



S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 10

Editor—Terry Collins

April 2014

Building Restoration

Our March speaker was SALHS member John Lloyd, and his topic was Building Restoration. John's company, "Between Time" is based in the village at Bachelors Hall and they undertake building restoration and conservation on buildings ranging from 15th Century houses to churches and farm buildings. They carry out projects on behalf of organisations such as the National Trust and English Heritage. John illustrated his talk with lots of pictures showing the type of work they perform.

Many of the buildings they have to work on are of significant historical value and as such, a great deal of expertise is required to replace old timbers and brickwork.

In some instances individual pieces of flint or glass need to be inserted into a wall, a very painstaking task calling for a high degree of skill. One of the properties that we were shown was Berg



The Shell House, Hatfield Forest

cottage in Barkway a 16th Century house. This National Trust property had decay and damage to both timbers and brickwork. The new bricks were hand made locally using a beehive kiln and fired with coal, and then replaced. Wooden laths were fixed with special screws and lambs wool insulation was fitted between the timbers. Lime rendering was then applied to the exterior walls replacing the cement used previously. Some of the old windows were replaced and chimneys were rebuilt and finally a new thatched roof was added.

The most distinguished building that we were shown was Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, (above) built between 1874 and 1889 for Baron Rothschild. It was vital that the work on this building was of top quality, which it was, as this is the National Trust's second busiest attraction. Work was carried out on the ornamental fountains at the front of the house which date from the late 1600's and on the roof where water was leaking into the towers, and on the roof where new lead figures were added.

One of the more unusual buildings that John's company have worked on is the Shell House in Hatfield Forest. (left) This is another National Trust building dating from the 1700's but on the site of an earlier Tudor building. It is rendered in flint, glass and shells a lot of which was starting to come away from the cement rendering it was in. The cement was replaced with a more suitable render-



Waddesdon Manor

ing, and local bricks from Aldeburgh replaced damaged ones. While this was being done the building's timber frame was repaired as were the chimneys.

One interesting feature was a single sash window which when raised slid inside the wall in which it was set. The most painstaking part of the job was the replacing of the glass and flint which was all done by hand.

John's wife, Rowan, then told us about some of the people they employ, stating that they take on school leavers as well as existing craftsmen. They pride themselves on giving their employees the best training available, and unlike many companies today, they are more than willing to take on apprentices to enable the numerous skills required to be passed along to future generations to ensure they do not die out.

At the end of his talk John answered a number of questions from the audience and was warmly thanked by Chairman Ian White, for a most interesting and educational evening.

Leeches, Toads and Dead Mice

All three of the above creatures were part of our April meeting when Tom Doig spoke to us about 'Folk Cures and Remedies.' Tom is a Social Historian who lectures at Corpus Christie College, Cambridge. He began by reminding us that like almost anything prefixed with the word 'Folk' be it Dance or Music, are all passed by word of mouth and as a consequence they change all the time.

Tom's talk was structured alphabetically, although with his numerous and humorous asides we did not get far into the alphabet.

We started with A for Abscess (or Boils) for which there are many old country cures. In days gone by as hedgerows were made from thorn bushes to keep out trespassers, the local ploughman would often scratch himself on one of the thorns, which may have been contaminated by dog faeces leading to a boil or abscess. The simplest cure for the ailment was lily leaves soaked in brandy and then laid across the boil. He told us the story of a 38 year old man who had been suffering from an abscess on his leg for some time, and went to see a doctor at Addenbrookes hospital. He was told that they could do nothing for it and left him with just a stump'. Sometime later he began to notice another boil forming on his back. His wife then decided that he should see Mrs Goo-



ley, the local 'wise woman.' she prepared a brown pasty poultice to put on the sore, and covered it in brown paper, and the abscess disappeared. He lived until the age of 71 and died in 1931. The poultice was made from cow dung and mares urine!

Another cure for the same illness was to take a leaf from a house leek plant (see bottom left) cut it almost in two, open it out then place it over the boil. This plant was also used as an aid to recover from burns, the leeks were put through a mangle, then added to juice from a plantain and spread over the burn. Another famed practitioner, Granny Grey, a white witch from Littleport, used a ball of tar from a chimney and this was then put on the wound. Leg ulcers were cured by burying an old penny coin leaving it until it had turned green and then stuck across the ulcer. The possible reason for this cure could be the sulphur that is in the coin, as sulphur is still used to treat open wounds.

The next ailment that Tom spoke about was Ague, or as we would call it Malaria. This was extremely common before quinine was discovered to be a cure, but of course there were many old folk remedies too. For instance, if you had leg pains during the illness, take a holly branch and run it up and down the leg until it bled, or wear a dead dock root around your neck, or put beeswax on your feet. Best of all however, get a pig's bladder, tie off all the stringy bits except one, cut that end short and use it to blow the bladder up as large as you can get it, fill it with goose fat and wear it as chest protector. You could also just wear a bag of radishes around the neck. But strangest of all, trap a mouse cut it open lengthways, remove all the flesh from inside, then go to the woods and find a puff ball, cut it up and fill the dead mouse with it, and wear on the body. If mice are not

available, take one eel slit it open and remove all that is inside and then fill it with moss and donkey urine.

Anaemia - Granny Grey's cure for this was to take the ball of tar from the chimney, take it to a blacksmith and roll it through his iron filings, then eat the ball, when it made you vomit the anaemia would be cured.

Moving on to the letter B, we have a cure for a bite from a mad dog. This cure from the Towner family is as follows, if bitten by a rabid dog, take a piece of cheese and write on it the following words in Latin, orebus, diebus, vivos, vives, populous,

Leeches in Use



quorae, then give the cheese to the dog, in this way you are giving the sickness back to the animal.

Blisters on the feet can be cured by taking a snail, turning it onto its back and then poking its underside with a stick until it starts to froth and then get it to walk over the blister.

Bronchitis can be cured by simply wearing blue beads around the neck. What could be simpler than that?

Tom then went on to tell us that this part of Hertfordshire was very good for leeches, due to the amount of flood meadows in the area. In days gone by the local women would wade into the water and stand there

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Sources for Local and Family History

Our speaker for February 2014 was Dr Kate Thompson, formerly the chief archivist at HALHS, who gave us a short but interesting evening advising all of us interested in our family or our local history exactly where to find the information we need.

Before beginning however she did warn us that despite the amount of information to be found on the internet, only about 28% of the documents, etc. that are available, are online, the rest require visits to archives or museums. In addition a lot of the information to be found on the internet is not completely reliable,

Valuable documents can basically be divided into two groups, primary and secondary sources. The following are all primary sources which can be found at local and national archives.

Central and Local Government documents

- ~Home Office Documents, covering Poor Law records from 1834 onwards.
- ~ Courts - Quarter and Petty sessions, the equivalent of today's Crown courts and Magistrates courts, that were abolished in 1971.
- ~County and County Borough records, and District Councils.

And finally Parish/Town Council records.

In addition it is always worth looking at census returns and local assizes records which can usually be found at local archives.

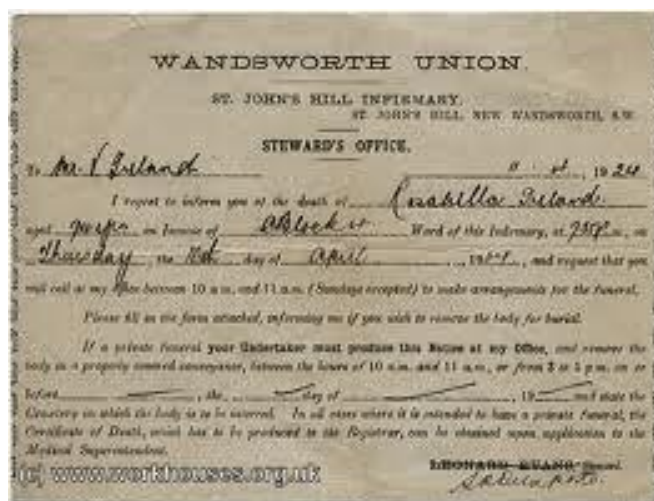
Ecclesiastical Records

- ~Church of England - Parish Records, with the current system starting in 1971 and with records from 1837.
- ~Church Wardens and Constables Accounts.
- ~Parish Poor Law records.
- ~Diocese records and archdeacons records
- ~Probate records, which went via the church until 1858.
- ~Charities records
- ~Non conformist church records.
- ~Outdoor poor records, those who were not in any local workhouses.
- ~Bastardy bonds, if the fathers name was given, he had to pay for the welfare of the child.

Other Records

- ~Manorial records and Court Rolls.
- ~19th Century Boards of Health Records.

- ~19th Century Poor Law Union Records
- ~School Records-a very good source.
- ~Police and Prisons.
- ~Workhouse Records-everybody who entered and left was recorded, as were births and deaths.
- ~Oral Records - very important. .But all too often forgotten.



Death record from Wandsworth Union Workhouse

Family and Estate Records

Usually from landed families

- ~Letters
- ~Diaries

Pictorial Media

- ~Photos
- ~Maps and Plans
- ~Local views
- ~Broadsheets
- ~Parliamentary reports

Secondary Sources

- ~Newspapers and Journals.
 - ~Published histories.
 - ~Trade directories, however they are not not all ways reliable.
 - ~Electoral registers and poll books
 - ~The landscape
- And finally the Internet, but beware as much of the information to be found there may need to be checked further.

Leeches, Toads and Dead Mice

until the leeches had fastened on their legs and the using stick of salt they would rub the leeches until they dropped off, then they would be collected and put into a little bucket that was attached to the woman's waist.

Finally they were put into bottles and sold to the local surgeon. They were of course used for bleeding and even today leeches are being used in medicine.. If you were anaemic then you would put the leech onto the wound, let it suck the blood until it was quite bloated, then it was removed, sliced, fried and then eaten.



Toads were used to help wean babies as follows, take one toad, squeeze it gently until it begins to sweat, collect the sweat into a small bottle. Dip a finger into it and rub it over the breast and once tasted the baby will not feed there again.

C is for cramp and Tom gave us one

or two remedies, the simplest is to just wear around the neck a small stone with three holes in it. In Hertfordshire they would use pudding stone, this is also very useful for keeping witches at bay, as is a cross cut on the end of an iron door handle.

If you cannot find a stone with three holes then hang three corks on a string around the neck.

Skulls of small animals were kept in a small bag and hung around the neck to cure toothache. In order to cure a headache however the cure is rather more drastic, lift a large stone and gather a large handful of woodlice, pound them to a paste in a mortar and pestle, put this into a glass of beer and drink it. (I think I would prefer the headache!)

Tom did not give us a cure for warts as there are too many to count, as an example, take a dead cat to a graveyard at midnight, when you hear a noise throw the cat in the direction the noise comes from. "When you throw it say, the following, "Cat follow the devil, warts follow the cat." the wart will disappear.

Tom answered questions from an enthusiastic audience and was warmly thanked by Chairman Ian White.

Notes from the Past Part 6

Staying with the theme of Folk and Country remedies, the following little recipe for treating a horse comes from the notebook of William Clift, it appears in the second of his notebooks and appears to be in his wife's handwriting.

'Recipe for Gripe or Colic'

One ounce of sweet nitre

One ounce of sweet peppermint

One ounce of Laudanum

Put them all into a quarter of gin

Give them all to the horse in one drink, it will give ease in 20 minutes.



Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above act we have to advise that the Society holds information on computer in respect of each member, This information is used for routine membership purposes only and remains confidential.

The SALHS Committee April 2014

Hon President	Ron Dale
Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Website	Brian Johnson
Archivists/Historian	Ray Dixon
Archivist/Facebook	Andrea Coppen
Public Relations	Bob Hunt
School Liaison/ Programme Organiser	Janet Dance
Newsletter	Terry Collins
Parish Council Rep	Julia Davies
Co-opted Member	Jenny Johnson
General enquiries email	admin@salhs.org.uk

Forthcoming Events

May 9th	AGM and "Access for all to the local Rivers" by David Batley plus Richard Atkins on the River Lea
June 13th	The Magna Carta by Ian White
July 11th	The History of Rye House by Sue Garside
August 10th	BBQ Members only Details to follow

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm
Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included