

# THE OXON RECORDER

Issue 37

Winter 2008/2009



*Reminder of the contents of this issue, so you can come back later for more information*

**Membership reminder:** It's that time of year again.

**Presentation Day at Great Tew:** OBR members tell us about their researches – and a poem.

**Recent Recording:** A bit more on Harpsden Court, near Henley.

**OBR Library:** Books to borrow.

**From Attic to Cellar:** A new extended range of courses at Cogges. Preliminary notice.

**OAHS building officer:** An opportunity to use your experience.

**Reprint?** A note from Linda Hall.

**Stop Press – recording in SE Oxon.**

*Heather Horner, newsletter editor*

## Membership Renewal

Over the past 4 years our membership has grown from 129 to 168. I hope you are all enjoying your membership and that you think it is worthwhile to continue to support us in 2009. The membership fee remains at £5.00 per year for which you receive 4 copies of *The Oxon Recorder* and access to all our recording activities. In the current economic climate this must be the bargain of the century.

If a renewal request form is included with your newsletter (printed on pink paper), then we do not have a Bankers Order for you, which would renew your membership automatically. Should you receive such a form, please use it to renew your membership by forwarding a cheque to the membership secretary (address on the form).

If we have not included a pink reminder, we already have your Bankers Order, and no further action needed on your part. (Hint to the pink-formers – see how easy it is?)

*David Hughes, Membership Secretary*



*Cottages in Great Tew – see p2 (photos D.Fielding)*

## Presentation Day at Great Tew, 22 November 2008

On a bright and crisp November morning a sizeable group of OBR members and their guests met at the Tew Centre. This is a new facility built on the edge of the cricket ground in a beautiful parkland setting surrounding the village of Great Tew in North Oxfordshire.

After a warming coffee, we were all welcomed by John Steane, our chairman, who gave us a potted history of Great Tew and some of its buildings. This set the scene for our walk down into the village, one of the most picturesque in Oxfordshire. This is very much an estate village, where some 70% of the buildings still belong to the Great Tew Park Estate.

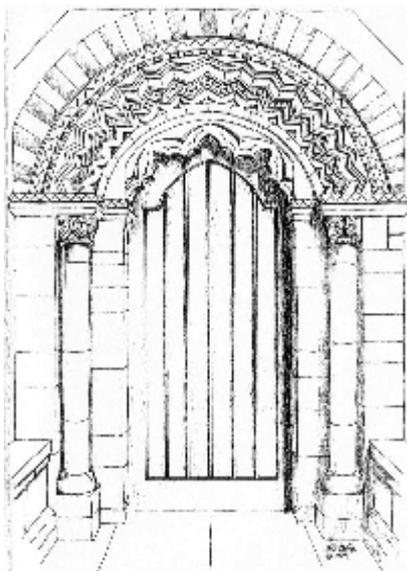


Left, view from near the manor house. Photo H.Horner



Right, Jan's drawing of the same cottages

Initially, we stopped at the 17<sup>th</sup>C Lucius Cary gateway opposite the handsome Old Vicarage (Lucius Cary being the grandson of Lady Elizabeth Tanfield of Burford Priory). This marked the entrance to the old carriage drive to the mansion, but is now used as the footpath to the church. The stone façade of St Michael's church, surrounded by wonderful specimen trees and an interesting graveyard, positively glowed in the sunlight. With the brilliant blue sky as a backdrop we could see clearly the stone gargoyles and other carvings of grotesque heads around the parapets of the walls. The 14<sup>th</sup>C south porch has successfully protected the intricately carved decoration around the inner south doorway.



This has been dated to c.1170 and consists of typical Anglo-Norman zig-zag and billet decoration (*illustrated left, another of Jan's drawings*). The interior of the church provided some marvellous features for us to admire, such as the 12<sup>th</sup>C nave pillars, two stone effigies c.1320, amazing carved timber bench ends from the 15<sup>th</sup>C, a 16<sup>th</sup>C timber parclose screen with linen-fold panelling, an interesting 3-deck pulpit and box pews from the 19<sup>th</sup>C plus many other fine features too numerous to mention here. The remarkable early 14<sup>th</sup>C wall paintings in the south aisle, executed in red, pink and black, depict scenes of the Passion and are of a kind that is unique in Oxfordshire. In the chancel we admired the fine brass memorials set into the floor, one dated 1410 dedicated to John Wylcotes and his wife Alice, the other to William Bolton and his wife Anne, dated 1513. The alabaster portrait of Mary Ann Boulton (of the Boulton & Watt steam engine family) inspired one of our members to poetry (see p5).

Tearing ourselves away from this fascinating building we continued down the lane into the centre of the village, passing rows of thatched cottages and the Victorian village school (still in use) on the way. The village pub, The Falkland Arms, refers to the Cary family who were living in Tew Park for several generations. We followed the lane past the village green which led down to Lower Park Farmhouse, in which Christina Cherry and her family now live. Christina, an OBR member, invited us all to wander around her beautiful old house, and she indicated all the clues that she had found to try and unravel its history.

The time flew by and we had to retrace our steps to the Tew Centre where we enjoyed an excellent buffet lunch prepared by Claire Freeman of Baxters. This was then followed by some individual presentations.

*(Right. An external stair tower on a cottage which we passed on our way to the Tew Centre. The coursed rubble ironstone gives the whole village a warm orange glow. Photo D.Fielding)*

Firstly Christina Cherry, who was thanked by John Steane for organising this day, explained how she set about dating the various parts of her house, Lower Park Farmhouse, mentioned above. Due to the difficulties of accessing early estate records there is documentary evidence only back as far as 1781, when it was held by the Barlow family who farmed it until 1873. In the 1881 census it was known as Barlow's Farm with an area of 405 acres. Later the Tustian family were there from the 1920s to 1990s and it is still owned by the Tew Estate, who now farm the land from the estate centre. The farmhouse is a double pile building with the oldest section to the rear, possibly mid/late 16<sup>th</sup>C, the front section having been added later, probably in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup>C. There appear to be three phases of building – a modest 3 chamber hall house which was later updated to include a fireplace/bread oven, then possibly roof raising to accommodate a first floor, and finally the addition of the front range to provide more formal rooms, with a cellar beneath. There is also a range of farm outbuildings including a dairy, detached kitchen/brewhouse, cart sheds, stables etc. There are some good timber beams with dating features such as chamfers and stops. The roof trusses in the attic provide a tantalising array of different joint types, butt, scarf etc. An unusual grooved surface to the collar of the truss which was probably originally in an open hall *(illustrated left, photo H.Horner)* brought out the detective streak in some members; possibly made by ropes for hauling up sacks? Or Paul Clark suggested it was where they had stored the long 2-handled saw? The jury is still out on that one.



Richard Farrant then showed us his work on Lane Farm, near Maidenhead in Berkshire, where he explained why he thought there were six phases of building there. Originally a 15<sup>th</sup>C hall house, with a cross wing added at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup>C. Then a 17<sup>th</sup>C south extension butted up to the original hall. After this a first floor added with stairs, resulting in a complex roof structure. In the 18<sup>th</sup>C another cross wing was added in brick and finally, in the 19<sup>th</sup>C the roof was raised and the house was refronted in brick with other features added such as bay windows, fireplaces, etc.

The next presentation was by Tim Peacock who described Codmore Farmhouse in Chesham, Bucks. This is a 4-bay house with a side wing, set well back from the road at the rear of the farm yard. It would appear that the 2 central bays are the 14<sup>th</sup>C hall which have the original doors to the cross passage. There is evidence for the position of the original screen and there are some good extant mouldings at wall plate level around four walls. The existing trusses are of a raised-aisle type with arched braces and some decorative features. The cross wing seems to have been added before the fireplace was inserted and before creating the first floor. There is a very interesting fireplace on the first floor with a unicorn stamp decoration alongside other cruder motifs.

The houses of Hornton were the subject of the next speaker, Paul Clark, who took us on a whistle-stop tour through this attractive North Oxfordshire village full of medieval hall houses. Paul had considerable evidence to suggest that these modest dwellings were all originally built of stone, made possible by the abundance of this material available locally and indeed, still quarried there. This overturned the received wisdom that almost all vernacular buildings were timber-framed until Tudor times.

Ann Atkinson, a resident of Witney, showed us photographs of the many mill buildings in this town connected with the blanket industry. The map extracts were fascinating in the way they showed the positions of the tentering racks where the cloth would have been stretched out to dry evenly without shrinking. Some of these buildings have been lost, some have been converted, either to offices or dwellings, and one is under threat due to the proposed Cogges link road. Quite a number of the buildings associated with the mills still survive in Witney such as the owners' houses, workers' cottages, guild halls etc. and although converted to other uses, enable us to imagine them in their former glory.

Henley upon Thames was our next stop of the afternoon and Ruth Gibson gave us a very erudite account of the Old White Hart which she has been recording for the *Victoria County History*. A rather non-descript 1930s mock Tudor façade hides a medieval coaching inn which was built on possibly three of the town's burgage plots. The whole site is bounded on three sides with a marvellous Tudor brick wall of one build and dated to 1531. There are obvious remains of jettied galleries on the rear wings around the internal courtyard and these, too, have a date of 1531. Interesting internal features abound and have all been meticulously recorded to allow the history of the building to be unravelled, including the investigation of the cellar with its chalk block rib vaulting dating from c.1300. OBR members contributed to the recording, see *Oxon Recorder* Issues 34 & 35.

John Steane then gave us a short account of hospital buildings in the middle ages and then cited two which he has looked at recently. The Hospital of the Holy Cross in Abingdon, founded in 1446, emphasised the development into the provision of more privacy, with 14 rooms linked by a cloister passage and a communal hall area in the centre of the complex.. This establishment was not abolished at the Reformation, but was re-founded in 1553 and became Christ's Hospital. The second example at Ewelme, founded in 1436, is of a similar design and materials to that at Abingdon, built of brick and flint, though the individual rooms are set around a quadrangle, directly attached to the church. The almshouses are still occupied for that purpose.

The last presentation, by David Clark, gave us a whirlwind trip around several locations, where David had photographed interesting properties with features that sometimes raised more questions than answers. Some of the properties were up for sale like The Clapper's in Charlbury and others under threat of conversion or, at worst, demolition, like the canal-side cottages in Kidlington. The interesting dovecote at Brightwell with its unusual cross-shaped plan and 1180 nesting boxes was thought to have been built in the early 17<sup>th</sup>C as an overt reflection of the builder's Catholic sympathies at a time of suppression.

The afternoon concluded with our chairman thanking everyone who had made a contribution to the day's events and, as usual, everyone agreed that it had been a very interesting and informative Presentation Day enjoyed by all.

*Jan Cliffe*

**Editor's footnote** This was my first visit to Great Tew, being a relative newcomer to Oxfordshire, and I was not aware until I told a friend about my visit how derelict many of the cottages had become – what my friend described as “disturbing picturesque decay” – and she was delighted to hear that most are now restored to habitation. I understand that the current owner has adopted a policy of letting properties to artisan craftsmen, often with young families, encouraging establishment of small businesses and careful restoration of the buildings by the occupants. New life has been breathed into the village.

Another of our members present that day was David Fielding, who shared these thoughts with me: “It was a real pleasure revisiting for the first time in nearly thirty years, and seeing the successful restoration of so many deserted cottages, which even Pevsner comments on. I dug out some verse I wrote on visiting Great Tew in 1969 and seeing Mary Ann Boulton’s tomb in the church. Her monument made a great impression on me. You may feel it worthy of inclusion in the next *Oxon Recorder*, but I will take no offence if it doesn’t appear.” I think it is a fitting tribute to a memorable day.

*Heather Horner*

### **Mary Ann Boulton**

**Counting through three lines of Christian names  
And indistinguishable commas on her tomb,  
Summed her seven children and a grieving husband.  
She was thirty four.**

**Seven years later the church’s restoration  
Found him paying the full six hundred pounds  
For the chancel in which she lies,  
An alabaster virgin.**

David Fielding. 1969



Chantry monument 1834 to Mary Ann Boulton 1795-1829  
St. Michael and All Angels, Great Tew.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Stop Press !!**

An opportunity has occurred to record two thatched timber framed cottages in Blewbury, both of which are of some vintage, with one being box framed (c.1550 - 1600) and the other cruck framed (c.1390 - 1425). OBR members in/near the SE corner of the county, e.g. Reading / Wantage / Wallingford / Benson / Woodcote who are interested are invited to contact Ken Hume, email [ken@kfhume.freemove.co.uk](mailto:ken@kfhume.freemove.co.uk). We will email local members shortly, if we have your address. We may need to select recorders since access to the buildings is very restricted.

## Harpden Court. Correction and Update



Issue 36 of *Oxon Recorder* (p7) reported on OBR Recording Day at Harpden Court, near Henley-upon-Thames. Two facts got accidentally conflated into an error; the artist and date of a bird-eye view sketch of the buildings should have been attributed to John Blagrave, dating to 1586. OBR member Ruth Gibson, who is coordinating our recording of the main block of the buildings, has kindly provided an image of the sketch, which features on an Estate Map drawn by the famous Reading map-making Blagrave family. Ruth has also forwarded the provisional results of dendro-dating at Harpden. The roof over the main block dates to 1568, strongly suggesting that the drawing by Blagrave depicts the existing roof (though there are some 18C modifications)

*(above) This 'birdseye view' of Harpden Court is by John Blagrave and dates to 1586. The main block still stands, facing north (roof 1568), the courtyard to the rear and all its buildings have gone. The front courtyard buildings have gone, replaced by the sweeping circular drive illustrated in the modern aerial view (below). A 'new' west wing housing the kitchens dendro-dated to 1721/22, some of the alterations to the main roof dendro-date to the mid-18C, which on stylistic grounds is probably also the period of remodelling of the south-east wing.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### An Opportunity to Use your Experience

The Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society is looking for a Listed Buildings caseworker for part of South Oxfordshire. You don't have to live there, but as some site visits may be needed, proximity to the northern part around Thame would be a help. Cases involving major changes to listed buildings are sent to us by the Council for British Archaeology, and the job is to look at these and make comments. The number of these is variable, but usually no more than half a dozen a year require comment. This can be a great opportunity to visit properties in the area, and use your OBR buildings experience to consider the impacts of proposed alterations. You will be a member of the OAHS Listed Buildings sub-committee, which meets four times a year to discuss cases and share experiences.

For further details contact David Clark, Chairman, OAHS LBC at [secretary@obr.org.uk](mailto:secretary@obr.org.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*

### Extended range of *From Attic to Cellar* courses

Following the success last autumn of our 1-day courses at Cogges Farm Museum, we plan to repeat some, and extend the range. We are also introducing three new tutors. Not all dates are finalised yet. We expect to have flyers available with Issue 38, check dates then.

Saturday 30 May **Window on the Past** — David Clark (dating features, fashions, fixtures)

Sunday 31 May **Raising the Roof** — Paul Clark (understanding form and function)

Saturday 20 June **Going to Church** — Paul Barnwell (changing use of liturgical spaces)

Date t.b.c. **Down on the Farm** — John Steane (farm buildings and their uses)

Date t.b.c. **Rule of Thumb** — Vic Allison (photography, measuring and drawing)

## OBR Library

Yes, OBR now has a lending library. Thanks to a generous donation from Gillian Harrison, the Secretary's 'spare' copies of useful books has been enlarged to the point where the term 'library' seems appropriate. Books are available on loan to members – for as long as you need them. Please contact the Secretary.

Titles now include:

Brunskill, R W (1982) *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain* London  
Excellent survey, but there is a later, larger edition

Brunskill, R W (1983) *Traditional Buildings of Britain* London  
The later edition was reviewed by the Secretary in VA (2005)

Buchanan, Terry (1984) *Photographing Historic Buildings* RCHME, London  
Counsels of perfection for those who have the time to spend.

Coles, John (1977) *Field Archaeology in Britain* London.  
This should really go to Oxfam.

Gibson, A V B (1963) *Instructions in Archaeology* London  
This should really go to Oxfam, too, but there is a short chapter on houses

Harvey, Nigel (1997) *Old Farm Buildings* Shire Books, Princes Risborough  
Useful introduction.

McCann, John (1995) *Clay and Cob Buildings* Shire Books, Princes Risborough.  
Still the best introduction to the subject.

Powell, Christopher (1991) *Stables and Stable Blocks* Shire Books, Princes Risborough  
An excellent introduction to the subject.

Powell, Christopher (1996) *Discovering Cottage Architecture* Shire Books, Princes Risborough  
A broad introduction to rural houses, mostly vernacular.

Schofield, John and Vince, Alan (1994) *Medieval Towns* Leicester University Press  
Again, now in a larger edition, but this remains essential reading for the topic.

### *South Midlands Archaeology*

There ought to be a complete set from 30 (2000) to 38 (2008), but at present only 32 (2002) and 34 (2004) are available.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Correspondence

There is a possibility of getting my "Rural Houses of North Avon and South Glos 1400-1720" reissued as a revised and updated version (leave out of the gazetteer, some of the less interesting houses and include a lot more that were surveyed since the book came out, plus more on fixtures and fittings, farm buildings etc), and in a different format (eg all the plans reduced to the same scale as originally intended!) And maybe even a different title to get rid of North Avon once and for all! To persuade the publishers that this is a viable option I need to be able to produce a list of people who will want to buy it, or who are prepared to subscribe in advance at a reduced rate. I don't know yet what the price would be but something in the £20 area is likely, but less for subscribers. If you are interested I would be grateful if you could email me asap. It would also be helpful if you could indicate roughly what price you would be prepared to pay. And even more helpful if you could pass this message on to anyone else you think might be interested. Very many thanks. Contact [hall.email@virgin.net](mailto:hall.email@virgin.net)

Linda Hall

**Forthcoming Events**

Tuesday 13 January 2009: **'The Grey Old Town on the Lonely Down' – A Perspective on Burford's Buildings** OAHS lecture by David Clark, free to members and guests, 5.50pm at Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford

Saturday 21 March 2009: **Recording Day** t.b.c. We will email when confirmed.

Saturday 28 March 2009: **St Thomas the Martyr: Piety and Poverty in an Oxford Parish** A day school (3 lectures and a guided walk) to be held at Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford. Information and booking [ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk)

Friday 8 – Sunday 10 May 2009: **Buildings & Farming: Past, Present and Future** A weekend school in association with the Historic Farm Buildings Group, to be held at Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford. Open to all, but book early. Information and booking [ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk)

Saturday 16 May 2009: OBR AGM at **Faringdon**. Guided town walk and buildings to visit.

Saturday 6 June 2009: **Recording Day** t.b.c. details next issue, or we will email when confirmed.

May/June/July 2009 **From Attic to Cellar; new extended series** mostly at Cogges Farm Museum. Flyer with Issue 38, dates likely to be 30/31 May, 20 June, 25/26 July, but check they are still the same when booking.

Saturday 30 May **Window on the Past** - David Clark (dating features, fashions, fixtures)

Sunday 31 May **Raising the Roof** - Paul Clark (understanding form and function)

Saturday 20 June **Going to Church** - Paul Barnwell (changing use of liturgical spaces)

tbc **Down on the Farm** – John Steane (farm buildings and their uses)

tbc **Rule of Thumb** – Vic Allison (photography, measuring and drawing)

Friday 25 – Sunday 27 September 2009: **Markets and Market Places** A weekend school in association with the Vernacular Architecture Group, to be held at Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford. Open to all, but book early. Information and booking [ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk)

Saturday 22 November 2009 (provisional date) **OBR Presentation Day**. The chance for members to catch up on recent research, even if they cannot be active recorders themselves. Venue t.b.c., and there will be a guided walk or buildings to explore.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Copy date and contacts**

Copy date for Issue 37 is 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009. Please send articles, information, letters, reviews, etc. to me, Heather Horner, at Windrush Cottage, Station Road, South Leigh, Oxon. OX29 6XN, telephone 01993 773819, or e-mail [hahwindrush@aol.com](mailto:hahwindrush@aol.com)

The Secretary is David Clark, 21 Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HQ, telephone 01865 516414, e-mail [drc@davidrclark.plus.com](mailto:drc@davidrclark.plus.com) or [david.clark3@which.net](mailto:david.clark3@which.net)

Our website is at [www.OBR.org.uk](http://www.OBR.org.uk)

The OBR are extremely grateful to *The Oxford Preservation Trust* for their generosity in supporting the production of *The Oxon Recorder* and to *Awards for All* in supporting our work to record the built heritage of Oxfordshire.

**Endnote from the Editor**

I had hoped to include other items in this newsletter, but a family bereavement has curtailed my input. My apologies if you were expecting to see your article here.

H.H.