Battle and District Historical Society

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Battle and District Historical Society
2001-2002

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BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2001-2002

It seems only a short time ago that as the Vice-Chairman I gave the outgoing Chairman's report to the AGM on the occasion of the Society's 50th Anniversary.

This year we celebrated the Queen's Golden Jubilee and to mark it the Society held a special film event, screening short films made in the past 50 years, of local and historical interest. They showed the great changes that have occurred and that we too are part of an ongoing history. May I thank Julie Ede for organising a most enjoyable evening.

The Winter and Spring lecture programme covered a wide spectrum of historical subjects. My own particular highlights were "Fishbourne Place; an update" by Dr David Rudkin and Dr Anne Curry's lecture on Agincourt.

The visits to the Houses of Parliament, the London Eye and Tower of London proved to be popular in the Summer Programme. The Malfosse Walk was also well supported. The Research Group held three meetings and papers on Gregory Martin, Pitcher family and Battle Methodist Church are in preparation.

I have heard it said that the Society has changed and is no longer "a Learned Society". Changed it may have, but is that surprising given the change that has occurred in the general public's perception of history since the founding of the Society, fuelled to a large extent by television. History is no longer "a minority interest for education" but a source of programmes for peak hour viewing by large audiences. Today there are more books published on all aspects of History then ever before. Perhaps because of this awakened interest the Society remains in robust health with a current membership of 224 and an average attendance of 70 at the lectures. My thanks to the Committee for their hared work in running the Society and to all those members who turn out for the lectures whatever the weather.

This year will see the resignation from the Committee of the Librarian, Cliff Braybrooke. The magazine editor Dawn Elliott and Joanne Lawrence who has for many years organised the lectures and this year's summer visits have also resigned from their positions but remain members of the Committee. On behalf of the membership may I express our thanks to them for their past efforts. Wendy and Peter Roberts have joined the Committee but vacancies still exist and need to be filled.

The setting up of the audio and visual equipment for lectures is carried out by Alan Kinnear and in recognition of Alan's past and continuing service the Committee decided to make him and his wife Honorary Members of the Society. Much of the existing equipment is showing signs of age or is on loan; therefore it is being replaced with modern equipment, which will allow the Society to be more self-sufficient.

The proposed building programme for the British Legion extension and its possible impact on the use of the main hall plus the general uncertainty of the timetable for the extensive refurbishment of the main has created a problem for the Committee as the arrangements for the Society's lectures have to be made up to a year in advance. The Committee therefore decided that it was only prudent (to use the Chancellor's word) to make arrangements for an alternative venue for the Winter 2002 and Spring 2003 Series of lectures. Not to do so could put the continuation f the Society at risk. Accordingly the lectures are being held in St Mary's Church Hall, Battle just a short distance away from the Memorial Hall. Details are given in the programme for 2002/3.

Malcolm J Stoker
Chairman

EDITOR'S NOTE

Neither the Committee nor the Hon Editor is responsible for opinions expressed by the contributors to this year's Journal.

THE FIRST FARMERS IN SUSSEX

Christine Gray 11 January 2002

Christine Gray began by giving the evidence used by archaeologists for dating early farming. The first evidence is fossils, then tools that can be sequenced from Stone Age, Iron Age on to Bronze Age and Romano British. They can then use pottery and dendrochronology and lastly radio carbon dating. The last ice age ended about 8000 BC, and then the countryside was covered in tundra followed by woodland of birch, alder, oak, ash and hazel growing in southern England.

At a site in Ipeing Common in West Sussex, there is evidence that hunter gatherers had burnt vegetation, to get new green shoots, which encouraged animals to graze that they could then kill. By 3000 BC woodland was being coppiced (cut at the base) to obtain fresh "poles" of the same size that were used in stockades and dwellings. There is also evidence of very old tracks. The Downs were once thickly wooded but because the tops were drier and safer with all round vision, the trees were cut down and by 2000 BC woodland was decreasing steadily.

By Neolithic times people were beginning to live in communities or villages and the population of this country was by then about 30,000. By the first century the population was about 2 million, which has steadily risen to the 65 million of today.

There are three signs of early settlement in Sussex, causewayed enclosures, flint mines, and barrows. At Bishopstone on the Ouse Valley near Seaford, there has been an agricultural settlement since Mesolithic times. There is no sign of dwellings in the Neolithic time but there are pits and gullies filled with mussel shells, flints, an early saddle

quern and very early pottery. There is evidence of Iron Age postholes where the dwellings would have been and tools, better pottery and the bones of pigs, sheep, goats and cattle. There is a Long Barrow nearby, on top of the Downs and above the Wilmington Man. It had a few burial chambers in it with small cavities for bones. It appears that the bodies were left in the air to "de-flesh" and then the bones were gathered up and put in the barrows.

There are very many flint mines in Sussex. Although flints were lying all over the ground, the quality of flints that were mined and had not been exposed to the air was much better, and polished axe heads were used for early trading. The mines were dug using deer antlers. The causewayed enclosures of which there are several especially at Cissbury seem to have been used for ritual purposes and were built between 1000 and 400 BC. There is no evidence of either farming or dwellings in them.

Joanne Lawrence

THE QUEST FOR AN EARTHLY PARADISE

Brian Meldrum 25 January 2002

The "Paradise" referred to in the title of the talk is derived from the name for a Persian Royal hunting garden used in the C5 by Xenophon. Early gardens were illustrated by paintings on Egyptian tombs and by Roman wall paintings. Other examples of gardens shown were at Fishbourne, Hadrian's villa and Pliny's estate in AD60. The main requirements for successful gardening are peace, prosperity, wealth and leisure.

At Mannington Hall a re-creation of an early garden has been made with a formal layout and box hedges while a contemporary stained glass window depicts the "Month of May" in a garden. In a drawing of 1816 by William Lawson the plan shows a formal garden. Malmesbury House, Gloucestershire and Old Hatfield House both have knot gardens which are, of course, best seen from above. At Cranbourne Chase a mound or mount provides an ideal viewing platform for the formal

garden below. Although Compton Wynyates has an idyllic setting the topiary has been removed, spoiling the effect to some extent. Garden design may be illustrated by embroidery as well as drawing. The layout at Knole House in Sevenoaks shows a formal garden but with a wilderness area in one corner.

After the English Civil War garden design was influenced through returning exiles by French and Dutch designers especially Le Notre. An example of his work may be seen at Vaux le Vicompte near Paris followed by Versailles (on an even grander scale) and later Hampton Court. Powys Castle with terraces looking out over the countryside started a more informal approach which continued under the influence of the paintings of Claude Lorraine depicting romantic designs. William Kent carried these ideas forward e.g. at Rowsham Hall. Soon the ha-ha was evolved to keep the animals out but maintain an uninterrupted view of the park. The park at Blenheim Palace designed by Vanbrugh was initially unsatisfactory but later improved by "Capability" Brown.

Eye catching features were introduced into the landscape such as the bridge at Wilton and also at Prior Park, near Bath. The ultimate romantic landscape is at Stourhead, Wiltshire owned by Henry Hoare the banker which uses water, planting and buildings with consummate skill. Examples of the work of Repton may be seen at Wimpole Hall near Cambridge and Sheringham in Norfolk. By the late C18 early C19 the expansion of the Empire overseas led to the importation of hundreds of exotic species of plants which changed the appearance of gardens. Sezencote Glos was built in an Indian style in 1804 while at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, Ferdinand Rothschild's country mansion was based the designs of several French Chateaux with an appropriately stiff and formal garden layout. The gardens at Tresco in the Isles of Scilly were able to take advantage of the mild climate and use tropical planting to great effect.

William Robinson advocated very informal layouts and this idea was exploited by the partnership of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll e.g. Folly Farm and Hidcote Manor. Great Dixter, Northiam, by Christopher Lloyd is the ultimate example of this informality and is still being developed and changed. Modern design was illustrated by Geoffrey Jellicoe's scheme at Sutton Place for Paul Getty.

No doubt that among the audience were members of the National Trust (although few would have visited all the examples of the gardens shown) so the opportunities for further explorations were well illustrated by the slides.

Ann Stocker

THE BATTLE OF AGINCOURT

Dr Anne Curry 8 February 2002

Owre Kyng went forth to Normandy, with grace and myyt of Chivalry
There God for hym wrouty marvellously
Wherefore Englonde may calle and cry "Deo Gratias
Deo Gratis Anglia redde pro victoria".

Dr Curry started by reciting this, the Agincourt Carol, which was written in the mid 15th century. Even then the Battle of Agincourt was famous. By the 16th Century Shakespeare made the battle even more famous and in fact the battle takes up almost all of his play, Henry V. At the time it was remembered rather differently on both sides of the Channel. Here we have the triumphalism of the English whereas in France it was thought of as a bloodbath and a cause of great grief and mourning. Between 1,600 and 10,000 Frenchmen were chronicled as dead, with the truth probably lying somewhere in the middle; the English losses were well under 1,000. The year 1415 was a time of political turmoil in France particularly between the Burgundians and the Orleanists, and the battle was one of the defining moments in Anglo-French relations in the Middle Ages.

Dr Curry then spoke about two points - firstly the English army and secondly the battle itself. In the English army every man was a volunteer and every man was paid. They were recruited by means of an indenture, which was a contract on a piece of paper, cut in half with a jagged edge, the soldier keeping one half and the army keeping the other. The men were paid quarterly in advance and they were indentured for a year. Henry had only sufficient funds for half a year and consequently he pawned both his and the state's jewels to raise the

money for the second half. Dr Curry's current research is into army muster rolls, and she showed one for Sir Thomas Erpingham, who was 57 years old and may have lead the archers at the battle. He promised to bring 30 men-at-arms and 90 archers for one year's service; the men to be fully armed and with horses, not for battle but for mobility. He had to promise to hand over important prisoners to the King and would be compensated for doing so; also he had to keep good discipline. A muster date of 1st July at Southampton is mentioned.

The army was 12,311 strong, with men-at-arms paid 12 pence a day and archers paid 6 pence. Thus in August 1415, ships were requisitioned from all over the country and Henry set sail from Southampton to Harfleur. The town was besieged for six weeks and surrendered on the 23 September, during which the army suffered great illness; by the 6 October when Henry left marching towards Calais and home, his army was only 8,500 strong. They were held upon reaching the river Somme with contingents of the French army on the opposite bank, and at that point Henry made his men cut strong, six-foot stakes. They eventually crossed the river and marched on in the direction of home. The French army, which was by then outnumbering the English by two to one, were massing ahead, when on the 24 October, Henry reached some ploughed fields between the villages of Tramecourt and Agincourt.

At dawn on the 25 October, Mass was said and soon after lines were drawn up. The English line was straight, only 1,200 yards in length with either flank in woodland and with the King and his men-at-arms in the centre and his archers on the flanks, and the French with twice the number of men were drawn up in lines three deep. At first there was a stand-off, so Henry moved his men forward to extreme longbow range over the newly sown fields and his men hammered their stakes in the soft ground pointing them towards the French. Battle commenced with the French nobles, knights and men-at-arms advancing on foot over the muddy field. By the time they reached the English line, most were exhausted by the struggle through the mud. The French ignored the archers, who were firing constantly, so as to gain glory by defeating the English nobles. Those Frenchmen felled by arrows or pushed to the ground were helpless in their heavy armour. In the melee of bodies piling up before the stakes, the English line held while their lightly armoured, thus more nimble, archers killed the prostrate French. They

often used their swords, as there was insufficient room for their bows. All the French soldiers taken prisoner were killed, something very much against the tenets of chivalry at the time. This seemed harsh but there were insufficient English soldiers to guard such large numbers.

Dr Curry's research leads her to believe that there were about 500 English dead. On the 29 October Henry and his army moved on to Calais and they were back in England by the 9 November. On the 23 November Henry and his army returned to London more in the manner of a requiem for the dead than a triumph.

Joanne Lawrence

FISHBOURNE ROMAN PALACE - AN UPDATE

Dr David Rudkin 22 February 2002

Our Chairman introduced David Rudkin by reminding the audience that the last update on Fishbourne the Society had received was in 1966, so we were well overdue for some further information.

David Rudkin then informed us that much work had been done since that time and is ongoing but he would concentrate on the last 7-8 years. He also reminded us that as work has been going on at the site for a long time, it could be assumed that we knew all there was to know but he hoped to show us that was not the case.

One of the first slides to be shown was that of the boy on the dolphin mosaic which survived extremely well considering how high out of the ground it was but this also served as an example of the other superb mosaics to be found at Fishbourne. Not much in the way of original buildings survive but the remains of the gardens are quite remarkable and Fishbourne now has the only replanted Roman garden in Britain. After excavation, the first century bedding trenches were found which enabled replanting to be undertaken. Tree pits were also found indicating former trelliswork and these have now been replanted with espalier apple trees. The Romans probably imported thousands of trees and plants from Italy, not all of which would have survived in our

climate which was probably only about one degree warmer than now.

The model in the foyer at Fishbourne gives a fair indication of how it is thought the site looked. Unfortunately, much has disappeared forever, an indication for example being the A259 now on top of the South Wing. When a water company began digging drains for a proposed housing estate, mosaic floors, walls and drains were found, work was stopped and the local archaeologists were called in. A local undergraduate Barry Cunliffe, was invited to make some initial trenches. Subsequently, at the end of the excavations in 1969, he was Professor of Archaeology at Southampton University and is now Professor of Antiquities at Oxford. At the end of the second season of excavation, the site was visited by Ivan Margery, who bought the site for posterity and gave it to the Sussex Archaeological Society for its long-term care. He also paid to have the large timber cover building constructed over the North Wing remains.

More slides showed that large postholes were found indicating a possibly Roman Military building for storage or granary use. Later a very large public bathing area was found, with decorated plaster on the walls and dated not as originally thought at 60 AD but now 75-80 AD. There is still much debate about the purpose of this largest domestic building discovered in Roman Britain with its Tuscany style architecture, who built it and why it is there. A carved slab was found in a wall of a temple dedicated to Neptune and Minerva indicating it was built by permission of "Tiberious Claudius....." A workman's pick axe spoiled the rest but who this man was is open to debate. A gold ring discovered in an aqueduct and inscribed "Tiberius Claudius" seems to give some corroboration that he might have been the builder.

In 1983, an A27 by-pass was proposed and Alec Gowan, District Archaeologist, requested permission to make trial trenches before the work began. He found pits, trenches, wall foundations and postholes probably indicating more military buildings. Again, this indicated storage buildings for a possible Roman Invasion Army.

In 1996 geophysics of more fields were made and wall foundations found. Further trenches were dug, one of which contained a three metre square pit lined with stones from the Isle of Wight, a second pit

contained horse bones and is thought to have been a possible drainage pit. Many slides were shown of further excavations and finds. Going through the sieves many small items have been found including an Onyx racehorse the size of a fingernail, probably from a gold seal ring, a military belt buckle, a stud from an apron, a metal lion - possibly a hat or belt badge, a gold state coin and also an 18" diameter platter made in Pisa 25-30 AD.

It is hoped a new excavation ditch will be commenced next year to the North of the Site. The finds so far indicate that there was probably a Roman army at Fishbourne but many questions remain, including when were they there and for what purpose? The debate continues on the Richborough or Chichester landing. However, as our speaker reminded us, records state the Romans sailed westward from France and this could indicate west, down the English Channel to the Isle of Wight and then Chichester (Richborough is to the North). It is possible the invasion fleet split, half going north and the rest Westward.

As to the future, a new Roman Garden in the South East corner is planned, with raised beds, pergolas, a water feature and planting with plants of the correct period. It is also hoped to introduce a Roman potting shed. It is hoped that an Heritage Lottery Grant might be achieved for major works. The original wooden covered building over the North wing of the palace needs refurbishing. More storage areas are planned to house the reserve collection of artefacts, which would enable the general public to view them via computers. Collaboration with the Chichester Museum is in hand with the main proposed project, which would include a conservation laboratory, and is estimated to cost £1 million pounds.

A truly fascinating lecture, which left the audience so spellbound.

Diane Braybrooke

JOAN, THE FAIR MAID OF KENT

Malcolm Round 8 March 2002

The subject of the lecture Joan, the Fair Maid of Kent was a peripheral figure in English history but one who, in her time, was the first Princess of Wales and a woman who was reputed to be the most beautiful in England. She became the wife of Edward, the Black Prince, an heroic and chivalric figure who was Prince of Wales but destined to die before he could ascent the throne of his father King Edward III. But she was mother to a King, Richard II who was neither valorous nor particularly wise.

Malcolm Round prefaced his talk with a reference to Joan's ancestors, Lady Godiva of Coventry and Hereward the Wake and included a topographical, architectural and agricultural summary of Wake's homeland, the Fens. This was the seed from which Joan was born; both she and her royal husband were descended from Edward I, the Black Prince being the son and grandson of successive Edwards and Joan the daughter (and on the death of her two brothers) the sole heiress of Edmund, Earl of Kent, the younger son of Edward I. She was therefore a great marital catch, not only desired for her beauty but also for her wealth; interestingly but perhaps not unsurprisingly, she was of a questionable virtue so that her marriage to the Prince was not without opposition. Strange then, that rumour has it that she had a sexual relationship with her future father-in-law!

This tale may be apocryphal as also her connection with the establishment of the Order of the Garter. Hers is said to have been the offending garter that slipped at the ball and which elicited from the King the famous remark "Honi soit qui mal y pense". Fact or fiction it is a romantic story like much of her life.

Joan was first married at twelve to Sir Thomas Holland in a ceremony before witnesses which was said to constitute a legal marriage; later she married for a second time, the Earl of Salisbury which marriage was subsequently annulled on the grounds of the validity of the first.

Widowed from Sir Thomas, she then married her Prince who went to

France and covered himself with glory at Poitiers and Crecy before dying, from natural causes in 1376. The King died the following year and was succeeded by Joan's son, Richard II.

Joan herself was a witness to historic events but a minor player within them. Her life was threatened by Wat Tyler's Rebellion during which her young son displayed the one act of kingly behaviour of his reign. His mother's death was said to have been caused by grief from a more typical and unworthy act. Sir John Holland, her son by her first marriage and the King's half-brother had killed, in a quarrel, the eldest son of Lord Stafford and for this murder the King had sentenced him to death. Joan interceded, in vain, for her son's life and when this plea failed sickened and died within four days. She was 57 and intriguingly requested that she be buried alongside her first husband and not the Black Prince.

Joan was a woman at the heart of the close network of families on, and around, the throne who married and acted for dynastic purposes but she still remains a shadowy figure, famed solely for her beauty.

David Sawyer

ROBERTSON MEMORIAL LECTURE

Romney Marsh 1200-1600 - Advance and Retreat

Jill Edison 22 March 2002

Coastlines and particularly Romney Marsh are always subject to change due to the effects of erosion and deposition. The coastline of England from Exeter in the south west up to Flamborough Head in Yorkshire is constantly changing. Romney Marsh which has "been taken out of the sea" during the last 2000 years is an area where many of the most dramatic changes have occurred. Man is a terrestrial animal and these changes affect humans to the extent that they have to move when the land becomes sea. Battle Abbey is sited on poor agricultural land so land on the Marsh was acquired in order to grow crops and graze animals. The waterways were alive with porpoises, swans, herrings and

eels as far inland as Brede Bridge. The river Brede was once considerably wider and deeper than it is today.

An important influence on the Marsh was the shingle bank which, in 1200 stretched from Fairlight to Lydd. About 100 years later the bank was breached and the sea reached as far inland as Newenden but by 1500 the water had retreated again. The evidence available shows that the shingle barrier ran east to west and large amounts of shingle were moved about by the sea; behind the barrier were channels of salt water and silt. By 1200 Walland Marsh had become an area of great prosperity and the local population increased. Land reclamation had been carried out at Brookland c1150 and tracts of land were taken over c1200 by Battle and Robertsbridge Abbeys to support the increased population. From 1236 there were huge storms at sea which broke the barrier down, the shingle was permanently dispersed and the original town of Winchelsea largely disappeared below the sea. In 1250 the sea flooded in again and by 1258 the sea had reached Appledore. Later in 1271 part of the church at Winchelsea fell, more storms followed and in 1287 the sea flooded Appledore three times. To try to contain the sea banks about 4-6 feet high were constructed and these may still be seen at Fairlight and Lydd. In 1280 it was decided that the town of Winchelsea would have to be rebuilt on a new site, at a higher level.

On the east side of the Rye Bay the site of Broomhill church has been excavated although it was found that some masonry had been removed earlier (for re-cycling). The overall size of the building was small and the archaeological evidence showed how the building had gradually disintegrated as the sea eroded it in stages. Only the lower courses of the flint walls remained; pieces of broken glass were also found. The shingle on the south side of Broomhill remained in place with a channel known as Wainway, behind. The Manorial accounts give details of the maintenance costs and by 1349 a sea wall and drainage ditches had been built up. The sea started to retreat and Walland and Guldeford were reclaimed.

Meanwhile the west side of the Bay, by C15 Rye and Camber (the name is derived from "camera" - a room) had become very important. The new town of Winchelsea had been laid out by Edward I on a nearby hilltop which was once by the sea but is now about a mile inland. The

grid iron layout once extended further west and much of the masonry used in garden walls has been recycled from these vanished buildings. There are 50 cellars below the houses, opening on to the street which were used to store wine during C12-14. Only a fragment of the church remains after destruction by French raiders, basically the east end of the previously large edifice. The Black Death in 1350 affected the town's prosperity as did a series of attacks by the French. To compensate for the silting up of the harbour, tolls were charged. Eventually by about 1520 Rye took over Winchelsea's important status. The town has a mediaeval layout, not a gridiron plan as at Winchelsea. The harbour at Rye also started to silt up, due to shingle moving into Rye Bay which meant that the times in which ships could reach the quays became limited, strangling commerce.

Do we consider the shingle bank to have "been a success" and should attempts continue to be made to control it? (perhaps Canute in his encounters with the sea learned the answer?).

Ann Stocker

COMMEMORATION LECTURE

English Kingship from the Conquest to Magna Carta

Dr Benjamin Thompson 11th October 2002

Dr Benjamin Thompson, Fellow and Tutor in Mediaeval History and Dean of Somerville College, Oxford opened the winter programme with a weighty subject that he explored with a witty lightness of touch. His theme was to explain how England both acquired strong government and at the same time a tradition for standing up to government-features that might seem contradictory yet have been characteristic of English history through nearly a millennium.

In order to assess how ideas of kingship evolved we need to take into account the Anglo-Saxon background. Since the time of Alfred the Great a very strong administration had been developed in order to defend the country against the Danes through well-developed systems

of taxation and military service.

The crucial re-orientation after the Conquest was that England was no longer headed by a home-grown dynasty with an administration designed to defend it against outside invaders but was under foreign rule, and had in effect become a colony.

Immediately, the Normans set about imposing themselves as conquerors did in the 11th century, by building castles to be their centres of power. The barons who held the castles received land-holdings to support them and consolidate their stake in the stability of the Norman regime. Though the remnants of the English aristocracy who survived Hastings rebelled against the expropriation of their lands they were ruthlessly suppressed and within a very few years only a handful of English tenants-in-chief were left.

The highly-organised kingdom that William took over already had an established land-tax, the geld, and an accepted unit of measurement, the hide, that made it easy to calculate what revenues were due and a universal royal coinage in which payments were made. It was ideally adapted to providing not only the funds to maintain order and stability in the new colony but also to pay for William's ambitions in north-west France. There, his major political interests lay in expanding his patrimony the Duchy of Normandy and repelling predatory neighbours. But this was a departure from the tradition that the primary obligation of an English king was to use England's resources for the good of the realm.

One of the earliest changes wrought in William's reign was the abandonment of English as the language of government and its replacement by Latin. So in a cultural sense England was brought closer to the continent. Another notable change was the increased freedom of action of the remaining aristocracy, especially the Marcher lords who had frontier responsibilities for the north and west, and were often left unsupervised when the king was out of the country.

The marvellous administrative achievement of the Domesday book, twenty years into William's reign, in providing a complete record of tenurial settlement, could never have come about without the Anglo-

Saxon organisation of shires and hundreds and of local systems of rule through sheriffs. Organised as it is, Domsday lists all land-holdings county by county with the king virtually everywhere the richest baron. Significantly at the end of each section are listed the "clamores", the disputes that had arisen between minor landholders whose allegiance was claimed by more than one lord. In order to prevent these disputes getting out of hand and generating disorder some fairly close royal supervision was necessary, particularly since there was a tradition of royal protection for the tenants of the barons. In 1086, it seems, William exacted an oath from all important land-holders that they would accept his lordship and his decisions.

A system of government was needed that would work well in royal absences. William had to be able to leave it to run itself when he was engaged in Normandy, but strong royal intervention was often needed to keep control of it. That is the fundamental tension in the new Anglo-Norman realm, the need to adapt to the demands of an alien regime and that regime's need to balance its old interests on the continent with its new interests in England.

The conquest of England also opened up questions about the inheritance of the throne to which there were no clear answers.

The particular circumstances of Anglo-Normandy were unusual because there was an original patrimony, generally given to the eldest son, and the acquisition usually destined for a younger brother. The custom of the time would have suggested the Robert should have Normandy with William Rufus taking England. But such an arrangement would have made the second son more powerful than the elder.

The greatest barons with lands on both sides of the channel pressed for a single king-duke. They could not afford the divided loyalties that would result from a division of the territories and the probability of war. But in the end the inheritance was split, with predictable results. After the Conqueror's death Robert, with the support of some barons, invaded in 1088, but was not successful. William Rufus retaliated in 1091 with an incursion into Normandy, and so the unresolved struggle continued until Robert went off on Crusade in 1095 leaving the field to William Rufus. By the time Robert returned William Rufus had died. Henry I,

who had succeeded to the throne, lost no time in completing the conquest of Normandy, capturing his elder brother and confining him for the rest of his life.

Henry I, during his 35-year reign managed to establish a loyal nobility and by and large they maintained stability and order. Civil government was run efficiently by a well-organised clergy. By 1135 it seemed that the Anglo-Norman realm was really settling down, until once again the problem of the succession arose.

Henry's possible heirs were his daughter Matilda, now married to the Count of Anjou - no friend of Normandy - or his nephew Stephen, grandson of the Conqueror. It was clear that to rule effectively the monarch must be able to control a powerful military-aristocracy. A woman's suitability for such a role was seriously doubted. Stephen exploited the uncertainty and seized the opportunity to get himself crowned. But his ambition exceeded his abilities and he proved unequal both to keeping the confidence of the barons and inspiring in them enough fear not to risk rebellion. Matilda challenged him in England and so began a long and wretched period of civil war.

When Geoffrey of Anjou began to make inroads into the Norman territories it became clear that Stephen had failed in the task that was fundamental to the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, that of being the sole king-duke to whom their loyalty was due.

Instead the barons began to make deals with each other to protect their possessions, and rejected royal authority in all but name. If the king could not keep the realm peaceful they were going to have to do so themselves. When Stephen's son died they forced a compromise by which Matilda's son Henry would become his heir. Stephen's 19-year reign had shown how much this complex realm needed an effective king to keep it together, to maintain control and to provide the stability which the great landowners increasingly regarded as essential.

On his succession, Henry II essentially did what Henry I had done after a period of confusion. He resolved the tensions by the strength of his rule despite the fact that he had also to control all of western France, including Aquitaine with its many powerful barons. In England, all the

castles that had been built in the anarchy, as the barons sought to defend themselves against each other, were summarily demolished. Henry disciplined recalcitrant barons and sorted out the tenurial disputes over their lands and tenants that had changed hands by insisting that these be referred to his court where he would make binding decisions. Increasingly he established systematic mechanisms for other disputes by means of writs which any plaintiff could buy, and appointed judges to hear cases that did not directly touch on royal interests. As the economy prospered in the new stability, Angevin methods of raising revenue were employed. Stricter controls were imposed on sheriffs so that monies they collected for the benefit of the king were passed on in full, payments were exacted before an heiress could marry or lands be inherited and the royal exchequer benefited from the profits of justice. However, there was a general acceptance of the king's methods as broadly fair, and an increasing growth, it seems, of a sense of Englishness amongst those who not so long ago had been very much aware of their Norman origins.

John, however, proved unable to run the very complex system that had developed so that it functioned properly. Having within five years lost Normandy he spent the remaining twelve years of his reign trying to raise enough money to conquer it back again. It was a period of inflation, so costs of campaigns were constantly rising. But unfortunately by then few of the greatest nobles were interested in keeping Normandy and England together. The king's constant presence in England was a new factor, as was his policy of exploiting the Angevin system of government in an arbitrary way. Instead of appointed officials following strict rules, John personally made decisions that extorted ever greater payments from the barons whom he looked on not as partners in running the country but as the best possible source of money. When it became clear with the defeat at Bouvines that John's Norman policy was in ruins there was a strong reaction against his methods, and so we come to Magna Carta.

The essence of Magna Carta is its insistence on the principle that since the barons had been told that they must rule their people fairly (and their tenants had a right of appeal over the head of their lord to the king himself) this in turn requires the king to apply the same standard to his own lordship. The very famous clauses of Magna Carta that resonate

though English history, as "No free man shall be taken or imprisoned, outlawed or exiled or in any way ruined...except by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land, and to no one will we sell, to no one will we deny right or justice" these clauses are there precisely because the king had been treating his barons in an arbitrary way, in total contrast to the systematic way the Angevins had taught people that government and rule should be done. There is no sense that Angevin government should be reversed, but it must be run on systematic lines. The king must not interfere in the proceedings of the courts. Magna Carta accepts some strong government but this must be even-handed and not exploitative. And so we come to this extraordinary combination in English history: government must always be in the interests of the English people, as the barons defined themselves, and in the interests of the community of the realm.

The events of 14th October 1066 made an important difference to what we would have been, and they help to explain the unique development of the English state. It was strongly governed, it was imperialistic towards its neighbours - but also it was guided by an ideology of the responsibility of the monarch to the nation. And that unique combination is absolutely fundamental to the rest of English history.

Jane Bergin

PSALMS, PAINTERS AND PATRONS, ILLUMINATED PSALTERS OF THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES

Dr A Lawrence 8 November 2002

Dr Lawrence started by explaining to us that she had chosen 12th and 13th century Psalters because it was the period when most interesting things were happening in the making, design and decoration of books. Psalters were the most popular and luxurious books of the day and they are the best place to look at the designs and development, which took place over these two hundred years. She began by showing us an image of a monk called Hugo Pictor. It is rare to see a picture of a known scribe and he appears to be working with a quill and "penknife". Care had to be taken because the only way mistakes could be corrected was

to scrape away the surface of the vellum. Scribes and artists did not work on blank pages of ready-formed books but were given sheets of prepared vellum, which were worked on and later bound. It appears that the writing was done first and the painting later.

Under the rule of the 7th century St Benedict, all monks had to perform their religious duties first, which left only a few hours a day to paint and write. The Psalters were very costly and only Royalty, cathedrals and large monasteries could afford them and they took on average a year to make. By the end of the 13th century the price of the books had begun to come down and the rich and powerful were able to afford Psalters and they were also given as gifts at the signing of Peace Treaties, as political gifts or handed over on negotiating a royal marriage. These patrons often had an input as to the subject of the beautiful illustrations and the bindings. We were shown pictures of many beautiful Psalters, which were bound in ivory, silver and gold and were devotional objects even when they were unopened.

The Psalters contained the texts of all of the 150 psalms as translated by the 5th century patriarch, St Jerome. St Benedict had ordained that prayers were to be said 8 times a day with extra masses on Sunday's and saint's days. So a way was needed to check which days were saint's days and which psalms were to be chanted. The basic services were fairly easy, just chanting selected sets of psalms. There were, however, extra psalms for saint's days and festivals. So each Psalter had to have a calendar. They used the Roman calendar and made it a perpetual one by using a code, which was based on which day of the week the first day of the new year fell. On joining an order each novice had to learn all 150 psalms by heart as the light was very poor in abbeys and monasteries.

Many of these Psalters had full-page illustrations, which were rather surprisingly nothing to do with the text but usually pictures of the life of Christ although the "commissioner" of the Psalter had some freedom regarding the subject, and there were plenty of illustrations for purchaser to look through and choose. Most important though were the decorative initial letters; these were often the most beautiful things in the Psalter and were very specially treated. Gold leaf was available in the 13th century but in the 12th century pure gold powder was used and the

brilliant blue was obtained from powered lapis lazuli. Most of the colours used were obtained in powdered form and were mixed with whipped egg white. At the beginning of the 12th century just the letter was involved in the design but by the 13th century small pictures were being incorporated as well, many being of almost unsurpassed beauty.

Finally, by the 13th century the "commissioners" of the Psalters were beginning to be known. The St Albans Psalter was made at the request of the Abbot of St Albans for Christina of Mark Yates, who was a hermit and a visionary, and who lived near the Abbey. It has nearly 100 illustrations of great beauty but a very plain text, and presumably this was because Christina was probably illiterate or at any rate could not read Latin.

Dr Lawrence ended by saying that while the 12th century Psalters were emotionally exciting, the 13th century Psalters were filled with gracefulness and beauty and they were not only luxurious and spiritual objects but were the equivalent of the art galleries of today.

Joanne Lawrence

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY

Ken Brooks 13 December 2002

Mr Brooks started his talk by saying that time prevented him from discussing more then a small selection of the gods of ancient Egypt.

Ta, or Ra, was regarded as the father of the gods. Each morning Ra, in the guise of the sun, rose in the east and set off across the sky to sink below the horizon in the west. He is most often shown on tomb paintings as a man with a falcon's head, wearing a crown surmounted by a disc - the sun.

Bast, the cat-headed goddess, was a very ancient deity. Her cult was in the Nile Delta at the city of Bubastis, which was enriched with a new temple to Bast. Her origins may have lain in the fact that the people of the Delta - a region frequented by snakes of many kinds - welcomed

wild cats into their homes as a natural killer of snakes. The domestic cat became a sacred creature and when wealthy people's cats died they were carefully mummified and buried in the cat graveyard at Bubastis. Mr Brooks showed several slides of mummified cats, which were once well-loved pets as the faces had been painted onto the linen giving them almost comical expressions.

The gruesome Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess with razor-sharp teeth was sent down to Earth by Ra to spy on mankind and see who was plotting against him. Unfortunately she set about her task with relish, killing her victims and drinking their blood. Ra was so appalled by her ferociousness that he sent his henchmen to collect all the alcoholic drink in Egypt, mix it with red ochre and fill every hollow with it. Sekhmet, thinking it to be blood, was unable to resist and drank it all, becoming so intoxicated that she could no longer hunt mankind.

Anubis, the jackle-headed god, was associated with the journey from this world to the afterlife and representations were carried as part of the funeral procession; we were shown a slide of the beautiful wooden carving of the god from Tutankhamen's tomb. This carving had gilded decoration with eyes of alabaster and obsidian.

Thoth, the god of wisdom and inventor of speech, was known as the divine scribe. He was present at the funeral rites to record the deeds of the deceased. Although often shown as a baboon-headed god, he was also seen as an Ibis and in this guise poured sacred oil onto the pharaoh's head, symbolising the renewal of life.

The cow-headed goddess, Hathor, was often described as the nurse of Horus. She was believed to give sustenance to the dead on their journey to the next world. This function can be seen in the mural from the tomb of Rameses VI in the Valley of the Kings. Hathor was also considered to be a light-hearted goddess, who enjoyed music and dancing.

Naturally the ancient Egyptians deified the crocodile, a creature familiar to people who spent their entire lives by the River Nile. This was the god Sebek, who was concerned with land emergence or renewal after a flood.

The dung-beetle seems to us an odd sort of deity. Why worship such a creature? The Egyptian witnessing the beetle pushing a ball of dung across the sand perceived this to be a representation of Ra pushing the sun across the sky. Also the beetle laid eggs inside the dung, and the grub then emerged as new life from dead matter. The sacred beetle, known as the scarab, was often worn as jewellery and also when the body was mummified small scarabs would be placed within the linen bandages according to the rites in the Book of the Dead.

Mr Brooks next related the mythical story of Osiris, the supreme judge of the dead, whose worship dates from 4,000 BC or earlier. Osiris was murdered by his jealous brother, Set, who gave a banquet at which a chest studded with precious stones was displayed. The chest would be given to whoever could fit inside it. After the other guests had tried and failed, Set persuaded Osiris to try. Set had had the chest made to his brother's measurements and as soon as Osiris laid down inside the chest, Set's henchmen leapt forward and before the astonished guests could react, they had sealed the chest and thrown it into the River Nile. Isis, the wife of Osiris, was broken-hearted and searched many years for her husband's body. Eventually she found the body at Byblos and bought him back to life using her powers as a goddess. However, Set found him again and chopped Osiris into pieces then scattered him throughout Egypt. The devoted Isis set out once again, to find all the pieces and put Osiris' body together again. But this done, even Isis' powers could not return him to this life and so he became the chief god of the afterlife.

Horus, the hawk-headed god, was the posthumous son of Osiris, and known as the god who overcame evil. News of his birth reached Set, who despatched his henchmen to kill him. But Isis made a basket of reeds, put her child in it and set it among reeds in the Nile. When he grew to manhood Horus fought many battles to regain his father's throne and in one battle Set tore out one of Horus' eyes. This eye is to be frequently found in carvings and hieroglyphics. The gods eventually intervened and judged in favour of Horus.

The speaker then briefly explained the process of mummification, which originated from Isis' binding together the various parts of Osiris' body after she had recovered them. The first process was the removal of the viscera, which were placed in four vessels known as canopic jars and

placed in a casket. Next the body was placed in natrum for ninety days then packed with spices and wrapped in linen bandages. Prayers were said at each wrapping the layers. At this ceremony the high priest would wear a jackal mask, to represent Anubis. The ancient Egyptians feared destruction of the body and so had a back-up system whereby duplicate figures, known as Ka's, were made. These were of wood, often life-size, and placed in the tomb as substitutes for the deceased. To cater for the needs of the deceased in the next world, carved figures of servants were also placed in the tomb; that of Tutankhamen contained 365 but these were less than life-size and each had an inscription carved on its front, which read "I am your servant and am here to do your bidding".

The speaker concluded by showing a wall painting of the deceased being handed over to Osiris in the next world. A priest with an adze in his hand, was depicted behind the deceased. An adze was used in the opening-of-the-mouth ceremony. This was an important ritual so that when the deceased arrived at the judgement he could speak out in his own defence.

Julie Ede

SUMMER PROGRAMME 2002

Our first visit was to Leonardslee Gardens in May. Sir Edmund Loder first planted these gardens in 1889 and imported a herd of wallabies whose descendants live there today. The gardens lie in a sheltered valley with a string of small lakes along the bottom, which were dug in the 18th century for the iron industry. Being damp and slightly acidic, the soil is well suited to rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. One can walk through the beautiful gardens imagining oneself in a misty Himalayan valley, the colours and smells are quite simply magnificent. There is an interesting new Bonsai exhibition with perfect miniature trees, many over a hundred years old.

The June outing was to the Palace of Westminster and the Wallace Collection. We arrived at the Houses of Parliament at the same time as a Third World Debt demonstration was being held. We could not get in the entrance that we were meant to, so we had to battle our way in to the

Central Lobby. Once there we devided into groups for our tours. One of the most interesting parts is Westminster Hall. This was built by William the Conqueror's son, William Rufus in 1099, and the magnificent hammer-beam roof was added by Richard II in 1399 (the rest of the Palace was rebuilt, after a disastrous fire, to a Gothic style by Sir Charles Barry assisted by Pugin during the reign of Queen Victoria). The hall was for many centuries one of the centres of London life, among other things it housed the Courts of Law and saw many state trials. Here Charles I was condemned to death, as were the Gun Powder Plot conspirators. It is now used for great State occasions such as the Lying-in-State of Monarchs, the last one being that of the Queen Mother.

In the afternoon we went to the Wallace Collection. This is a fascinating and eclectic collection, which now belongs to the nation, but was once one of the finest private collections ever assembled by a single family. The wealthy 4th Marquess of Hertford and his illegitimate son, Sir Richard Wallace spent most of their life living in Paris but they were compulsive collectors of art, particularly Old Masters and 18th century French paintings and furniture, European and Oriental armour, Sevres porcelain and gold boxes. When their London home, Hertford House, which had been used as the French Embassy, became vacant, the collection was moved back to London and when in 1893 Sir Richard and seven years later, his wife died childless, the collection was bequeathed to the nation in perpetuity. The courtyard of Hertford House has been given a glass roof and is now a very good restaurant.

Starting with a ride on the London Eye our July outing continued with a boat trip down the river to the Tower of London. From the top of the Eye you are looking down on the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, St Paul's and the Dome and can see as far as Windsor to the west and Canary Wharf to the east. The river trip was interesting, as it showed how much the skyline of London has changed, the wonderful old Wren churches which were landmarks for so long, no longer stand out among the gleaming skyscrapers, but fortunately you can still see the rebuilt Globe theatre on the south bank together with the Tate Modern (the old Bankside power station), and St Paul's and the Monument, on the north bank. Immediately alongside Tower Bridge is the new headquarters of the Greater London Council, a strange glass egg shaped

building designed by Sir Norman Foster. The Tower of London itself is always wonderful and there is much to see. The Jewel house has been updated and you stand on a moving walkway to see the Crown Jewels, which are both lit and displayed in a much better way than hitherto.

Joanne Lawrence

OBITUARIES

MR KEITH READER M.A.

Keith Malcolm Reader, MA (Cantab), committee member, Vice Chairman, Chairman, and finally Vice President, died on 9th October 2002, aged 87. A talk to the Society soon after he had joined it on retirement to Battle, had the title "Muses and Mandarins - a light-hearted account of the early Civil Service Commissioners". Small wonder, for after a double-first in history at Gonville and Caius College, his largely lifetime career in the Civil Service concluded as, according to the Times, "the last Director of Examinations of the Civil Service Commission". In other words, in fact, Under Secretary for Recruitment and Head of the Civil Service Commission. Keith's membership of the committee, notably as Chairman from 1984 to 1987, saw a surge in Battle's interest in its Historical Society, and the stability which distinguishes it today. In this time the Society was granted charitable status. Such distinction, founded on firm control but also an exceedingly agreeable disposition of friendship, not to say humour, will long be remembered by the Society who elected and re-elected him Vice Chairman from 1987 to the time of his death. His wife Fiona writes "Keith had a great love for the Battle Historical Society. His participation in it and the friends he made there meant much to him".

MR E G CREEK M.A.

A long-standing member, George Creek M.A. (Cantab) died on 13th January 2003, aged 92. An Exhibitioner of St John's College, Cambridge after graduating in Modern Languages and Economics he joined the Indian Civil Service in 1933. Until Indian Independence in 1947 he served in Bengal as a District Officer and latterly as a District

Magistrate. He and his family returned to England in 1952 where he qualified and practised as an accountant. In 1971 at the prompting of his wife Dorothy (a member of the Newbery family) he retired and settled in Battle. A keen gardener and lover of music he became an enthusiastic member of the Historical Society. As a member of the Committee he organised the lectures, became Vice Chairman and Chairman in 1976-82 and for 16 years Vice-President.

J MANWARING BAINS (1910-2002)

Mention must be made of the death of Manwaring Bains, Curator of the Hastings Museum from 1935 to 1973. At the time of his appointment he was the youngest curator in the country and went on to become a respected local historian. His "Historic Hastings" published in 1955 remains the definitive book on the subject and an object lesson to all who dare to write about such matters. He was a friend of the Battle Historical Society and an Honorary Member.