

**MARCHAM SOCIETY MEETING, 19 OCT
HISTORY OF HARWELL, Part 1**

You could be forgiven for thinking that the history of the Harwell site began with the arrival of the boffins. However, Nick Hance soon dispelled that idea in his interesting and entertaining talk.

The location is criss-crossed by ancient tracks such as the Icknield Way, Portway and the old Oxford-Hungerford road known as Straight Street. William of Orange passed by on his way to claim the crown of England. Being at the intersection of three parishes, Harwell, Chilton and East Hendred, was a great advantage when illegal sheep fairs were held in bygone days. When the forces of law from one parish rode out to remove the offenders, they simply moved a few yards into the next parish!

By the early 1900s, a successful racing stables was established beside the (old) A34 at the northern end of the Chilton parish. In the mid-1930s a string of winners had given many of Chilton villagers good returns on their bets. Imagine the dismay when Air Ministry officials arrived to compulsorily purchase the land for the building of one of the first of 66 new airfields. Who says we weren't prepared for war?

In fact, only 20% of the new airfield was in Harwell parish, but that happened to be where the CO was standing when the naming took place. An open day was held in 1938, to which VIPs, foreign ambassadors and others were invited including (unbelievably) members of German High Command. No doubt they took plenty of notes!

Throughout the war, RAF Harwell served as a bombers' training station. In 1944 aircraft towing gliders took off carrying troops to Normandy as part of the D-Day invasion force, including the "Pathfinders" who provided the flares for aircraft to land troops for the assault on Pegasus Bridge.

Alongside the airfield a catapult pit had been constructed, at the request of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. This was intended to research the launching of 30-ton bombers from aircraft carriers. In fact, it was never used and was abandoned after the war, to the distress of the maintenance man, who had "lived in", only emerging once a week to collect his pay.

After the war, the Attlee government decided to set up a nuclear research establishment. John Cockcroft and his team chose Harwell and took the site over from the RAF on 1 Jan 1946. Construction work began at once and Britain's first reactor, GLEEP (Graphite Low Energy Experimental Pile) became operational in August 1947, followed by BEPO (British Experimental Pile O) in 1948. £50 billion was invested by the Government over five years. It has been suggested that this increased the austerity period by two years! Such was the perceived need for our own nuclear research.

The defence work shifted to Aldermaston in the early 1950s and, in 1954, Harwell became part of the newly-formed United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA).

Nick has promised to return next year to tell us about the happenings at Harwell from the 1950s onwards.

JF

SUNSHINE CLUB

Oct: our table was once again cakes and jars plus some very nice apple pies and crumbles, all home made, which soon sold. Thanks to all who gave and brought. It was nice to see so many members including a few who are unable to come on Monday afternoons, always nice to see them. After the sale we had a nice buffet tea, followed by some readings, the evening ended with a raffle.

Our donation this quarter will be going to "Cancer Research". Pleased to say we have no members at this moment in hospital or unwell, except for Faith who is not very well, we all hope she will soon be on the mend and back to club. A get well card has been given. Not much news this month, our next social afternoon will be November 4th at 2.30pm.

J CROOK

SENIOR CITIZEN'S CLUB

It was nice to see so many of our members at our September meeting, despite a few people feeling poorly and a few others on holiday. Mr Eric Hall entertained us on a keyboard and invited us to all join in and sing along.

Being as there are so many Christmas parties going on in December, our members were asked would they like us to hold our party before or after Christmas. Members voted for after so that's what was decided, date to be arranged.

At our October meeting on 28th we are having a tombola and a table top sale, once again. I'm sure there will be some nice items to be had. We do hope members who have been poorly are feeling a lot better by now. The meeting finished with tea and biscuits and the usual raffle which is always popular.

Next meeting November 25th at 2.30pm.

E CADLE AND B REED

FRILFORD ST PETER'S WI

The next meeting of Frilford St Peter's WI will take place at Duffield Place on Friday November 19th at 2pm. The speaker will be Mr E East and his subject is "Traditions and Ceremonies of Oxford University". This sounds a very promising opportunity to learn more about what goes on in our historic "seat of learning". Visitors will be very welcome.


WEH

BERKSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY.

Why not come along to a meeting and find out about your roots? Next meeting is 7.15pm Mon 8 Nov 'Burning Poison, a Georgian murder mystery' at Long Furlong Community Centre, Boulter Drive, Abingdon. Large free car park and everyone is welcome.

MARCHAM SOCIETY WALK

Thursday 4 November 10.30am – NOTE CHANGE OF DAY
Meet village school car park for 4 mile circular walk towards Cothill taking in pub stop at Black Horse, Gozzards Ford. Quality mud so stout footwear advised! Come and join Marcham Society amblers in the hope of seeing Green Woodpecker, Fieldfare, Lapwing, Long-tailed tit and Fallow deer. New walkers are always very welcome. Members free, non-members £1.
Contact: Liz Barrett 01865 391251 or Greta Goulding 01865 391592.

 <p><i>The Marcham Society</i></p>	<p>Dr Pascale Nicolet from Oxford Brookes will be telling us of the importance of ponds for wildlife</p>
<p>All Saints' Church <i>Tuesday November 16th 2004, 7.45pm</i></p>	<p>Non-members £1 Further details: Eric Dunford (391439) or Judith Fontaine (391275) www.marchamsociety.org.uk</p>