

S.A.L.H.S

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Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

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Editor—Terry Collins

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Great Amwell Lime Kiln

Instead of the normal barbecue in the rain approximately 18 SALHS members visited the recently discovered Lime Kiln and St John's Church, Great Amwell.

Additionally, Dick Dixon outlined the location of the "henge" under fields south of the folly estate off Hillside lane, and then guided the party along Madgeways Lane, a probable ancient sunken lane leading north east across Great Amwell. Arriving at The Ranch House we joined John Lloyd who gave a fascinating talk about the Lime Kiln and were able to climb down right inside it, by kind permission of the owners.

The kiln is a rare survivor of a once commonplace structure built (in this case probably early 19th century) for making lime by burning chalk at around 900°C. This one is noted in Kelly's Directory of 1840.

The chalk would have been quarried nearby and used for local building projects. John illustrated the process of making mortar by mixing lime with sharp sand and water, causing a chemical reaction which generated sufficient heat to produce steam. Slaked lime is still used, as well as for building, to generate heat to warm certain ready meals and in hand warmers and similar devices.

Lime produced in the kiln would have been used to create hydrated lime, the basis of plasters, mortar, lime-wash and concrete and is made in the main chamber of the kiln where chalk was layered with timber probably. Many flints were found nearby which would have been found in seams in the chalk as



The Lime Kiln at Great Amwell

it was quarried and used in building projects. John outlined the history of using lime which originated with the Romans and increased steadily over succeeding centuries quantities of mortar were needed for the construction of stone castles, city walls and religious buildings. Kilns were once very common but were only intended to be temporary, once they were no longer needed they were either dismantled and moved or left to decay

Part 2 of the visit took in the churchyard of St John's Great Amwell. Due to Covid restrictions we were unable to enter the church, however William Brown, Chair of the Amwell Society and our guide described the structure and its development since the 11th century and we could see the Norman chancel through the doors. He also mentioned other interesting features, such as the 15th century west doors with slots behind for barricading the doors shut, two sundials carved on the wall and the positioning and condition of the stocks.. The vestry minutes of 1769 record a resolution

to erect stocks which were originally behind the George pub and were moved to the present location in the 1920s but are now rather in need of repair.

The church is constructed from flint dressed with chalk and limestone and rendered with lime plaster. The roof is plastered but its pitch suggests it was originally thatched. Considerable changes to the structure were carried out in Victorian times including the removal of the box pews, installation of the pulpit (believed to be from the Archbishops palace at Croydon) and removal of the rood screen. Some of its tracery is incorporated in a screen inside the second set of doors. The high altar was made by boys at Haileybury school in honour of Reverend Arthur Walker on his death in 1962 and commissioned by his son Edward, vicar of Amwell and chaplain of Haileybury for 46 years. Other notable connections to the church include Richard and Elizabeth Warren who were married there on 14th April 1610 and sailed on the Mayflower in 1620. They are the ancestors of two US Presidents; Ulysses S Grant and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Other monuments inside the church include that to High Sheriff of Hertfordshire Robert Plomer (1737), his father William Plomer and his eldest son and daughter who pre-deceased him.

A very Interesting afternoon after which some may have repaired to The George but I had to limp home for a cup of tea.

Rpb Gifford

Walking the New River part 1

Back in 2018 Rob and Linda walked the New River, not all in one go however, and they returned recently to see what changes had been made since their first trip. This time they did not go further south than Broxbourne so there may have been other changes they did not see.

As many of you will know this waterway is neither new or a river, it was built to take fresh water to London originally running 42 miles from Hertford to Islington it is now only 28 miles in length. Most of the memorials to be seen refer to Sir Hugh Myddelton as the man who designed and built the river but in fact it was designed by Edmund Colthurst who designed, surveyed and started the project between 1604 and 1608 until he ran out of money. Myddelton who was a goldsmith provided much of the capital needed and more of the cash was given by the crown who were persuaded of its value and therefore provided the 'kings share' both Colthurst and Myddelton remained on the team.

Following the river south from Hertford the next item of note is the New Gauge a later adjustment built by Robert Mylne in 1770 to harvest and regulate the flow of water from the River Lea to increase the flow which until then had been largely drawn from the Chadwell Springs other springs were also drawn into use. The New River then flows through Kings Mead from the Lea Navigation giving excellent views of the wildlife which can be seen due to the management of the meads over the past few years. Older pictures of the meads show that they were nearly all grazing land.

Approaching Ware you can see the Broadmead Pumping Station which has been converted into offices and reduced in size from when it was built in the Victorian era. The river flows past Amwell House and Herts Reginal College, also near here are relics from WW2, a Blacker Bombard and a Spigot mortar, both anti tank weapons which would have been used by the Home Guard. Just along the road we come to the old John Gilpin roundabout. Moving on to Amwell pool, this is where the New River was embellished by its chief engineer Robert Chadwell Mylne who is buried in Amwell churchyard. It has islands and monuments to both Myddelton and Mylne but not Colthurst. Continuing along the river brings us to more familiar territory, and that is Amwell pumping station built around 1910 and originally fitted with steam driven pumps. Next on the journey is St Margarets Pumping station which was once crossed by a tramway but the only trace of it now is a concrete slab that marks the spot where it crossed the New River.

Across the road is Pump House Lane the site of a small housing development of five houses half below ground level of the river and with a patio overlooking it. Continuing along the river we pass Pindar Road Industrial Estate and more housing but there is still some greenery and wildlife and although it cannot be seen from the river we are not too far from Rye House. When this walk was first done there were lots of traffic

jams but things have changed and below the old bridge is this charming mural. (Below) The next building of note



is Broxbourne Pumping station. The area around the New River at Broxbourne has changed since they last did the walk, as you walk near the station the Kingfisher pub and the Pulham's factory were on the right and the old treadmill for crushing stone is just behind the houses. Nearby is St Augustine's church which dates back to the 12th Century and passing by the High Street and the Bridge House, where there is a large pool and island, formerly a landscaped garden and from here is the first area where you are diverted from the river.

You then walk across playing fields and rejoin the river at Church Lane, Wormley and after this Wormley-bury Mansion is off to the right and there is an old WW2 pill box, presumably one of the Stop Lines of pill boxes built just before the war. Shortly after this you come to the rear of the shops at Brookfield Farm. On the right there was until recently a reservoir but now there is housing, one of the new roads is called Mylne Close which is still recording significant names. Nearing Bishops college and Withern Park you pass along a pleasant leafy area, and Theobalds and Cheshunt Country Club are off to the right and you can see the sweep of the river past farmland. The large buildings seen on the left are the Cheshunt travel Lodge and the News Corporation Printing works, possibly the largest printers in the world. Next we cross the aqueduct with the New River piped over the M25 and looking North towards Capel Manor which can just be seen from the river and the area is green and leafy as you cross Bulls Moor Lane. Shortly after this the river is piped and there is only an outline of where the river flowed, but it does flow through what would become Myddelton House gardens, well worth a visit especially in late spring. The New River then crosses Turkey Street and reappears near Enfield Crematorium near Hoe Lane and Goat Lane both busy roads and best watched from the river bank. Near here is a Metropolitan Water Board pumping station built after they took control of the river in 1904. Just after Carter-hatch Lane the river was piped again in 1900 bypassing the loop from Southbury to Bush **continued on Page 4**

Queen Victoria's Rooms at Kensington Palace

In October we welcomed back Dr. Lee Prosser, curator at Historic Royal Palaces to tell us about Queen Victoria and her rooms at Kensington Palace. Unfortunately I was not able to be there and so the following is my version of the events and not his.

It was never meant to be that Princess Victoria would be Queen, as she was fifth in line to the throne. Her father, the Duke of Kent, was the fourth son of George III and her mother was Marie Luise Victore, Duchess of Leningen. Their only daughter named Alexandrina Victoria was born on May 19th 1819 at Kensington Palace, where she lived during her childhood until she moved to Buckingham Palace. Yet by the time she was 18 years old a number of deaths amongst her relatives left her as queen of Great Britain. She took the throne as an inexperienced teenager but when she died aged 81 she was known as the 'Grandmother of Europe.



To celebrate the 200th anniversary of her birth a new exhibition has been opened entitled, 'Victoria- A Royal Childhood'. Dr. Prosser and other curators from Historic Royal Palaces have carried out extensive research into the decoration and furnishings that the young princess would have been familiar with in her childhood, including the birthing room (see above). They completely cleared out the previous exhibition of 2012 and stripped the rooms including removing plaster boards and floor boards. He carried out a vast amount of research using the Lord Chamberlains bills which are kept in the National Archives which record payments for carpets, curtains, furniture and wallpaper, for the Duke of Kent between 1802 and 1819. He went through 5000 pages of detailed payment records sifting out the relevant entries and even used her dolls house for clues as to colours and fabric patterns. Once he knew what the original colours and fabrics had been he commissioned the modern equivalents which captured the spirit of the originals which invoke the Regency era into which Victoria was born. Many intimate items will be on display for the first time including books, jewellery and clothing worn by Victoria and her children and new display cases will enable visitors to get better views of the items on show.

This permanent display explores how the young prin-

cess blossomed into the iconic monarch we are familiar with. Included are a scrapbook of mementos created by her German governess Baroness Lehzen on public display for the first time. The death of her father in 1820 changed everything for the young Victoria leaving her mother with a mass of debt and in difficult circumstances. Her father's equerry John Conroy claimed the late Duke had asked him to look after Victoria and her mother and he set about formulating a strict set of rules for both Victoria and her mother to follow, known as the Kensington System. This meant that the princess grew up relatively isolated but constantly supervised, she was not even allowed to walk down stairs alone in case she fell. Victoria herself described her childhood as lonely and oppressed despite the companionship of her governess, her other companion was her faithful little dog, Dash whom she sometimes dressed in a pair of trousers. From about the age of four she was tutored by George Davys and received singing lessons from an opera singer Luiga Lablache as well as drawing lessons from Richard Westall.

Victoria herself described her childhood as lonely and unhappy but research by curators suggest that in fact she misremembered her childhood. She enjoyed going to the ballet, the theatre and the seaside and admitted that she had been spoiled. She made a number of tours of the country and at all the towns she visited she was welcomed enthusiastically. On her first visit to the Black Country she was shocked by the poverty and smoking coal heaps.

Victoria came to the throne on June 20th 1837 when she was woken at about 6.00am to be told that the king, her uncle had died and she was now queen. She wore a black mourning dress that day in honour of her uncle, and as she wanted to break free from her mother and Conroy she chose to make her first public appearance without them. She chose to hold her first privy council on the day she became queen and held it in the red saloon (see below) with 97 counsellors, quite a start for an 18 year old teenager. Victoria did not spend much more of her life at Kensington as she moved into Buckingham Palace fairly quickly and had her mother moved to another house. The Prime Minister at the time was Lord Melbourne and the new queen became very fond of him and he of her and it could be said that he was almost a father figure.

Terry Collins



Walking the New River continued

Hill. This is now called the Horseshoe Loop and was made into a linear park through Enfield. This area is quite picturesque with trees, old bridges and walkways and there is even a café. Nearing Bush Hill an 18th Century aqueduct carries the New River over Salmons Brook replacing the original one which lasted 173 years and was made of earth, timber and lead. After leaving the park you walk down Bush Hill Park Road along side the New River, which had open banks and lots of tree cover, into Winchmore Hill with its Victorian era pumping station and getting to the Southern end of Enfield but another diversion is needed in order to carry on towards Green Lanes. This area is being turned into a linear park and should look quite nice when completed.

Continuing towards Palmers Green you can see the river but visitors are discouraged. After this you come to Pymes Brook which has been made into a 12 mile walk, then you come to a small park, a tunnel and suddenly you are on the North Circular Road and the river goes back into pipes again. But soon you are back by the river and the banks get higher as the river enters a belt of hills. Now you are in Bowes Park approaching Wood Green tunnel built in 1852 to aid the flow of water. When the tunnel was cleaned out among the items found were, 2 guns and ammunition, 6 safes, 3 bikes and 2 motor bikes, this is an example of coming out of a secluded walk into the heart of London. We are now near Alexandra Palace and heading towards Hornsey, Turnpike Lane. and Finsbury Park. The river runs through the park and the Woodbury Wetlands run by London Wildlife Trust, there are two reservoirs, one is the conservation area and the other is



The New River at Palmers Green in the Heart Of London used for water sports.

We are now almost at the end of our journey, just space to mention the statue of Hugh Myddelton at Islington Green, but oddly the statue is facing the wrong way looking away from the river. Suddenly you find yourself at Saddlers Wells renowned for its waters since the Middle Ages, and claimed to cure many ailments including “dropsy, jaundice and scurvy “ Sadler later added music in the 17th century and it evolved over the years. This area is called Amwell which is why an internet search for Amwell Society lands you in Islington. You have now arrived at the end of the line, New River Head, where the managing company had its headquarters and built grand offices and engine houses, which were later embellished by the Metropolitan Water Board. Some of these have now been turned into rather classy flats.

(Many thanks to Rob and Linda Gifford for their notes)

Terry Collins

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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.

Forthcoming events

November	12th	2021	Murders in Hertfordshire by Nik Pringle
December	10th	2021	Christmas Party (To Be Confirmed)
January	14th	2022	Bishops Stortford A History by Helen Gibson
February	11th	2022	Slavery in Hertfordshire by Marion Hill
March	11th	2022	An Evening with Old Relics by Tim Turner
April	8th	2022	A walk with The Admiral by Richard Thomas

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm
Members Free Non Members £2.00 Tea Coffee and Biscuits included