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- The making of a field archaeologist: Part 1
- Probate evidence of 17c building alterations
- Forthcoming events
- AGM information

The Oxon Recorder is the newsletter of Oxfordshire Buildings Record and is published four times a year. OBR aims to advance education and promote research on the buildings of Oxfordshire by encouraging the recording of buildings and to create and manage a publicly accessible repository of records relating to such buildings. The Oxon Recorder is also available in the members' section of our website: www.obr.org.uk

Next copy date for contributions is 1 June. Please send any contributions or comments to Richard Farrant at <a href="mailto:newsletter@obr.org.uk">newsletter@obr.org.uk</a> Contributions need to be Word or Pages documents with accompanying photographs sent separately in high resolution jpg format.

## **OBR News**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. As you will know from the Secretary's circular of 20 March, the AGM scheduled for 16 May is deferred indefinitely due to the Coronavirus lockdown. The documents for presentation to the AGM are annexed to this newsletter, namely the Secretary's and Treasurer's reports and the independently examined annual accounts. All committee members and officers will remain in post until a General Meeting can be convened. It will be assumed members are content to adopt the accounts and the reports, and also for the committee members and officers to remain in post, unless objections are sent to the Secretary by 16 May. The Committee would welcome broader participation and if you wish to join it, please complete the annexed form and submit it to the Secretary.

**OBR BURSARIES**. The Committee has reviewed the bursary scheme, in the light of its two year operation. The scheme will continue indefinitely, using the same criteria for judging applications as before. These are:

- Applicants must be OBR personal members;
- Applicants must demonstrate that the bursary is being used to pay for course/conference fees and for no other purpose;
- Applications should demonstrate how the course/conference will improve the applicant's ability to record and interpret a vernacular building;
- Applicants will be expected to demonstrate commitment to support and promote the OBR's aim\*;
- Applicants commit to make a report on the course or conference which may be published in the Oxon Recorder.

\*OBR's aim is to encourage the better understanding of Oxfordshire's built heritage, and to this end its members carry out building recording, teach courses, give talks, and write articles (or even books) on the subject.

The existing maximum grant of £500 will continue, but it is possible the amount granted may be reduced if demand in any one year is unexpectedly high. Applications can be made at any time. Applications, using the form annexed to this newsletter or available on the OBR website, should be made to the Secretary at secretary@obr.org.uk

**ANN SPOKES.** We are sad to record that Ann Spokes Symonds died in late December, aged 94. Ann was an Oxfordshire County and Oxford City Councillor for many years, and served as Oxford Lord Mayor and chairman of the County Council. She vigorously defended Oxford's heritage and initiated the campaign to preserve North Oxford when large parts were threatened in the late 1960's. This reflected her great interest in historic conservation and she was an energising member of inter alia, the OBR, Oxford Preservation Trust and the Oxfordshire Local History Association.

## The making of a field archaeologist; Part 1

Editor's note. What follows is a departure from the Oxon Recorder's normal fare, being an autobiographical memoire by our Honorary President, John Steane. His eminence as a field archaeologist of vernacular building of very long standing will make the origins of his motivation relevant to most readers; and his account is also a vignette on past times which will be of interest to many. Subsequent parts will appear in future Oxon Recorders.

I was born on 3rd May 1931 in Balham, South London. My father came from Maidenhead; he was the son of Grandpa Steane who was an ironmonger who lived at Lambeth Walk, was churchwarden of St Mary's Lambeth, was a freeman of the City of London, and a pallbearer of Archbishop Davison. Grandpa Steane retired to Maidenhead when his health began to give way. He married the 16th child of a lady who died at 41 whom we knew as Granny Steane. Grandpa had two children, Frank (my father) and Marguerite, my Aunty Mardie.

My father went to school at Maidenhead College. I have a series of beautifully bound school prizes including Field Marshall Roberts' "40 years in India" and Creasy's "15 decisive battles of the World", a distinctly Edwardian Imperial choice. He was fond of the river Thames – punting was his delight. He left school to join the G.W.R (God's Wonderful Railway) because grandpa reckoned he couldn't afford to send him to university. He joined the Royal Fusiliers in 1915 and was promoted captain; his army service was in Egypt, the Sinai and Palestine. He was mentioned in dispatches and accompanied General Allenby to Jerusalem and to Damascus.

When demobilised, jobs were short. GWR offered him his old job; he declined and made the great mistake of his life – he went to work for his cousin, Harry Mash of Mash & Austin in London, which owned three farms and market gardens in Cornwall and supplied the Covent Garden market with fresh veg and flowers – also the liners at Southampton and the theatres in London.

We used to go to Maidenhead on Saturdays when my father had a half day off. We were entertained to lavish roast lunches in Aunty Mardie's basement kitchen; above was her paraffin-smelling corner shop full of everything that a small boy could desire. Aunty Mardie just said, "choose". I used to dress up with my cousin Peter and we put on little plays at the end of the afternoon which enlarged my historical imagination.

In the meantime I went to one of the London elementary schools to remain open during the Blitz. I was evacuated to Chesham (Bucks) for the first year of the war – where I waxed fat

on a diet of roast chicken and apple pie cooked by my father's cousin Aunty May. I read the Daily Mirror and collected stamps. Aunty May encouraged my drawing and painting by allowing me to paint in her sitting room.

In December 1940-January 1941 my father, now Captain Steane was stationed at Fletton near Peterborough. The family joined him. His job was to protect the engineering works, Baker Perkins, from saboteurs. He was also guarding the brickworks which were working at full blast – since the Blitz was destroying whole city centres – Coventry, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, East End of London, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds. He rented a house from a Mrs Datson for one month; she lined the floors with newspaper so that little boys didn't tread mud all over the place.



Father and son John. 1940



Brother Christopher, and John in Dulwich College uniform. 1943

My brother Christopher and I gradually learned our way into the city of Peterborough, much smaller and tightly knit than now since it took London overspill. Bus there, bus back. We frequented a shop selling treacle tart. We peered through the minster gate to the yawning gothic arches of the west front. The huge Norman nave. The 13th century painted ceiling. The fan vaulted presbytery. We met Canon Knyvett, Archdeacon of Northampton, later Bishop of Selby. He took us up above the arcade, triforium, clerestory, past the great wooden wheel for lifting stone and timber, the roof timbers above the 13th century ceiling; out on top of the leads. The huge expanse of fens stretched to the eastern horizon. I gained a partiality for cathedrals: Wells, Ely, Lincoln, Westminster Abbey, Canterbury, Chichester, Winchester - all of these I saw in the next eight years. My mother took me (and my bike). We stayed at Rye, Lewes, Canterbury, Brighton, Ely.





**The West Front** 

Peterborough Cathedral

Fan vaulting

Other fascinating places we visited in the winter of 1940-1 were Oundle – school, shop, church, bridge, Talbot inn and Fotheringhay castle, the site of Mary Queen of Scots' execution, Collegiate church. Norman cross where French POWs made models of beef bones. Peterborough museum itself with bronze age axes. All busily jotted down in my red notebooks!

I also came into contact with the prehistoric. In 1941 my father was stationed for a time in the Isles of Scilly. He invited my mother and us two boys to stay on St Marys (one week) and Tresco (another week). Uncle Harry offered to drive us to Penzance. As we approached Reading I began to feel sick (I was always car sick). Harry asked, "had I ever seen Stonehenge?" I forgot about being nauseous, pressed my nose against the window and was rewarded by the amazing sight of Stonehenge as it was in 1941. I was never car sick again.

When we got to Penzance we boarded the 'Scillonian', a little steamer armed with Bofors guns which took us through the U-boat infested waters that allegedly covered the lost land of Lyonesse. I can hardly describe the sight of the Scillies, so completely unlike the Isle of Wight, Freshwater Bay and Colwell Bay where we had holidayed in the 1930s — white beaches with masses of cowrie shells and bird bones but no people, flint implements for the collecting. Every bit of flint had been brought by man; stone chamfered tombs called cist vaens on every rise, Cromwell's castle, King Charles' Castle and across the water, Tresco with it's tropical gardens, museum of figureheads of wrecks and the Rev. Chadwick with whom we stayed — getting up in the middle of meals to look up things in his extensive library. He also had a splendid collection of flint implements. Such a kind man. I had to share a bed with my brother which wasn't much fun. The whole house was blacked out. There were 30 soldiers to roll back the Wermacht.

In 1942 I was given a London County Council scholarship to attend Dulwich College, an ancient public school which has just celebrated its four hundred years, and was founded by Edward Alleyn, master of the kings' Bear Garden. I came under the influence immediately of AWP Gayford, Organ Scholar of Keble College, who was head of music, English and History. "Guts", as we called him, was friendly and impressed with someone (me) who always got full marks for history as I came up the school. Dulwich believed that the classics

were the ideal education so I learned Latin & Greek. I dropped Greek but continued with English, French and Latin into the Sixth Form. Here I met a triple set of brilliant teachers. "Guts" himself, PJ Coveney, known as 'Cove' (Cambridge) and George Grange (or GG – i.e. "horse") who taught the general paper. Coveney was full of recent Cambridge learning – including Dom David Knowles and F R Leavis. GG was an old socialist who flung Karl Marx and Engels at one – I read all these greedily.

I should have mentioned that my brother Christopher who was three years nine months older than me went as a boarder to Christs Hospital in Horsham and came under the influence of a mathematician named Rev DH Poole. He was an expert on Norman architecture and had travelled the length and breadth of Britain pursuing Norman sculpture, photographing it and card indexing the results. It was the first time I ever met a research method. I was impressed. I began to go round churches – only churches (I hadn't yet been taught by Hoskins to look at the whole landscape) myself on my bike making observations – recording them in card indexes. Poole died of cancer in the middle of my undergraduate second year; he left me his library, his card indexes, his photographs and £1000. I handed the filing cabinets on to the Courtauld Institute of Fine Art who were glad to have this record of what Norman sculpture was like 40 years previously. I read the books. I invested the £1000 in more books. My library expanded.

During 1943, 1944 and 1945 my father's cousin Maud Steane ran a farming camp from her large and unfinished house called the Firs at Witchampton, Dorset. Up to 25 sixth formers from Dulwich College were invited each year to help bring in the harvest. They consisted of the cream of the school, prefects, actors, the 1st XV, 1st XI, in addition my brother was invited and Michael Boyes who is my oldest friend now 91 years of age. He used to cycle with me to school.

I was too young to go farming in 1943-4 but not too young to seize my cousin Eric's bike (he was in the army in the Middle East), take a packet of sandwiches and explore the Dorset countryside. Everywhere I went I met with well preserved prehistoric and Roman-British earthworks. There were great hill forts such as Badbury Rings, Hod and Hambledon Hills; Roman roads, Bokerley Dyke, the Roman-British villages of Rotherly and Woodcutts, the Neolithic long barrow called Wor Barrow. All had been in the possession of Lieutenant-General Pitt Rivers who after a distinguished military career and by a series of accidents succeeded to the inheritance of Cranbourne Chase. He had already formed a huge collection of artefacts from all over the world. His theories of typology were an attempt to apply Darwin's theories of evolution to material objects from different cultures. These he displayed in a museum he built in Farnham in the middle of his estate which was still open to the public in the 1940s. In addition he carried out a series of ground-breaking excavations which were recorded in three-dimensional detail: his estate carpenter made superb models of the excavations, most of which have landed up in the Salisbury Museum. He understood the importance of strategraphical analysis. All these excited me as I cycled through the Pitt Rivers landscape past Tollard Royal where the general recorded the first medieval archaeological site near Salisbury. I had my paints and drew and painted Salisbury Cathedral from the north and the west. I got to know the so-called draincage collection – objects dropped into the waterways that criss-crossed the city, the amazing wall paintings in St Thomas' church and the city market place and market cross.



**Badbury Rings, Dorset** 

I was now 16. The Second World War was over. I went into the sixth form in 1945. "Guts" Gayford suggested I try for entrance to Magdalen College Oxford before taking Advanced School Certificate (A levels) in December 1948. Magdalen offered the 16 year old Steane an open-scholarship (or Demyship) in Modern History. I went into the army for 18 months and served in Kent, Cornwall, Edinburgh (6 months) and Trieste (6 months) before coming up to Oxford in October 1950.



Christopher, Mother and John. 1949

John Steane Personal photos © John Steane

## Probate evidence of 17c building alterations

Oxfordshire Probate Group members are currently working their way through the wills and inventories of Swerford, in NW Oxfordshire between Chipping Norton and Banbury. The inventory of William Hollins, Parson of Swerford, who died in 1634, contains lines with a strong suggestion that he was making alterations to the house at the time of his death.

30.	Item oake, elme & ash boards	£З	0s	0d
31.	Item Polles, Rafters, and timber in the streete	£5	13s	4d
32.	Item hoopes and Quarters for a joyner	£,1	0s	0d

The Old Rectory at Swerford is still standing, a substantial house with an older core, although now encased in 18th and 19th C additions. William Hollins had large land holdings, and maintained a well-stocked farm with sheep, cattle, horses, and varied arable crops, with a total estate value of nearly £500, very generous for the time. His books alone were valued at £30. Much of his land was leased from Oxford colleges, and he had a number of live-in servants, with his niece acting as housekeeper. The rooms listed in the inventory are parlour, study, yellow chamber, chamber adjoining, maids chamber, great chamber, two little chambers, men's chamber, hall, dairy house, malt house, kitchen, cheese chamber, with mention of upper stable, and pease barn.

#### References:

Oxfordshire History Centre, MS Wills Oxon 132/1/10, will & inventory of William HOLLINS <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1194004">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1194004</a>.



The Old Rectory, Swerford

Heather Horner

# **Forthcoming Events**

# Oxford Architectural & Historical Society Oxfordshire Local History Association

OBR belongs to these bodies and members can participate in their events. If you are not an OAHS member personally, you should check first with OAHS about availability, noting your OBR membership. At present of course, events are affected by the Coronavirus lock-down. See websites (<a href="http://www.oahs.org.uk/new program.php">http://www.oahs.org.uk/new program.php</a> and (<a href="http://www.olha.org.uk/events/talks-and-meetings/">http://www.oahs.org.uk/new program.php</a> and (<a href="http://www.olha.org.uk/events/talks-and-meetings/">http://www.olha.org.uk/events/talks-and-meetings/</a>) for listings and details of events, and talks.

#### **OBR Contact details**

Membership - Paul Clark (membership@obr.org.uk) General - David Clark (secretary@obr.org.uk) Newsletter - Richard Farrant (newsletter@obr.org.uk) Webmaster - admin@obr.org.uk Website: www.obr.org.uk



#### **OXFORDSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD**

#### TWENTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The twentieth Annual General Meeting of the Oxfordshire Buildings Record would have been held on Saturday 16 May 2020 in The Varsity Club, High Street, Oxford, after which a tour of All Souls College would have taken place.

The Agenda of the meeting would have been:

- 1. Apologies for absence
- 2. Minutes of the nineteenth AGM on 1 June 2019 (on pp.15-17 of Oxon Recorder no.78 if you need a copy, please visit <u>www.obr.org.uk</u> to download it).
- 3. Matters arising
- 4. Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year 2019
- 5. Secretary's Report
- 6. Membership Secretary's Report
- 7. Election of Officers and Committee for 2020/21

The following Officers need to be elected at the AGM (present incumbent in brackets) Chairman (Paul Clark),

Secretary (David Clark),

*Treasurer (David Hughes).* 

The Committee currently consists of the following (present roles in brackets): Kathy Davies, Richard Farrant (Newsletter Editor), Heather Horner, Felix Lam (Events) Donna Thynne (Archivist) and Simon Townley. All retire annually but are eligible for re-election. John Steane was co-opted as a committee member during the year.

8. Election of Examiner

The OBR accounts examiner, Malcolm Lucas, has been nominated to the post.

9. Any other business

We welcome offers from members to join the committee. If you would like to do this, please contact the Secretary, D Clark, 21 Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HQ (secretary@obr.org.uk).

#### Secretary's Report for 2019

The Oxfordshire Buildings Record investigated 47 buildings in 2019, eighteen of which were houses in Hook Norton, where we are working with the Victoria County History to develop as complete an understanding as we can of the built character of the village for volume XXI. In the other ongoing projects, the Chipping Norton Buildings Record completed the fieldwork for another four buildings as part of the Historic England project on 'Early Fabric in Historic Towns', and two further houses were recorded in Chalgrove, as part of a continuing project in the village. Four more buildings in Abingdon were recorded. One house was recorded in South Oxfordshire for the VCH volume XX. The remaining 18 houses were recorded at the request of the owners or arose through site visits carried out during examination of listed building planning applications by members who are also OAHS caseworkers.

Opportunities for group recording days were fewer than usual. In the spring we had a successful training day at The Gables, East Hagbourne, where we encountered an unusual king-post roof construction, and later in the year at Elm Tree House, Shrivenham where we offered the owners a choice of possible development histories for their house. Our recording days continue to attract a good cross-section of members, and are the main way in which we try to develop recording and interpretation skills.

During the year we launched an initiative whereby members accompanied the secretary on initial site visits. Only one of these resulted in a group recording day; the other five were small enough to complete after a short visit.

As ever, individual OBR members have also been active on their own initiative in recording interesting local features and buildings at risk. Some members also work professionally on recording projects.

As we reported last year, work to get our building reports into a form suitable for archiving at the Oxfordshire History Centre has continued. Although we made no deposits this year, another 50 reports are ready for printing. This work involves a lot of detailed admin to ensure all necessary permissions are in place, and Donna has done a great job in sorting this out. We regard this as a priority, since there are now over 400 building reports, which we need to get into the public domain for other researchers to use.

Last year I recorded our thanks to Tim Peacock for his work on the website. His sudden death last September robbed us not only of our treasurer but also of his IT skills and we are now facing the inevitability of a site redesign. Donna has also been active in posting snippets of information on the OBR Facebook page, so please send her material for that, or look at it regularly for our latest news.

As members will know, there were no OBR excursions in 2019, but the OAHS allowed OBR members to join their excellent programme – run by John and Sue Hine. We welcomed Felix Lam in 2019 to manage OBR events, and the first of these was the successful Presentation Day at Goring in November, where Simon Draper of VCH led a fascinating, if somewhat damp, walk around the village. Sadly, however, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we have had to cancel or postpone not only the AGM but another event to two barn reconstructions that she worked hard to organise.

Simon Townley was the OBR lecturer last year, giving us a marvellous overview of the part building research has increasingly played in developing the histories of Oxfordshire parishes that are the must-read starting points for anyone researching town and village buildings.

David Clark

#### Treasurer's Commentary on the accounts for the year 2019

I would like to record my sadness in taking over as Treasurer for the OBR following Tim Peacocks untimely death in September 2019 and to put on record the high quality of his record keeping, which made my task so much easier.

The 2019 accounts have been approved by our Examiner, Malcolm Lucas and are attached to this commentary.

The excess of receipts over payments for 2019 was £97.85, compared to £949.08 in 2018. The major items that contributed to this change were a small reduction in members subscriptions, an increase in general expenses of £165, the awarding of Bursaries at £500 and the purchase of a new Laptop computer at £439.94.

Income from membership fees was slightly down on the previous year by £67, however, we continue to receive generous donations from our members, which we gratefully acknowledge

At previous AGMs there were discussions regarding the level of our excess income and reserves, and the committee were encouraged to use these responsibly to promote the objectives of the OBR. The committee decided in 2018 that we would offer bursaries to personal members to pay for training courses and conferences, that would enhance the capabilities of the group, and £500 was awarded in 2019. This scheme is continuing in 2020 and is open for applications for funding to any OBR personal member. The purchase of the laptop for use by the Secretary, together with cloud storage, will enhance the preparation and publishing of our buildings reports for open use and will provide long term secure storage of our records.

On our general expenses the only change of significance has been an increase in "general admin" which reflects our increased focus on preparing and obtaining approvals for the open publication of our reports. In future years this cost will be separated from our general admin expenses. The net cost of events was down on the previous year (-£314.95 in 2018 and -£146.50 in 2019). All other costs were in line with previous years.

David Hughes

#### OXFORDSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD

#### STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR OF 2019 (1 JAN TO 31 DEC)

WITH COMPARATIVE FIGURES FOR THE PREVIOUS YEAR

			2018			2019	
RECEIPTS		RESTRICTED £	UNRESTRICTED	TOTAL	RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED	TOTAL £
		L	Ł	L	2	£	~
GRANT	(1) English Heritage	740.00		740.00			-
NORMAL INCOME	joining fees		60.00	60.00		70.00	70.0
	subs.		1,012.00	1,012.00		945.00	945.0
	members' donations		583.90	583.90		576.00	576.0
	visits & contrib. for meetings	3	610.45	610.45		475.00	475.0
	training courses		-	-		· -	-
	gift aid tax refund		246.53	246.53		283.45	283.4
	interest		8.14	8.14		13.15	13.1
	other		257.77	257.77		-	-
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	740.00	2,778.79	3,518.79		2,362.60	2,362.6
PAYMENTS							
FROM GRANT	Chipping Norton	942.11		942.11			
FROM GRANT	Chipping Norton	342.11					
PAYMENTS FROM	general admin.		108.44	108.44		273.39	273.3
NORMAL INCOME	visits & meetings		925.40	925.40		621.50	621.5
	web		162.96	162.96		20.00	20.0
	recruiting & publicity		-	-		-	
	training courses & bursary			-		500.00	500.0
	equipment maint.		-	-		439.94	439.9
	recording consumables		-	-		-	400.0
	insurance		206.30	206.30		199.92	199.9
	CBA affiliation		73.50	73.50		64.00 146.00	64.0 146.0
	other		151.00	151.00		146.00	140.0
TOTAL PAYMENTS		942.11	1,627.60	2,569.71		2,264.75	2,264.7
EXCESS OF RECEIPTS	OVER PAYMENTS	-202.11	1,151.19	949.08	0.00	97.85	97.8
					-		
BALANCES		RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED	TOTAL	RESTRICTED	UNRESTRICTED	
		£	£	£	£	£	£
OPENING BALANCE A						10 555 55	10070
CAF		592.04	9,565.03	10157.07	389.93	10,588.98	10978.9
Nat	West current account	-	96.15	96.15	-	223.39	223.3
OPENING TOTAL OF ALL ACCOUNTS		592.04	9,661.18	10,253.22	389.93	10,812.37	11,202.3
CURRENT BALANCE A	T BANK						
CAF	deposit account	389.93	10,588.98	10978.91	389.93	10,777.58	11167.5
Nat	West current account	-	223.39	223.39	-	132.64	132.6
CLOSING TOTAL OF A	LL ACCOUNTS	389.93	10,812.37	11,202.30	389.93	10,910.22	11,300.1
CHANCE IN DAI ANCE	AT DANK			949.08			97.8
CHANGE IN BALANCE	A I DANK			343.00			51.0

<ol> <li>OBR acting as payment stage for English H</li> </ol>	eritage.
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	/ /	
This statement of receipts and payments was approved by the Executive Committee on	11/03/2020	and signed on its behalf
20 1/2/	/ /	
Paul Clark (Chair)		
EXAMINER'S CERTIFICATE		
I have examined the statement of Receipts and Payments for the year ended 31 Decembe	r 2019 and I certify that it is	s in accordance with the
ords, vouchers and information supplied to me.		
AH)		0/1/20-
Malcolm Lucas		date: 8 / 4 / 2025

## **OBR Bursary Application form**

Name Address
e-mail telephone
<b>Description of the course/conference</b> (including title, organiser, stated purpose, headline content, website address if advertised online)
Course/conference Date(s) Cost
Previous building recording experience (amateur/professional)
Courses/conferences attended in the past three years
What do you expect to get out of this course/conference?
As a member, how would you plan to use what you have learned to support and promote the aims of the OBR?
Signed and dated