

Herefordshire Archives Forum

Notes of Meeting

held on 7 November 2011
at Herefordshire Record Office

Present

Irene Orchard (Archive of Cider and Pomology), Mark Robinson, David Clark (Fownhope Local History Group), Stephen Rexworthy, Mal Mason (Eardisley History Group), Barbara Ferris (Dinedor Heritage Group), Pat Strauss, (Ledbury Civic Society), Barry Sharples (Bosbury Chroniclers), Sylvia Pinches (Victoria County History Group), Colin Bates (Marden History Society), Sue Hubbard (Weobley History Society), George Miles, Paul Haley (The Share Initiative), Thain Hatherly (Leintwardine History Society), Sue Knox (Museum Development Officer), Rhys Griffith (Herefordshire Archive Service).

Apologies

Brian Smith (Golden Valley Research Group), Barry Lawrence (Much Cowarne History Group), Heather Hurley (Ross Civic Society), Peter Attenborough (Linton and District History Society), Jenny Houston (Longtown History Society), Penny Walshe (Whitchurch History Group), Rhiannon Turrell (Yarpole Living History Group), Jeff White (Cradley Heritage Group), Dave Tristram (Herefordshire Council).

1. New horizons for Leintwardine: Thane Hatherly gave an account of the Leintwardine History Society and its activities and offered an explanation of its success. He has been an active member of the group since it started in 2000 with a roll of 11. Over the past ten years, the membership has grown to 300 and the Society's venue has had to change to accommodate the well attended meetings and talks. Thane puts the success of the group down to a varied programme of activities, including talks, an archive research service and regular publications. Above all, a sociable and friendly atmosphere has been key. Social interaction is a vital element of the talks, with wine playing an important part in this. The evenings are efficiently run, comfortable and convivial, with single people being made to feel particularly welcome. On average, there is an attendance of 80 for the talks, which are on a wide range of subjects, including Welsh cattle drovers, the Leintwardine Chantry and Edward III and the Mortimers, which was attended by 300 people. The speakers are vetted for quality before they are booked. The programme of events is set and published a year at a time and plenty of notice is given.

Other activities include outreach work with local school children, outings, ranging from strolls to large guided visits, such as a tour of Wigmore Abbey that attracted 60 participants. Publications include a colourful quarterly journal of 16 pages with features on a wide variety of topics. This represents a substantial community involvement, with interactive contributions from a wide

range of local people on topics as diverse as Lucien Pissarro and early aviation in the area.

The Society holds a substantial collection of archives, artefacts and books and has benefited from a *Your Heritage* grant of £16.5 thousand to equip the refurbished Leintwardine community centre so that the material can be properly housed and displayed.

The way in which the Society is administered contributes to its success. Annual membership is £15 and this is collected by means of direct debit; a difficult system to establish, but one that is well worth the effort as it helps attract members from as far afield as Australia and Canada. The Society is, as a result of this and the brisk sale of publications, on a financially sound footing. Plans for future improvement include an updated website, which is to become independent from its current generic location.

2. View + in Herefordshire. Paul Haley introduced this major heritage project which it is hoped will involve a cross section of Herefordshire, including local communities, local history groups, schools and volunteers. The project will centre on nearly 5,000 photographs taken by Thomas Henry Winterbourn in the late 19th/ early 20th centuries. The glass plate negatives of the photographs are held at the Hereford Museum Resource and Learning Centre. Nearly all the negatives have been digitised (scanned to 12,000 dpi). An important element of the project, which has benefited from a £40,000 HLF grant, will be collections care. The negatives will be repackaged, and among the volunteer training programme, to incorporate workshops introducing photographic interpretation, will be sessions aimed at preservation.

A number of themes, including trades, costumes, portraiture and transport, will be explored during the project as the photographs, most of which were taken in the Leominster and north Herefordshire area, incorporate a very diverse range of subjects. A remarkable feature of the collection is that many of the images are named and dated.

The project will have a number of aims under the broad aspiration of encouraging local communities to engage with heritage. There will be a dvd of the images with an interpretive catalogue, there will also be public events at three or four venues, together with 30 training workshops, booklets and exhibitions. A crucial outcome will be a series of school based sessions, with young people being encouraged to become 'archive journalists'. Paul is keen to work with existing organisations so that some of the activities might form part of already planned events rather than standing alone. He is proposing to make contact with individual local history groups to take some of these ideas forward and would be very pleased to hear from any society interested in participating.

3. Archive Forum Next Steps. No further progress to report

4. What's going on? – News from the local history societies

Marden History Society – Colin Bates described how the society was formed as a result of a grant for an oral history project but has since not been able to make great progress. It has proved difficult to maintain a membership of 25 – 30. A recent successful talk on the Lugg Bridge has shown that investment in high quality speakers would be likely to generate greater interest.

Pomology Archive – There has been an upsurge in the establishment of community orchards, with an increased interest in tracing evidence of ancient plantations. Much of Irene's time, which is limited, is taken up with responding to enquiries. She has not had an opportunity yet to develop the website, which currently acts as a signpost.

Fownhope Local History Group - The new book will be published in 2012. The Group has been very busy, fielding a large number of enquiries. The new website is making progress with the help of a Community Pride grant. It is hoped that local census data will be made available online.

The group continues to work with the Media Archive of Central England (MACE) and has hosted a MACE training event aimed at dealing with local films. A problem with converted MACE DVDs is that they do not appear to include breaks between recorded films. This presents difficulties during public screenings.

Weobley History Society – The society is hoping to establish a website that is more informative than its current presence on the parish council pages. There is a plan to work with local businesses to establish a series of *blue plaques* aimed at recognising the architectural importance of key Weobley buildings. The Museum has recently benefited from a Museum Development grant for new display boards.

Museum Development Officer – Sue offered to publicise forthcoming events in the monthly article she writes for *Herefordshire Life* (email: sknox@herefordshire.gov.uk). She also reminded members to let her know of their wish to participate in the 2012 Heritage Open Day by May 2012.

Eardisley History Group - All reports on this year's archaeological investigations are now in. They have to be ready for 9 December when there will be a presentation to an archaeological symposium. Among the wealth of information will be a reference to the excavation of stork bones on the site, with evidence of butchery. The HLF funded project, which incorporated the transcription of all Eardisley wills up to 1700, is now being wound up. Another possible archaeological project for 2012 will focus on a site at Bollingham in Beardsley. There are also plans to mark the half centenary of the closure of Eardisley station, with a film of reminiscences.

Malcolm remarked that Hereford and Worcester radio was keen to offer publicity for local events in its morning programme. This does mean a trip to Worcester by 8am.

Ledbury History Group _ This is a small embryonic group attached to the civic society. At present it is conducting a detailed study of the High Street through time. There was an exhibition and open day at the Burgage Hall, with a good response from the public. The group aims to publish a booklet on its work so far.

Bosbury Chroniclers – This is a newly established group which is working with the Victoria County History to provide an online resource. Currently the group is working on transcribing pre 1700 wills, which will eventually be available on the VCH website.

Victoria County History Group – The parish history of Eastnor is almost finished and it is hoped that this will be achieved by 19 April when there will be an event to mark the bicentenary of the castle's construction. Sylvia will then be looking for funding to develop the work of the Bosbury Chroniclers.

Mark Robinson – Mark continues to research the astronomer George Henry With and is keen to trace references in the county to dry earth closets, which With developed.

Date of next meeting: Monday 5 March 2012, 2pm