

Mere Historical Society



UNLOCKING HISTORY

Newsletter

Autumn 2018

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OXFORD AND THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

May 2018

This visit attracted so much interest from MHS members that the coach had to be upgraded to a larger, 49-seater coach. The day of the visit dawned with blue skies and we were able to enjoy a whole day of beautiful, sunny weather.

The primary purpose of this visit was a morning guided tour of the Ashmolean Museum. Afterwards, there was 'free' time for lunch and visiting other places of interest in Oxford (a list of which was provided by Caroline Cook), or just strolling around the city.



“One of our groups with a guide”

The museum allocated 5 guides to our group, including one specialising in people with hearing impairment. Therefore, the groups were relatively small which afforded plenty of opportunities for questions.

The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology is the world's first university and public museum. The first building opened in 1683 to house the collections of Elias Ashmole, a prominent scholar and antiquary among other roles. His founding principle was that "knowledge of humanity across cultures and across times is important to society". The collections included items which he collected himself or acquired from other travellers and collectors, most notably John Tradescant and his son, and included antique coins, books, engravings, geological and zoological specimens. The original museum was in Broad Street and was moved to the present building in Beaumont Street in 1845.

In the early 20th century Ashmolean Museum began to specialise in art and archaeology; collections on other topics were moved to the Museum of Natural History and the Museum of the History of Science.

Recently the museum has been extensively modernised, upgraded and extended at a cost of £69m. Exhibits are attractively displayed and clearly and succinctly described. The interpretation panels tell a story and are easy to read (even without reading glasses!). The new wing enabled the museum to display for the first time to the public collections of light-sensitive exhibits, such as textiles.

The Ashmolean safeguards collections of many very rare and exquisite objects. Their website page <https://www.ashmolean.org/treasures> shows examples of treasures chosen by the curators. It is therefore not surprising that it is one

of the most sought-after places by British and international visitors to Oxford. The museum welcomed an astonishing 938,000 visitors in 2017. On the day we were there, groups of French schoolchildren were being shown round. But - as is the way with modern youth, they can't tear themselves from their smartphones, completely oblivious to the rare exhibits surrounding them.

Now some practical details for members who would like to go to the Ashmolean in future: entrance is free except to special temporary exhibitions. Because the exhibits are so well explained, it is not really necessary to have a guided tour unless you want to know more about the history of the museum. The museum has a very pleasant restaurant/cafe. Also, there are left luggage lockers so you can wander around the galleries unimpeded and even after around Oxford itself. But beware, the lockers demand £1 every time you open the door! - but we didn't mind that; it's in a good cause.

After the guided tour, many MHS members scattered around Oxford. Some enjoyed a picnic at the Botanic Gardens or on the banks of the Cherwell. I would recommend the indoor markets as a good source of sandwiches, baguettes etc. And the ancient market is interesting in its own right. Other MHS members visited colleges that were open to the public. And some culture vultures, after the morning's guided overview, spent the afternoon taking their time to look in detail at the exhibits.

This was a most interesting and thoroughly enjoyable visit, and our huge thanks must go to Caroline Cook for her expert and efficient organisation and support during this wonderful trip.

Lenka Stokes

MOTTISFONT ABBEY AND GARDEN

June 2018

June 19th 2018 was a beautifully warm, sunny day, perfect for strolling in the grounds as well as visiting the interior of the house where they have a permanent exhibition of paintings

The Abbey was founded in 1201 by William Briwere, and became a popular stopover point for pilgrims travelling between Salisbury and Winchester. Although the land has been cultivated since the days of the 13th Century Priory, it was the Mill family who laid the framework for today's garden, the riverside walks and the planting of 35 species of trees.

In 1934, Maud Russell commissioned leading gardeners to plan part of the existing garden. The rose garden was built in 1972 with a wide variety of rose specimens and under-planted with herbaceous perennials to bring scent and colour to the garden. On the day of our visit barely any soil was visible in the walled garden as it was a mass of flowers with the surrounding four walls reflecting the scent of the roses.

During our guided tour we were shown the font, a circular pond, 3 metres in diameter with a 3 metre deep rocky base which has produced an abundance of fresh water since the time of the ice age. As the water flows out it forms a shallow river of crystal clear water with an abundance of trout where it joins the River Test.

The path along the river edge was very quiet and relaxing. At one point we passed an excellent attraction for children, Boggy Climbing, which appeared to consist of a platform where children could in wet weather jump into a muddy patch. We visited the old fishing hut along the river bank, telling the story of Frederick Halford, most noted for his development and promotion of the dry fly technique on English chalk streams.

The house itself is not open to the general public as it is tenanted but we did have access to the drawing room painted by Rex Whistler. There were also paintings by various artists as the house attracted many artists during the 1930's.

Our tour ended with a visit to the Summer House, a perfect place for Maud's weekend parties, also the perfect spot to look across the North lawn to see how the house was used as a church.

An excellent day out.

Monique Turnbull



Mottisfont: the rose garden

TETBURY AND CHAVENAGE HOUSE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

July 2018

A fascinating trip on a perfect summer day was organised by Caroline, supported by Gerry, to visit the historic town of Tetbury and then Chavenage House. The Cotswold stone of Tetbury was warm and welcoming. The town prospered from the wool trade and has many attractive buildings including the iconic Market House, supported on stone pillars, which still hosts a market underneath it. 'Tettas's' monastery was first mentioned in a charter by King Ethelred in 681 AD, giving the town 1,300 years of recorded history. For centuries the Chipping (market place) was the site of Mop Fairs, where local farm labourers and domestic staff offered themselves for employment; and the medieval cobbled Chipping steps still retain a bygone charm, flanked by weaver's cottages. The Victorian Police station now houses the Police museum and contains a Victorian court room and many interesting artefacts. The streets of the town are a delight with handsome wool-merchants' houses and many independent shops and cafés.

After lunch it was a short journey from Tetbury to Chavenage. The earliest recorded owner of the land at Chavenage was Princess Goda, the sister of Edward the Confessor; but there are records of Chavenage Green being the meeting place of the Hundred Court in the early 9th century. Edward Stephens acquired the estate in 1564 and completed the 'E' shaped Elizabethan house in 1576. It is built of Cotswold stone and incorporates some monastic buildings which date back to 14th century. Timbers from old galleons, broken up on the River Severn, were used to support hundreds of tons of mellow grey Cotswold tiles on the roof. The large windows in the great hall contain ecclesiastical glass from redundant churches and monasteries. The ground floor rooms contain beautiful panelling from 1587-99; and on the upper floor, two rooms, hung with Mortlake tapestries of 1640, contain items from the Civil War and a contemporary portrait of Oliver Cromwell.

The ghost story associated with the house dates from this time. Nathaniel Stephens MP, PC was a distinguished Colonel in the Parliamentary army. After the cessation of hostilities, it was decided that King Charles I should be executed to prevent a Royalist uprising. Colonel Stephens was reluctant to support the regicide, but acquiesced. His daughter, Abigail, cursed him for bringing the family into disrepute: and shortly afterwards the colonel became terminally ill. At his funeral a hearse drew up to the house, Colonel Stephens rose from his coffin and entered the hearse, giving due reverence to the headless driver, the King, and was taken away. This continued with his successors until the family became extinct.

The adjoining chapel was first recorded in 1803, the tower, buttresses parapet and pinnacles were constructed in 1780, later embellished with fragments of carving. A new wing was added to the rear of the house in the Edwardian period which included a ball room where we enjoyed cream tea.

During the 20th century Chavenage hosted ANZAC troops in the First World War and was the Officers Mess for American Topographic engineers in the Second World War.

Chavenage has been the home of the Lowsley-Williams family since 1891 and contains many items of interest which are on display. On arrival we were warmly welcomed and shown around by Caroline and George, daughter and son of the current owners, who told us the history of the house and stories about the occupants through the centuries. In the present day the house is used for hosting events including weddings, vintage car rallies and for filming. Many will recognise it as featured in the Poldark series and Lark Rise to Candleford.

Judy Munro







BOSCOMBE DOWN AVIATION COLLECTION AND AMESBURY HISTORY CENTRE.

September 2018

This three centre visit was attended by 26 MHS members leaving Mere by coach at 9.30am.

On arrival at our first stop, the Boscombe Down Aviation Collection (BDAC), we were greeted with tea and biscuits followed by an introduction given by the BDAC Director J.H. Sharpe, Squadron Leader RAF Retd.

The BDAC, today a registered charity, began life in 1999 and was originally based at the airfield at Boscombe Down with the aim of telling the story of Boscombe Down and its place in the history of flight, predominantly its role in flight testing and evaluation. However, as the collection has expanded, its aim has been extended to cover military flying in the Wessex region generally with displayed aircraft having to have the necessary provenance in that history. In 2012 the collection was moved to its present location taking up two hangars at the Old Sarum airfield. The hangars, built in 1917, are unusual in incorporating geodetic timber roof trusses with a clear span of 20 metres and continuing to support the roof a hundred years later. Old Sarum, being one of the few remaining grass airfields in the country, has been in continuous use since 1917 undertaking changing roles from WWI pilot training, WWII aerial reconnaissance, gliding school and helicopter operations among others, ceasing as a military base in the late 1970's. Since 1992 its operations have been undertaken by the Old Sarum Flying Club.

The Boscombe Down airfield opened in 1917 as a Royal Flying Corps training depot. It closed in 1920 but reopened in 1930 as a bomber squadron unit. At the outbreak of WWII it became an experimental base for testing aircraft and armaments as well as being used for operational purposes. Post war it continued its role in flight testing. Today the airfield is still a government military establishment but run by a private management company on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

After the introduction time was spent viewing the collection of over forty aircraft and helicopters, comprising both complete and front section only airframes, with members taking the opportunity to sit in some of the open cockpits. The Collection is not only a museum style display but has an ongoing programme of restoration by a team of dedicated volunteers.

After lunch at the airfield's Skies Cafe a short coach trip took us to the medieval Abbey Church of St Mary & St Melor in Amesbury. There was time for a wander around the interior before an introduction to the history of the church was given by one of the Amesbury History Centre ladies Pat, followed by a short talk about the building itself by Norman Parker ably assisted by our chairman Peter Lewis who spoke of his time as vicar of the church.

The history of the present building dates from 979 when Queen Elfrida founded it on the site a Benedictine Abbey for women, in order, it is believed, to expiate her involvement in the murder of her step-son King Edward (the Martyr) in the previous year. Henry II re-founded the Abbey in 1177 when the buildings were extended and enlarged. In the following few centuries further building took place. Henry III's Queen Consort, Eleanor of Provence, was buried here in 1291, although the exact location of the burial is not known; so she is the only Queen of England without a known grave. At the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII many of the buildings were destroyed, but the Abbey Church was spared and given to the people of Amesbury as their Parish Church. The church underwent further renovations and modifications over the following centuries. In 1983 the organ from the redundant church of St Edmund in Salisbury was transferred and rebuilt here.

A walk around the outside of the church afterwards revealed clear evidence of a long history of building alterations and demolitions. Today the church is of cruciform shape bearing little of its original monastic design.

The final visit of the day involved just a short walk for more tea and biscuits at the Amesbury History Centre. Exhibits included relics from the

excavations at Blick Mead, an ancient spring on Salisbury Plain. Finds, including flints, burnt bones etc. provide evidence of the regular gathering of people at the spring for large feasts during the Mesolithic period and predating Stonehenge by thousands of years.

Also on display were pottery and coins unearthed from a local Roman settlement from the time when Vespasian was subduing southern England, circa 45 AD.

With our trip terminating back in Mere shortly after 4pm it was not an overly long day time-wise but certainly quite an intensive one covering such a wide range of our local history. Grateful thanks to Caroline for organising such a seamless set of visits and thanks also to our coach driver Peter.

With apologies to those members who were expecting an in-depth dissertation spanning an historical period of some 12000 years.

Tom Cadoza



Abbey Church of St. Mary and St. Melor



Boscombe Down Aviation Centre

DORSET HEROINES

By David Beaton

9 January 2018

This talk drew on the author's book "Dorset's Forgotten Heroes" (Dovecot Press, £4.95), concentrating on the distaff side. We began in the English Civil War when, in 1642, **Lady Anne Digby** heard that her own brother, Lord Bedford, who had taken the side of Parliament against the King, had been sent to demolish Sherborne Castle, which she – in the absence of her husband, who had rallied to King's Standard in Oxford – defended for the monarch. With a handful of defenders the castle held out, and Bedford went away empty-handed – later to join the King's cause. But in 1645 the soldiers of Parliament returned, this time under the more formidable Lord Fairfax, and the castle was 'slighted': in modern terms, demolished. Despite her ringing declaration that she would die beneath its ruins, Lady Anne was allowed to ride out unscathed.

A similarly doughty lady was **Lady Mary Bankes**, who in 1643 successfully defended Corfe Castle for 6 weeks for the Crown against the Roundheads. But in 1645 they were back, this time led by her near neighbour, Lord Bingham. Bingham colluded with an officer of the Royalist garrison, a Colonel Pitman, who brought 100 'reinforcements' into the castle who were in fact Parliament soldiers; and so Corfe Castle, too, was 'slightly' ruined. Meanwhile more doughty women were to be found on Parliament's side, although of less high social status: the women of Lyme Regis assisted their menfolk in defying the King's men when they came to take the port in 1643. The Royalist commander was the King's nephew, Prince Maurice, who reportedly declared that taking the town would be "a morning's work". The 500 inhabitants held Lyme for 8 weeks against 5,000, until relieved.

A less warlike heroine and Lyme lady was **Mary Anning**, who survived being struck by lightning at the age of 1 to become a great fossil-hunter and self-taught palaeontologist. (Ed.'s note: and now the Dorset Coast is one of Britain's UNESCO World Heritage Sites). At the age of just 12, she

found the first complete skeleton of the ichthyosaurus (fish-lizard), in 1811; and later, the first complete pterodactyl.

Then there was **Lady Charlotte Guest**, who married the owner of the great Merthyr Tydfil steelworks. She bought Canford Manor in 1846, for just £336,000, and had it renovated by Sir John Barry, the architect of the Houses of Parliament for only £36,000 more. Lady Charlotte was a good enough businesswoman to run the steelworks after her husband's death. Her cousin, Sir Austen Layard, was the excavator of Nimrod and Nineveh, the ancient Assyrian cities; and he sent a 'surplus' Assyrian bas-relief, at least two thousand years old, for storage to Canford, which was later sold by Canford School (as it became) for £7m.

Arguably a more influential person still was **Marie Stopes**, the famous advocate of birth control, explainer of sexual relations, and pioneer of sexual health disclosure and treatment. She was not a Dorset girl but a Scot; and in her days of fame and prominence, and of marriage to one of Britain's pioneering aviation moguls Sir Henry Verdon Roe (of Avro, as in the Avro Lancaster), she lived in Leatherhead in Surrey. But she had two cottages on Portland Bill, in which she founded the Portland Museum. Her only son, Harry, married the daughter of Barnes Wallis, the inventor of the Bouncing Bomb used by the Dam Busters. Marie was so annoyed by his choice of bride that she cut him out of her will, leaving him only a dictionary.

A less famous contemporary was **Violet Cross**, from Hazelbury Bryan near Sturminster. Her claim to fame rests on her service in the two great wars, not to Britain but to France. In 1916, she became the matron of a field hospital near Verdun, which became the scene of one of the greatest and most murderous battles of the first War; and for her service there she gained the Croix de Guerre. In 1940 she answered a personal appeal from the French high command and went again to France. When the Germans overran France in 1940, she fled from Rouen to Paris, where she narrowly escaped identification as an Englishwoman and consequent internment, and then to Spain and Portugal. After sailing for Lisbon to Poole harbour, she covered the last 25 miles to Hazelbury on foot.

Another winner of the Croix de Guerre was **Dodo Leese**, later Dodo Selby-Bennett. She gained her decoration as a SOE agent working with the Maquis in the Vosges mountains, the borderland between Vichy France and an Alsace re-integrated into Germany after 1940. Despite originating from two of Dorset's major landowning families, she became a militant Socialist and stood for Parliament. Later, as a naval wife, she took on the task of establishing a tourism industry in Malta at the behest of its Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff.

Finally, David brought to us **Betty Hockey**, who set up a dance troupe in the Home Forces after 1940 which proved an outstanding success. Theirs was the first troupe to put on a show for troops of the 'Forgotten Army' which had served in India and Burma: but, such was the state of the first to return – ex-prisoners and walking wounded – that the show was set aside in favour of hand-holding and TLC. Until her death as a centenarian, Betty continued to campaign for the Burma veterans and to commemorate all the units which her troupe had entertained, even in the USA.

David's talk highlighted for us the many ladies of Dorset – or women, as an interjection from the audience sternly reminded us – who have left their mark on their times, and after them.

Peter Landymore

EMERGENCY PLANNING AND PRACTICAL SALVAGE IN HISTORIC HOUSES

by Hannah Severn

20th February 2018

Hannah's talk was given by someone who previously worked in the National Trust region that suffered the devastating fire of 2015 at Clandon Park, which resulted in almost the total loss of one of Surrey's finest Palladian houses, and therefore knew whereof she spoke. Now the Steward of Stourhead House, she began with a reminder that Stourhead was itself heavily damaged by fire in 1902.

Threats to heritage properties are, it seems, known in the trade as Agents of Deterioration. In a sort of descending order of destructiveness, they include fire and flood, 'loss' (or theft), moulds and pests, gases and pollutants, and such mundane features as temperature, humidity and even light. Among the notable victims of fire in recent years were Uppark in 1989, and Windsor Castle in 1992. The salvage operation at Uppark was so thorough that over 4,000 waste bins were filled with recovered fragments, whose previous position in the house was meticulously recorded. To the extent possible, these were reincorporated in the restored property, to reconstitute as far as could be done a house reflecting its age, rather than a 'renovated' house. At Windsor, a fire that was at first apparently minor and containable resulted in the end in tremendous damage to structure and interior – within the latter no less than 300 clocks. The salvage operation included military personnel and Castle staff, as well as 125 specialist contractors. While fire was the primary agent of destruction, the quantity of water poured on it – 1.5 million gallons – was ultimately more damaging than the fire itself.

Emergency planning starts with preventive measures, naturally: fire and (sometimes) flood alarm systems, with regular electrical testing and standard fire safety precautions. Alarms are assessed by the emergency services, even when they turn out to be false (which happens a lot). Each

property must have a designated Emergency Team, each member filling a specific role. Salvage only begins when the emergency services declare the area safe. Teams are trained to focus initially solely on the safe evacuation of people; objects, however valuable, must wait. However, emergency plans will identify 'priority items', listed on so-called 'Grab Sheets', with team members allocated specific tasks in salvaging these once they have the green light. Plans are, of course, of value only when backed up by regular exercises.

There are usually separate teams for salvage (getting items out) and recovery (preventing or amending damage). These operations sometimes use ingenious methods: including wind tunnels, improvised with polythene sheets, a couple of tables and a pair of fan heaters, to dry out books and papers that need slow drying to save them. Hairdryers can be used for taxidermy items (but beware of arsenic); while Melinex is excellent for lifting off damaged paper. Emergency teams even include a communications and welfare officer, often to ensure a plentiful supply to the team of cake.

That danger is ever-present was illustrated by the flood at Stourhead in November 2015, due to the failure of antiquated pipework, but prompt action kept the damage to a minimum.

Hannah's presentation prompted some eager questions, to which she gave clear and full answers, acknowledging always the limits of her own special expertise. Her clear diction and confident presentation of her subject were exemplary. She finished with an appeal for new volunteers at Stourhead: applications, please, to Jean Booth, via jeanbooth@nationaltrust.org.uk

Peter Landymore

THE ROAD TO SARATOGA: 62ND REGIMENT OF FOOT, LATER THE WILTSHIRE REGIMENT.

Michael Wills

6th March 2018

"The English don't remember wars they lost". Consequently the American War of Independence (1775 - 1783) is not well known in England. Michael Wills attempted to remedy our lack of knowledge during the following hour, describing some of the characters and battles involved. Always having an interest in history, he became intrigued by the war while on a visit to New York. Finding that the soldiers involved eventually became the Wiltshire Regiment he was moved to research, both in New York and in Salisbury, some of its battles. This culminated in his book, "The Wessex Turncoat".

The unrest started because the Government of George III was attempting to raise taxes on the American colonies from 1765. The colonists protested against this on the grounds of having no representation in Parliament. The Tea Act of 1773 resulted in the wholesale dumping of tea in Boston Harbour. In retaliation Parliament introduced still harsher laws and the protest grew into armed skirmishes by the middle of April 1775. The army was stretched. George III employed 19,000 Hessian soldiers and with his recruiting sergeants scouring the country, he gathered some 8,000 more English troops to send with the Hessians, across the Atlantic in 300 ships.

There seemed to be three interesting characters involved over the following period, John Burgoyne, Benedict Arnold, and Horatio Gates.

Burgoyne was a fancy dresser and became known as Gentleman Johnny. He became a member of parliament and by 1776 was a major general. In 1776, he was at the head of the British reinforcements that sailed up the Saint Lawrence River and relieved Quebec City, which was under siege by the Continental Army. He led forces in the drive that chased the Continental Army from the province of Quebec.

Burgoyne's strategy was to separate New England from the southern colonies. Fort Ticonderoga had been built by the French and controlled the southern end of Lake Champlain and thus an important north-south route. Arnold had captured it in 1775. It was held until mid 1777 when Burgoyne's superior troop numbers overlooking the fort caused the Americans to withdraw. Burgoyne had been hoping to link up with forces from the south and from the west but they didn't arrive. He found himself surrounded and fought two battles at Saratoga to try and break out. He failed.

On 17 October 1777, Burgoyne surrendered his entire army, numbering 5,800. This was the greatest victory the colonists had yet gained, and it proved to be the turning point in the war. It also brought France and Spain into what became known as the Seven Year's War.

The command of the American forces was held by Benedict Arnold. Animosity between him and Major General Gates had finally led to Arnold being relieved of his command. Injured and no longer fit for service, he became military governor of Philadelphia. He later conspired with the British to go over to the British side but had to flee when the plot was discovered.

Burgoyne returned to England but many of his erstwhile troops were held until the end of the war under parole (and arduous conditions) before returning home. Many defected or escaped. Those returning became *The Wiltshire Regiment*.

Harassed by Native Indians, being used to set piece battles, using rivers for transport and avoiding ambushes, buying ships then disassembling and rebuilding in order to travel from one river to another, all during harsh weather, it had all become too much for the British. As is so often the case, from Hannibal to the present day, ultimate defeat was due to long

supply lines, adverse weather, incompetent leadership, and hostile natives.

There is a wealth of literature and comprehensive entries in Wikipedia for those who wish to read more of the background to this campaign and its part in the Seven Year's War.

These events form the historical background of Michael Wills book, *The Wessex Turncoat*, a tale of how a Wessex man came to fight on both sides of the War of American Independence. Introduced as a good friend of Mere, and frequent LitFest supporter, Michael Wills (michaelwills.eu) is a teacher, trainer, founder of Salisbury Language School, and also a writer of children's books.

Hamish Bell

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED – THE STORY OF THE CENSUS

by Daphne Tighe

13 March 2018

Before 1801, there was no sound information available to the King's Ministers, to philosophers and economists, or to anyone on what was universally agreed to be one of the most vital attributes of the Nation: its population.

Historians today estimate that in 1500, England may have had a population of 2.25 million: about the same as in 1340 (before the Black Death) and indeed at the time of the Norman Conquest. By 1600, this might have reached 4 million; and by 1700, 5 million. In 1800, Parliament – in the midst of the long war against Napoleon – passed the Population Act, not without stiff opposition from those who saw it as an infringement of British Liberties, or worse: an attempt to squeeze out more tax revenue. Thus in 1801, came about the first of the decennial census counts of the population of Great Britain (Ireland was not included until 1821).

This revealed a population in England and Wales of 8.9 million; and in the 3 parts of Britain (i.e. including Scotland) 11 million. These are likely to be underestimates, since there was substantial undercounting due to administrative errors, and some evasion. The census was repeated every ten years thereafter. In 1851, occupation and place of birth were required for the first time to be recorded. Despite substantial emigration, notably from Ireland, the population was estimated – again, likely to be an underestimate – to have reached 20m.

For family historians, the 1911 census is the most recent to be made available for examination at the level of the individual. More recent data are still only available in aggregate form, partly for reasons of privacy protection. The 1921 Census showed a total of 19m females and 18m males: reflecting (in part) the effects of the Great War. The 1931 census data were lost to fire in 1942, the result of bombing; and no census was held in 1941. However there was a “National Registration” held in September 1939, mainly for the purposes of issuing identity and ration cards and controlling call-ups to the armed forces. The information collected was not as comprehensive as for a census, but did include occupations as well as identities and addresses.

This brief summary does no justice to Daphne’s clear and compelling presentation. With the aid of a few well-chosen illustrative slides, she brought an apparently dry and dreary subject to life: and communicated in the most lively way the wealth of information that can be gleaned from the census data, and the fascination of using it to discover details from the past of our unremarked, ordinary predecessors who nevertheless have left their traces in history, thanks to the census and its data.

Peter Landymore

OUT OF MY ATTIC – BOY'S TOYS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

by Michael Weale

3 April 2018

The clue was in the title; and, notwithstanding the plentiful presence of the gentler sex in the audience, Michael had to start with his apology: no girls' toys were to feature. But who, today, can argue that construction toys and steam engines are not for girls too?

Back in the 19th century, Michael explained, Germany was the leading maker of toys, and the main innovator. It was really after the Great War that British reluctance to buy German favoured the emergence of the British toy-making companies which became famous for his (and our) generation. Germany had a strong tradition of model-making: although models, built with precision and detail, and to scale, are not to be confused with toys, as they are definitely NOT for playing with by destructive small boys.

For example, miniature soldiers emerged in the 18th century as models: the first metal-cast ones coming for Nuremburg at the end of the century. These were followed by alloys (lead with tin and antimony), with Dresden becoming another main source. For display purposes, they produced also 'flats': soldiers in profile rather than fully three-dimensional figures (examples were passed round for us to see.) Then, some 70 years later in the UK, the patriotically-named William Britain found, in the 1860s, a hollow-casting method that produced lighter, cheaper soldiers. Britain's metal soldiers were not to go out of production until 1966, even though Britain did turn to producing plastic soldiers in the 1960s.

Meanwhile in Germany, in the 1930s, a method was found for making 'composite' soldiers out of sawdust and glue. Not only soldiers, but Hitler and the rest of the Nazi leadership could be bought in this way. Speaking of valuable rarities, hand-painted, complete sets of the Britain soldiers, produced over the century (almost) that they endured, are now prized, some more than others: look out for the Bahamas Police Band, a set that was for some reason less popular at the time than cavalry, the Black Watch or the Guards. Also popular were the models made of the various types of artillery, although the WW1 "exploding trench" was perhaps a little bit 'over the top'.

If you were more nautically-minded in the late Victorian age, you might have gone for a Frank Sugg boat; Sugg had been a test cricketer and bat-maker, and may have found a use for the off-cuts from the bat-making process. Bowman boats, which came along in the 1930s, and were built with working steam engines, are too good to play with; although Bowman boats from the '50s are solid wood and not really models but toys. Later, Alexander Greiner made coasters: not for putting drinks on, but model cargo ships.

A famous example of a toy company that was encouraged in its growth by anti-German sentiment is Triang, which started up as Lines Brothers in Merton, South-west London, in the 20s, and by 1938 had become the biggest toy company in the world. Every child of the 'forties and 'fifties knew their trains and model cars. Even more famous is Frank Hornby, who invented his Meccano system around 1900. Later his company diversified into train sets, (the renowned Hornby Double O), and even Chemistry sets. Lines Bros. of Triang fame eventually took over Hornby in the 'seventies, keeping the brand name in use, but both disappeared in the 'eighties. Thriving collector markets exist for the cars, trains, and

construction sets – and for the earliest models made from these – for both makes.

Michael illustrated his talk with a wealth of real examples of ancient toys that were passed among the audience, with appropriate cautionary words that allowed them to be recovered intact at the end. His enthusiasm for his subject was successfully communicated to his audience –even if unevenly, possibly, across the genders.

Peter Landymore



The Foreign Legion

SUGAR TO CAMELS

Ros Liddington

17 April 2018

Ros Liddington's work at Wilton House, and its role in World War One as a hospital, led her to the Tate family through one of the Earl of Pembroke's great-grandfathers, Arthur Wignall Tate. He was one of the heirs to the fortune made by Henry Tate out of the sugar trade.

Born in 1819, in Chorley Lancashire, Henry Tate was the 11th son of a Unitarian clergyman. When he was 13, he became a grocer's apprentice to his elder brother in Liverpool. After a seven-year apprenticeship, he was able to set up his own shop. His business was successful, and grew to a chain of six stores by the time he was 35. In 1859 Tate became a partner in the John Wright & Co. sugar refinery, selling his grocery business in 1861. By 1869, he had gained complete control of the company, and renamed it as Henry Tate & Sons.

His fateful chance came in 1872 when he came across an invention, by a German, Eugen Langen, that offered a simple way of cutting the sugar loaf – then a standard way of producing, transporting and even selling sugar – into cubes equivalent to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a teaspoon. He bought out the patent. To produce cube sugar he built a refinery in Liverpool; and then in 1875 a second one at Silvertown in London.

While becoming extremely wealthy, Tate was a generous donor to educational and medical charities, and a patron of painting, especially of pre-Raphaelite artists. By 1889 his collection of contemporary art was too large to be properly housed at home, so he donated his collection of 65

contemporary paintings to the government, on the condition that they be displayed in a suitable gallery, toward the construction of which he also donated £80,000. The National Gallery of British Art, nowadays known as Tate Britain, was opened on 21 July 1897, on the site of the old Millbank Prison.

Abram Lyle was born on 14 December 1820 in the seaport of Greenock, Renfrewshire, in Scotland, and at twelve years old became an apprentice in a lawyer's office. He then joined his father's cooperage businesses and in partnership with a friend, John Kerr, developed a shipping business, making the Lyle fleet one of the largest in Greenock. The area was heavily involved in the sugar trade with the West Indies, and his business included transporting sugar.

The sugar-cane refining process produced a treacle-like syrup that usually went to waste. In 1883, Charles Eastick, a chemist at the Abram Lyle & Sons refinery in Plaistow, formulated how it could be refined to make a preserve and sweetener for cooking. The resulting product was marketed commercially in 1885 as "golden syrup". Together with his three sons, Lyle bought two wharves at Plaistow in East London in 1881 to construct a refinery for producing Golden Syrup. The site happened to be around 1.5 miles (2.4 km) from the sugar refinery of his major rival, Henry Tate. In the first year Lyle's refinery showed a loss of £30,000, with economies being made by asking staff to wait for their wages on occasion; but eventually the business came to dominate the United Kingdom market for Golden Syrup.

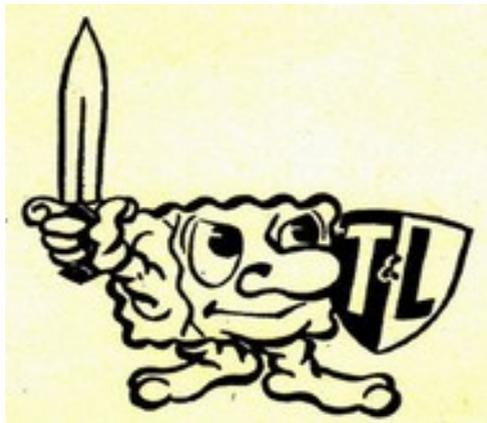
Abram Lyle died in April 1891, 8 years before his greatest business rival, Henry Tate. The two men never met but in 1921, after Tate's death, Henry Tate & Sons merged with Abram Lyle & Sons to form Tate & Lyle. Ironically the sons of both men were now in business together. Since then

there have been many sons and grandsons to guide the company into its multinational modern form.

With a family fortune behind him and plenty of brothers and cousins to run the business, the young Arthur Tate, born in 1888, did not enter the family business. At the age of 21 he was given a Mercedes, and he devoted himself to motor-, and later power-boat, racing, with his friend Tommy Sopwith, of the aircraft family. However, after war broke out in 1914 he duly joined up and served in France with the Black Watch, earning a DSO and becoming a mustard gas casualty. After the war he returned to the sporting life, car and boat racing and attempts on speed records. He died in 1939, aged only 51, having - most unusually for a Tate boy - no sons. His only daughter Monica married and had 2 sons and a daughter; and was the grandmother, on his mother's side, of the present Earl of Pembroke, heir of Wilton House.

And what of Camels? It was Tommy Sopwith, Arthur's best friend, who produced the Sopwith Camel, arguably the best and most effective fighter 'plane of the first World War.

(Edited from Ros Liddington's notes)



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