 January 2008

Mr Hurst started his lecture with a slide showing the universe as it was presumed to be in 1066. He said that it is impossible to talk about astronomical events in the Anglo-Saxon era without going back to the earliest recorded astronomical history, which started in about 4000BC. In those days astronomy, astrology and religion were closely linked together. The Sumerians and the Chinese were the first people to keep records of their observations. The Sumerians knowledge was quite amazing; they knew by simple observation, the paths of the planets and they used the movement of the suns shadows to accurately predict the seasons for their agriculture. Incredibly they also worked out that the earth had a wobble. By 2000 BC the Sumerians and the Babylonians had comprehensive records written on clay tablets that are easily readable today. China also has wonderfully accurate records of the skies and they were especially interested in things in the sky that moved. The Egyptians brought out the first calendars with twelve months in a year, twenty-four hours in a day and a system of water clocks that gave reasonably accurate time.

Religion was a very important factor. Aristotle, in 300BC, believed, as most people did, that the earth was at the centre of the universe, with everything else revolving around it. By 800AD Cathedral schools all over Europe were thinking about cosmology and astronomy and they were beginning to seriously threaten long held religious views. By just after 1000AD astrolabes were being used to measure the altitude of heavenly bodies and a scale of brightness had been worked out for objects seen by the naked eye.

Then on the 1st May 1006 an object suddenly appeared in the constellation of Lupus, which was the brightest thing, other than the sun, that had ever been seen. The Egyptians recorded that lights were not needed at night and people were very afraid. It was extensively recorded in China, India, Egypt and Europe. With the knowledge that we have today we know that it was a supernova. Remnants of it can still be seen today and it is known as the Crab Nebula. It gradually faded but could be seen for nearly two years. In 1054 another 'new star' appeared in the constellation of Taurus. It was another supernova, and again people were afraid, superstitious and saw these objects as dire omens.

In April 1066 the Chinese, who already knew what comets were, noted a new one appearing in the constellation of Pegasus. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles state that 'all over England the sign was such as men have never seen before in the Heavens. They are sore afraid'.
The orbit of the comet, that is now known as Halley's comet, is a 75 year one, and the comet came nearer to earth in 1066 than it has been during the last century. It was very clearly seen with the naked eye, even in daylight, and its tail was the size of 'the diameter of four moons'. By July of 1066 it would have been directly overhead but by the 14th October 1066 with the sun rising at 6.10am and setting at 6.56pm the comet would have been too faint to see. However, it obviously made a big impression as it figures quite prominently in the Bayeaux Tapestry.

These last two occurrences would have been clearly in the minds of the soldiers on both sides as they settled down the night before the battle and some would have even remembered all three. Who knows how fearful and superstitious it made them?

Joanne Lawrence

ANGLO-SAXON MANUSCRIPTS

Michelle P Brown 25th January 2008

Our distinguished speaker - Professor of Medieval Manuscripts at London University and formerly (for 18 years) Curator of Illuminated Manuscripts at the British Library - invited us to fasten our seatbelts for a 'romp' through 500 years of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. What an exhilarating ride she gave us!

The manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon period (app. 600-1066A.D.) grew out of the "rich preconditioning soil" of Roman, Post Roman and Celtic Britain. Although Pre-Christian Celtic and Germanic societies possessed a highly developed oral culture, basic writing systems developed - as a sort of 'exploded alphabet' - from contact with the Roman literary tradition, even though the latter was somewhat limited in Britain to commemorative or administrative tablets or letters from soldiers). These writing systems-such as **'ogam'** and **'runes'**- were largely used for talismanic purposes.

It was the Christians who came to celebrate 'the Word' (Logos), but it was not until the first Christian Emperor Constantine that **'the Book'** (Codex) "came out of the closet" to become a focal point of Christian worship. Christianity was first introduced to Britain under the Roman Empire, but it was Pope Gregory's sending of St Augustine (in 597) to convert the new Germanic tribes that had settled in the South-East that sparked the flowering of the English Church. Meanwhile, in the 560s, the Irish prince-abbot Columba had started the island monastery of Iona in Scotland to convert the 'Scotti' (meaning the Irish) to Christianity. Both these missions promoted Christianity through the written word and had expert scribes. They formed two traditions, known somewhat oversimplistically as 'Roman' (Lindisfarne) and 'Celtic' (Iona) manuscript styles which, however, in time fused into what is known as an **'Insular'** manuscript style for the whole of Britain. This was particularly after doctrinal differences between the missions were settled by the Synod of Whitby in 664 A.D.

The most remarkable examples of the Insular style are the **Lindisfarne Gospels** - made singlehandedly on Holy Island by Bishop Eadfrith in dedication to St Cuthbert –and the famous **Book of Kells** , made somewhat later in remote Iona. These beautiful works were richly illustrated by the slides Professor Brown showed us.

Such works were huge in size, some needing as many as six men to carry them, and would begin with a decorative **'carpet page'** - looking much like a rug – and then an **'incipit' page** ornamenting the opening words. (A famous example, the great 'Chi-Rho' page of the Lindisfarne Gospels, was shown to us). Books were ornamented and illuminated particularly because most people couldn't read. They were rather drawn to books as icons, the images of the Divine. As Pope Gregory the Great put it: "Through images the illiterate read."

The early script was large: 'uncthial' (one inch letters) or 'half-uncthial', and largely inscribed and painted by goose-quill on vellum. However Eadfrith invented a variant of the lead pencil to draw the designs in reverse on the back of the vellum then paint them against a 'lightbox' of candles using a palette of 90 colours formed from plant extracts.

'Communities of reading' sprang up beyond Iona and Lindisfarne, notably in Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, where Bede, in 736, wrote his 'History of the English Church' in a cursive script using motifs. However most works remained liturgical in nature such as the famous Lichfield and Vespasian Psalters and the 'gold-dripping' Stockholm Codex Aureus (all from Kent).

But they were not just seen as ornaments. "Each word written" wrote Cassiodorus , "is a wound on Satan's body." Princes would have these books carried into battle to show that God was on their side. One has to remember, Professor Brown reminded us, that this was 'the spiritual front line'

Such works did not remain in Britain. Many reached as far as Rome and Constantinople, promoting a high reputation for learning for the 'Insular' British church. With the coming of the Vikings in the 9th century, however, Britain looked thereafter more to the North, to Scandinavia or the North-men (later the Normans) with works also in old English or Norse. Thus Professor Brown closed by hoping we would invite her back for a 'Part 2' dealing with later Anglo-Saxon and early Norman manuscripts. This is surely an offer we can't refuse? She also suggested that those with a strong interest in the subject visit the British Library and follow her seminars on the British Library website.

Nick Hollington

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD.

Dr. Michael Jones. 8th February 2008.

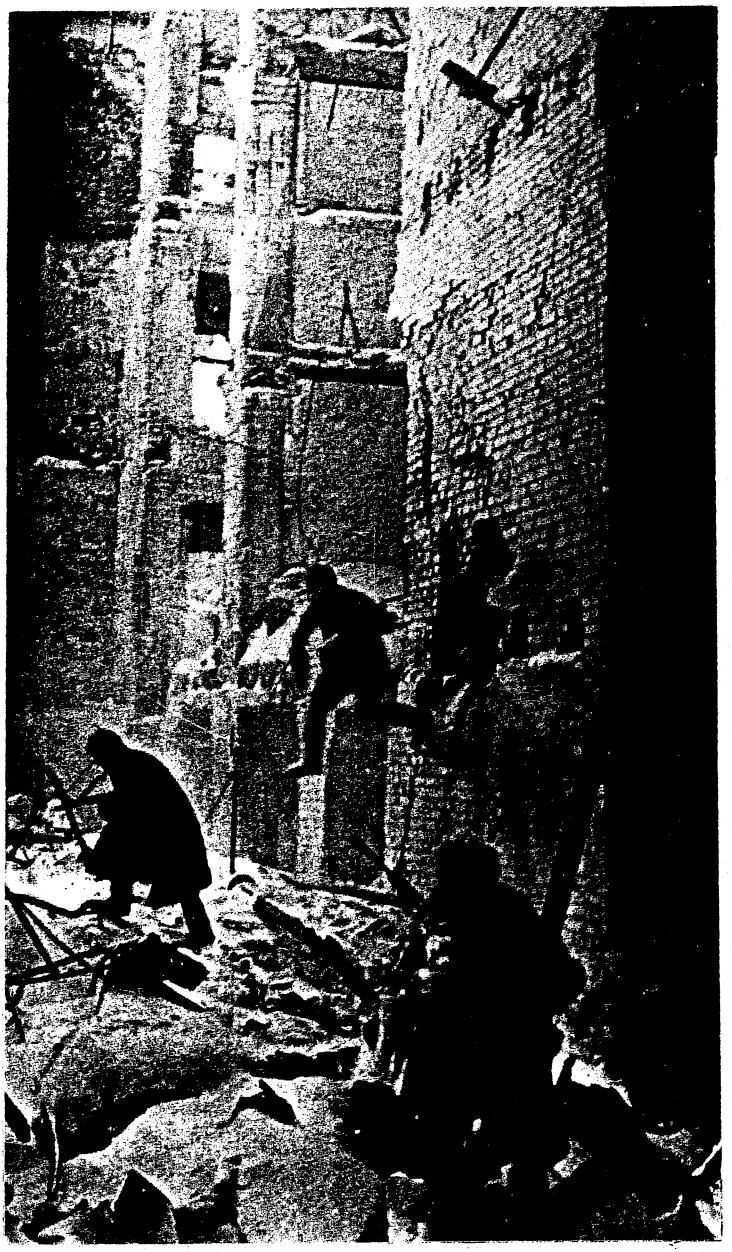
Doctor Jones addressed the Society on the subject of the Battle of Stalin-Grad, with particular emphasis on the lives of the civilians who were trapped within the city throughout the siege and whose experiences were as traumatic as the soldiers who defended it.

In 1941 Stalingrad was an industrial city and an important railway junction;for some obscure reason it had been considered as a suitable refuge for evacuees and displaced adults. In the space of five years its population had doubled to almost a million and no plans had been made to re-evacuate. This meant that any conflict in, or around, the city would have devastating consequences for the inhabitants ; how much was revealed by the lecture.

The Battle was won by the Russians in February 1943 and was rightly perceived at the time as being the turning point of World War 2. Hitler's finest army- the 6th- which had triumphed in France , the Low Countries and in Ukraine and which the Fuhrer himself proclaimed "could storm the gates of heaven" was decisively defeated. The finest fighting machine of the twentieth century was totally overwhelmed by the stubborn resistance of a city whose collapse and surrender was anticipated from the first day. The rout of the German Army was complete and their fate disastrous. Of 95,000 captured only 5,000 returned; the number of dead has never been confirmed.

For its part the Russian 62nd Army was demoralised even before the battle began but found within itself reserves of courage and tenacity- and a spiritual loyalty to Mother Russia-that finally triumphed. The plight of the defenders was "beyond desperation"; it was remarked that even rats and wild dogs had fled across the Volga. The survival was described as "more than a victory of successful tactics - rather an outstanding triumph of the human spirit."

The battle had started in the hot summer heat of 1942 but had dragged on though totally apocalyptic months;- the 14th September when the Germans broke into the city and the 14th October when they launched a massive attack on the factory district. On 23rd August they had unleashed terrifying raids on residential areas, specifically targeting civilians. 65000 residents were killed in this deliberate and successful attempt to create panic and a collapse of law and order, and ,of course, morale. As many people died on that day than as at Hiroshima. By the end of the siege a population of between 800000 and 1 million had been reduced to a statistical invisibility. By December the winter temperature was 40 degrees below and the



German Army suffered appallingly. They were ill equipped for the Russian winter and supplies were inadequate.
In retrospect Hitler should have won easily; the odds were entirely in his favour. Had he not been his own military genius he might have won. His Commander, Von Paulus was a distinguished General but fatally hesitant. Rommel, a far better one was feared and respected but had been shunted off to North Africa and Von Mannstein, who had been victorious in Russia in early 1942 had been moved from the Crimea to Leningrad. With him went the heavy artillery that could have flattened the city and its defenders.
Doctor Jones has written a new book "Stalingrad- How the Red Army triumphed" which concentrates on "Battle psychology" rather than the campaign itself. He had spoken to surviving witnesses and had been deeply moved and inspired by their experiences. They told him that a soldier's life expectancy was measured in minutes. Many spoke of a spiritual transformation, casting off communism and reverting to a dependence on religion. Particular respect was paid by the veterans to the women of the city who had served, selflessly , as doctors, nurses and telegraphists and to young boys who had fought alongside the men.
Fighting had been intense - from building to building and floor by floor. Landmarks were obliterated overnight to the extent that people lost all sense of location. Children were separated from their mothers and whole families starved.
As a tribute Great Britain presented the city with the Sword of Stalingrad. This was felt a more fitting tribute than the George Cross which had been suggested but vetoed, as inappropriate, by the King.
The city was not expected to be rebuilt after the war but a sudden decision by Stalin at the Teheran Conference reversed this ,so that, like its twin town Coventry, it has risen, Phoenix like, once more.
One or two anecdotes stay in the mind. Dr. Jones recalled the Russian Commander's dog playing happily, at the height of battle, with an elephant that had escaped from the zoo; and the fascinating revelation that the Germans had somehow tunnelled beneath the Conference room at Teheran and packed it with explosives. Within an hour of the meeting between Churchill,Roosevelt and Stalin the plot was discovered. !

David Sawyer.

LINKING THE PAST: CONTINUITY OR CHANGE AT BURSET ANCIENT FARM

Steve Dyer 22 February 2008

Mr. Dyer began by explaining that the Butser Farm Project was not about ordinary archaeology but about experimental archaeology. Butser Ancient Farm was founded in 1972 by experimental archaeologist Peter J Reynolds and named after the original site of an Iron Age settlement on Butser Hill, a few kilometres from Petersfield, Hants. It is an open-air research laboratory where the ancient world is being explored by full-scale experiment. It was set up to carry out two main areas of research, one into farming and two into living, between 1000 BC and 410 AD. This covers the Iron Age and Romano-British era. It offers educational facilities to schools, colleges and universities and also lastly for the public to see and experience life in Romano-Celtic Briton. The original site at the top of the steep Butser Hill, which had traces of Iron Age roundhouses, was abandoned in 1976 because of erosion of the site. They moved the project down hill to make it easier for the public to visit and in 1991 it was moved 5 km away to an even more suitable site at Bascomb Copse, Chalton, where it is today.

There is an arable area where ancient crops are grown, using a variety of cereals and plants known to have been cultivated in the Iron Age. Wattle fences are used and the seeds are carefully measured on planting, the crop is measured again on harvesting and so knowledge of yields is obtained. By using evidence from bones and woollen fragments, they have been able to trace the descendants of ancient farm animals and you can see both Moufflon and Soay sheep grazing on the farm.

The roundhouse at the second site was built to further the experiments. Evidence of circular structures has been available to archaeologists for a long time and the Butser team based their first house on facts from excavations at Primperne, Dorset. They learnt many things, such as the pitch of the roof; in lowland Briton it has been found that the optimum pitch of the roof is between 40 and 50 degrees. Anything under 40 degrees gets sodden and collapses under its own weight and anything over 50 degrees lets the water run off too quickly so that it forms a lake around the house which causes damp to penetrate the daub and wattle. In upland Briton the pitch is steeper to shed snow. In July 2006 there was a period of gales and torrential rain

and the largest round house was badly damaged. It was known that some of the posts were rotting and it was planned to replace them but the storm damaged the whole structure. It was then decided to construct another roundhouse at the third and permanent site. The previous building had thrown up all kinds of unanticipated problems and this time using the plans from an excavation at Longbridge Deverill, near Salisbury, they had a much clearer picture of Iron Age technology. The excavation showed the house to be 15 metres in diameter and it had been dated about 600 BC. There was no evidence of domestic use, so it is presumed it was a meeting place. The posts used weighed about ¼ of a ton, the bases were charred and any other wood used was debarked. There is an outer wall of daub and wattle and there is a large porch to the front. The floor is stamped chalk in the house and stone in the porch. Most of the thatch from the old house has been re-used and the pictures show it to be an impressive building. A fire is kept burning 365 days a year with the smoke venting through the thatch,

In 2002 the Discovery TV Channel offered to film the building of a Roman villa, using authentic materials but using modern machinery; it was to be based on a plan of a villa in Sparsholt, near Winchester. A single storey 'corridor' villa has been built with buildings at either end. There is a hypocaust underneath and the walls are made of 250 tons of flints and 30 tons of lime mortar. The roof is of wood beams with clay tiles held in place with iron nails. It was a wet summer and the main walls being built of the flint and lime mortar, took many months to dry out. The upper parts of the walls are daub and wattle to reduce weight. After much experimentation it has been found that the best way to vent the smoke from the hypocaust is through clay flues going vertically up the walls and then placed diagonally to the outside just below the daub and wattle, which would otherwise crack with the heat.

The research programme continues today and the site is open to visitors, who as well as looking at the buildings can try some of the crafts and skills needed to live in the Romano-Celtic world.

Joanne Lawrence

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ACOUSTIC EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Dr. Richard N Scarth 14 March 2008

With the aid of rare photographs Dr Scarth traced the history of the Acoustic Mirrors that were installed along the Kent coast, the Thames estuary and the North East coast of England between 1918-1930 to give an early warning against attack by aircraft.

During WW1 on the Western Front, Royal Engineer officers carried out the dangerous task of Gun Sound Ranging, the placing of microphones in No-Man's land to enable the positions of the enemy artillery batteries to be plotted. One of these officers was Lt. (later Major) William S Tucker. Born in 1877 he was at age 25 a lecturer at Imperial College and became Ph.D. at 30. He volunteered to join the Engineers at the outbreak of war. He developed a sensitive microphone later known as the Tucker microphone, which it was soon realised could be used to locate approaching aircraft.

The early aircraft detectors were basically large ears consisting of four trumpet shaped sound collectors arranged a few feet apart that could be moved vertically and horizontally to track the clearest sound.They were operated by three men, two with stethoscopes connected to the back of the trumpets, one man searched the vertical plane and one the horizontal plane. When both obtained the clearest sound the third man recorded the position and passed the information on to the linked searchlights. Portable acoustic trumpet equipment was developed which remained in operational use to the early years of WW2.

A second type of detector was the Disc detector. A photograph taken in 1918 showed one built at Broadstairs (later re-located to Hythe) and it was here that an Acoustic Research Station was set up headed by Major Tucker. After the War the now Dr Tucker was appointed Director of the Air Defence Experimental Establishment at Biggin Hill where experiments continued to improve the range and accuracy of aircraft detection systems. This was necessary to give the defending fighters time to intercept given the increasing speed of aircraft.

Experiments had shown that when a sound proofed disc (of reinforced concrete) picked up the sound of an aircraft's engine it collected at the centre of the disc. By placing a microphone at the back of the disc it was possible to calculate the bearing of the aircraft.

At Romney Marsh in 1924 thirty two vertical searching discs were built sixteen along the coast edge and the other half three miles inland. All the microphones were connected up to HQ at Newchurch where a light lit up on a map table indicating the position of the incoming aircraft. This early warning system was not a complete success and was abandoned in 1932.

A third type of detectors was Sound Mirrors, concave reinforced concrete structures 15feet, later 20 and 30 feet in diameter. A 15 feet mirror was built at Kilnsea East Yorkshire in WW1 to listen for Zepplins.
Sound was reflected from a concave surface to a focal point in front of the centre of the mirror. Here listening gear was mounted connected to a stethoscope where the man listening could search for the point of focus of the incoming sound. Between the wars early warning stations were built on the Kent coast at North Foreland, Abbots Cliff, Hythe and Denge. These were 20 feet and 30 feet diameter mirrors and to overcome the problem of extraneous noise encountered in the exposed listening position a small chamber was built underneath the mirror for the listening operator.

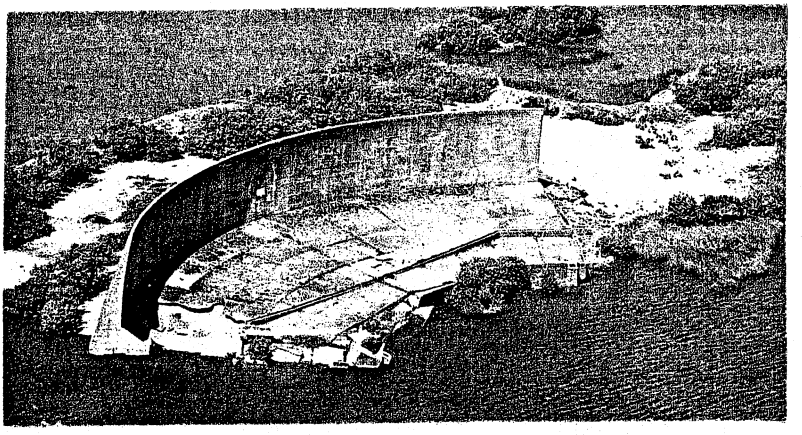
Aircraft engines emit a wide range of sound waves and of these the low frequency long sound waves travel best through the atmosphere. It was found that the larger the listening surface the better the pick up of these waves. In 1930 the largest type of mirror was constructed at Greatstone-on-Sea on Romney Marsh. A strip of reinforced concrete curved in both directions two hundred feet long by twenty six feet high was built. Directional microphones were placed in front along the focal plane connected to a control centre where the bearing of incoming aircraft could be determined up to 35 miles distance.

Initially it had been planned to build a chain of sound mirrors around the south and east coasts but this was abandoned as aircraft speed increased and the advent of Radar made the system obsolete. Even so a mirror was built at Malta to protect the Naval base as late as 1936. A spin off was the control and reporting system which was developed for use with Radar.

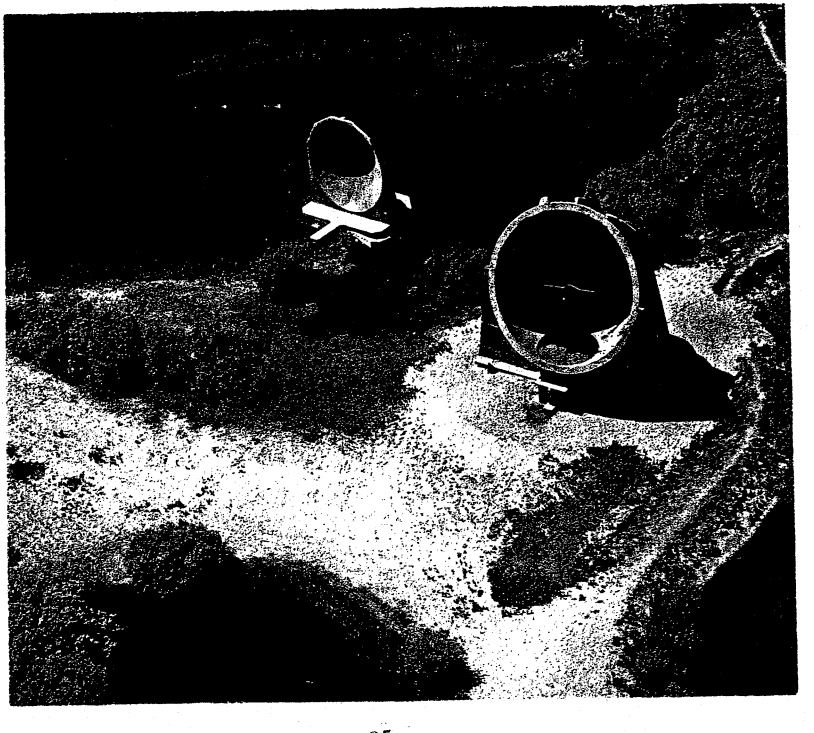
Through land erosion and neglect most sound mirrors have been lost but English Heritage have carried out ground works which have saved the 20 and 30 feet mirrors and the 200 feet sound wall at Greatstone-on-Sea.

Acoustic Mirrors were a brave failure as in the end they did not produce the expected results.

Malcolm Stocker



Sound Mirrors at Greatstone Romney Marsh



"KIPLING'S BOY JACK"

Hugh Miller 28 March 2008

"Why the question mark ?" asked our speaker. He told us all would eventually be revealed.

Rudyard Kipling was, as we all know, a renowned author who, during his career, became acquainted with many eminent people. He was born in Bombay in 1865, the eldest of three children, his sister Alice was born in 1868 and his brother John in 1870. The children spent their childhood in India. However when Alice and Rudyard were old enough to go to school they were brought back to England to be educated. Their parents basically abandoned them at school and returned to India. Whilst at school, which Rudyard hated, it was discovered that he was almost blind. Spectacles solved this problem.

When he was 17 years old, Rudyard left college and returned to India. He was desperate to write and joined the Civil & Military Gazette at a wage of £2. per week. During this period he had several short stories published which enabled him to travel to America and London. It was during one of these visits he met Carrie Belestier and on the 10th January 1892 they were married. Rudyard and Carrie visited Canada and Japan during their honeymoon and eventually decided to buy a large house in Vermont where they had two children, Josephine born in December 1892 and Elsie in 1896. They returned to Torquay and their last child, John was born in a friend's house in Rottingdean on the 17th August 1897. The family went to America in 1899 for the winter where, unfortunately, Josephine became ill with pneumonia and died. The family returned to England and Rudyard never went back to America.

Rudyard bought his first car, of many, but never learnt to drive. He and Carrie wanted a large house in the country it was during a car ride that they found Batemans. They moved in 1902 and lived there all their lives. Rudyard was writing poems and stories continuously, possibly the most well known of these being the "Just So Stories" for children and was at the peak of his career. In 1911 he received his greatest accolade, that of the Nobel Prize for Literature but refused a knighthood from the King. He eventually bought a Rolls Royce car and as he had done with all his cars, named her Duchess.

When John was 10 years old he went to school in Rottingdean and later to Wellington Public School and joined the Officer's Corps. In May 1913 he decided to join the Army although his father had hoped he would join the Navy. He had inherited his father's poor eyesight and the Medical Board refused to enlist him. On the 10th August 1914 John volunteered for the Army but was again refused because of his poor eyesight. Rudyard began enlisting the help of his eminent contacts in an effort to help John and eventually Lord Roberts, who was Commander in Chief of the Irish Guards, gave him a commission in the 2nd Battalion.

War was imminent and Rudyard and Carrie were worried that John might be sent to France. This happened on John's eighteenth birthday. The men marched on consecutive days to Loos from where on the 25th September 1915 John wrote his last letter home, requesting "dog-tags" for a 2nd Lieutenant. The next day saw heavy fighting and John was reported missing – no body was found – within a week Rudyard and Carrie received a letter say he was missing, presumed dead.

Rudyard and Carrie were desperate for news and enlisted all the contacts they could, including the Prince of Wales, in an effort to locate John. They travelled to hospitals and convalescent homes in an attempt to locate anyone with information and even arranged for a leaflet drop by aeroplane over the enemy lines.

Eventually Rudyard and Carrie accepted that John was dead. Rudyard wrote a poem entitled "My Boy Jack", as a memorial to his son (although the family had always called him John).

Our speaker told us that at the end of the war, Rudyard was asked to write many epitaphs for war memorials, including one of the most famous "***Their name liveth for evermore***" and also "***Known unto God***" for the unidentified soldiers. The War Graves Commission searched for five years after the war for bodies and many were reburied in the now famous battlefield cemeteries. John's name is on the Burwash War Memorial and there are wooden crosses in the Church Porch which Rudyard brought back from France after the War Graves Commission had reburied the bodies.

Rudyard died of a perforated ulcer on the 18th January 1936, two days before his friend King George V. He is buried in Poets Corner in Westminster Abbey.

In 1992 the War Graves Commission announced that a body of an unnamed 1st Lieutenant in the Irish Guards had been reburied and had been assumed to be that of John Kipling. The question arises whether John had been promoted from 2nd to 1st Lt. but the announcement had not yet appeared in the London Gazette. It is also possible that the War Graves Commission made an error with the original Map Reference as John's last whereabouts was near the St Mary Advances Dressing Station outside Loos. However the name on the gravestone is now that of John Kipling but without possibly a DNA test, it will never be known for sure if it is he.

So "Kipling's Boy Jack" was in fact his beloved son John. The original question was answered.

Hugh Miller concluded his fascinating story by reading "IF" by Rudyard Kipling. It is an indication of the depth of information given to us that left the audience so deep in thought that only a couple of questions were asked.

Diane Braybrooke

Rudyard Kipling

BDHS EXCURSIONS

Geffrye Museum 4th December 2007

The Geffrye Museum in Shoreditch is a small jewel of a museum housed in an elegant 18th Century house behind high walls in an oasis of tranquil lawns. The museum specialises in domestic interiors of middle class homes in a sequence of rooms from 1600 to the present day and captures the essence of the English interior style within a socio-historic framework. In December each year the rooms are decorated in authentic festive styles which reflect the changes in Christmas customs both old and new. Thirty-seven members had a really enjoyable day, which included a festive lunch.

Something Old, Something New 14th February 2008

This excursion was organised so that members could not only visit the Tutankhamun Exhibition but see something of the new developments in **Canary Wharf and Docklands**, especially taking in the sites of the 2012 Olympics. A full coach of 50 members marvelled at the size and height of the new buildings and also the amount of new building still being carried out. There were cranes everywhere! An hour was spent having lunch in Canary Wharf and then we travelled on to the **O2 Arena** (The Millennium Dome) to see the **Tutankhamun Exhibition.** The exhibition reflected the boy king's world; we saw diadems and pectorals that he would have worn, also his games, furniture, perfume jars and jewels, nearly every item being made of precious wood, ivory or gold. There were also wonderful relics found in the wrappings of the king's mummy including a magnificent gold dagger.

The British Museum 1st April 2008.

Another full coach of 50 members journeyed up to the British Museum to see the magnificent First Emperor Exhibition. Before lunch we had a **guided tour of the Anglo-Saxon galleries.** On the way to the gallery we passed the gold Ringlemere cup and also a display of the wooden tablets excavated at Fort Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall. Ordinary Roman soldiers and their families wrote these wonderfully preserved tablets, some asking for warm clothes, others ordering more food and in one case a Roman wife is asking a friend to come to tea. We had had lectures about both of these subjects in the last two years and it was wonderful to see the actual objects.

EMPEROR
CHINA'S TERRACOTTA ARMY

After lunch we all went into the **First Emperor Exhibition.** The First Emperor was one of the world's greatest rulers. Over 2000 years ago he founded what was to become the nation of China. He also built a vast tomb complex, an eternal empire underground guarded by a terracotta army. The Emperor was born in 259BC and at the age of 13 he became king of Qin - one of seven states competing for power and at war with one another. Under his leadership the Qin conquered the other states using highly developed weapons and military strategy. The King declared himself Emperor and introduced reforms and strict laws. He built roads and canals and introduced standard weights and measures, a single currency and a universal script, to allow him to rule more easily. He wanted to rule forever and spent 30 years building his tomb, from where he could rule for eternity. In 1974 a farmer unearthed a terracotta head and this led to the discovery of about 7000 terracotta soldiers, civil officials. musicians, bronze chariots, horses and birds. It is now one of the world's most important archaeological sites. The actual tomb of the Emperor has not yet been excavated; who knows what treasures it contains? The exhibition contained several of each type of warrior, official and all the other figures, each with a different face. There were coins and many other artefacts of the period. We were able to stand much closer to the actual warriors than tourists are if they visit Xian. It was a memorable day.

Parham House and Steyning 4th June 2008

Amazingly for this summer we were blessed with perfect sunny weather for this trip as well as our favourite coach driver Darren. One of Simon Jenkins' favourites in his "1000 Best English Houses" (he called it "a house of magic"), Parham delighted the 40 or so members and friends who participated in this excursion and we were given excellent tours of the Elizabethan mansion by the guides while the house was closed to the public. The gardens, where many members took their picnics, are equally 'magical' and many of us bought plants from the nursery. Then onwards to the village of Steyning, whose streets are lined with black and white timber-framed buildings and which possesses perhaps the finest Norman church in Sussex as well as an excellent museum. Most of us (still) found time for tea and a little something before Darren whisked us back to Battle in good time.

HELP WANTED: Our excursions team needs more members. We need someone to handle bookings as, sadly, Joanne will be retiring. Also excursion leaders and assistants-no experience is necessary. If interested, please phone Nick Hollington on 01424 843046.

WINTER PROGRAMME 2008-9

2008

Friday 10 October
Commemoration Lecture
EARLY ANGLO SAXON KINGDOMS
Professor Barbara Yorke

Friday 24 October
THE BODIAM BANQUET: HIGH STATUS FOURTEENTH CENTURY FOOD
Alan Stainsby

Friday 14 November
HISTORY OF THE OMNIBUS IN SUSSEX
John Bishop

Friday 28 November
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Followed by social evening

Illustrated lectures and the AGM are held at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall Battle
A complimentary glass of wine will be available at the end of the Commemoration and Robertson Memorial lectures. Coffee is served after other lectures.

2009

Friday 9 January
THE BATTLE OF RORKE'S DRIFT
Dr Adrian Greaves

Friday 23 January
THOMAS PAINE: REVOLUTIONARY
David Powell

Friday 13 February
EARLY HISTORY OF FLIGHT AND FORMATION OF RFC
Colonel John Nowers

Friday 27 February
SECRET SUSSEX RESISTANCE IN WWII
Stewart Angell

Friday 13 March
ANGLO SAXON BROOCHES
Dr Andrew Richardson

Friday 27 March
Robertson Memorial Lecture
TRADITIONAL TRADES CRAFTS AND INDUSTRIES OF KENT AND EAST SUSSEX
Richard Filmer

Editor's Note

RESEARCH GROUP- new directions

While the Research Group will miss the leadership of Peter Moore, his spirit will live on in the new directions that the group plans to take in the forthcoming year. Over the past year or so our activities have been dedicated to recording and indexing the BDHS document collection held in the Battle Museum. While that task is not yet finished, the indexing process and creation of a computer database is now sufficiently advanced for the Group to consider its original mission, undertaking historical research of Battle.

During the next year a prospectus for specific research studies will be prepared and distributed to all members of the Society to solicit interest and active participation in projects. It is hoped that by this means we can set up small individual research teams that can be coordinated by the Research Group towards the goal of the first collective history of Battle.

What an exciting challenge!

Trevor Devon

OBITUARIES

Alan R Denny July 1917-July 2008

Alan Denny's career coincided with the passing of the British Empire, for thirty years he served in the Colonial Police Forces of Aden, Kenya, Tanganyika, Trinidad and later as adviser to the Jamaica Police. Returning to England he became a Probation Service Officer and in 1968 he was awarded an MBE.

On retirement in 1978 he moved to Battle and soon joined the Historical Society, he became a member of the Committee and Chairman in 1989-1990. Under his enthusiastic guidance the fortunes of the Society were revived with a greatly increased membership attracted by the range of interesting lectures he personally selected and visits he had arranged. In recognition of his contribution he was made an Honorary Member. He regularly attended lectures and he will be greatly missed.

Malcolm Stocker

Peter Moore

Sadly, Peter Moore died on 16 May 2008. Peter and Margaret have been loyal members of the BDHS since 1996 and, for the last few years Peter had been Chairman of the Society's Research Group. This small group undertakes original historical research and, latterly, has been cataloguing the Society's archives. Peter was a conscientious and firm Chairman and will be sorely missed.

David Sawyer.

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PER BELLUM PATRIA

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Forename(s) ----------

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