

OLD WARDEN HISTORY & HERITAGE SOCIETY

Issue 2 May 2017

OUR AIM

We aim to promote interest in and knowledge of the history of Old Warden and surrounding area, including buildings, landscape, people & community and items of historical interest.

We want to support the preservation and security of items of historic interest and to assist the community in carrying out historical projects.



7 March 2017: Talk by Paul Labous

NEWS FROM YOUR SOCIETY:

Time has flown by since our last newsletter in Dec 2016. We finalized a successful major funding bid to the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership Programme, enabling us to commence the Warden Abbey Project. We also held a project launch event on 7 March, including a fascinating talk on the Warden Pear by Paul Labous, and barely had time to draw breath before the geophys survey started on 24 March. There was a lot of preparatory work behind the scenes to enlist volunteers for the geophys, prepare all necessary paperwork, and ensure that we fully satisfied permissions, health & safety, and insurance requirements.



24 March 2017: MOLA Surveyors undertake a site 'recce' with members of the OWHHS committee

WARDEN ABBEY PROJECT – POST SURVEY BRIEFING

It doesn't seem possible that after months of planning the geophysical survey has now been completed. It looks so easy on Time Team, but in reality, the two geophys techniques were found to be physically demanding; needing focus, concentration and teamwork.

Our volunteers were excellent; turning up on time, working hard, and very interested with what was happening and what the results would show. All of



Above: Volunteers operating the magnetometer

Below: Getting to grips with earth resistance



us have learnt new skills and it was a privilege to be able to study the site in more detail.

The MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) surveyors were very patient in explaining everything to us and were a pleasure to work with. Not all went to plan as there were some problems with the magnetometer which set us back slightly, but that was overcome and the weather was perfect throughout.

MOLA were able to download initial result 'plots' at the end of most sessions, but we now have to await their full analysis and report, expected by the end of May. Just to whet your appetite though, the earth resistance has, by showing up foundations of structures, provided an outline plan of the layout of the abbey church and cloister, and the magnetometry has provided evidence of tile and brick kilns. For those interested in garden history we may also have some hints at the layout of the late Tudor gardens surrounding the Gostwick mansion (i.e. the Landmark Trust building).

MOLA will be coming back to deliver a talk about the survey to local people and we will keep you informed about this and other events.

Armed with the geophysics results the next step of the project is to commission an expert in historical reconstructive drawing to depict what our lost Abbey would have looked like. Something to fire the imagination!

Our very grateful thanks to the landowner, The Southill Estate, for granting permission to access the site – without this there would have been no project. We must also thank Richard & Nancy Batty, the tenants of Abbey Farm, and Jane Markham, manager of Warden Abbey Vineyard, for allowing volunteers the use of their facilities during the survey.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION (BLHA)

OWHHS has taken out society membership with BLHA. This means that members of our society automatically become members of BLHA. Check out their website at; <http://www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk/>.

The BLHA Annual Conference and AGM is on Saturday 24 June 2017 in Bedford, and offers a very interesting day out with a full programme of talks and tours. OWHHS will be reserving a table to display details of recent activities. It would be lovely if any of you would like to join us. Please let Christine Hill (christinehill742@btinternet.com) know by Thursday 25 May so that the booking form can be completed and sent.

For full details see <http://www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HIB-7-10.pdf>. The cost is £20 including lunch, and cheques payable to BAALHS must accompany the booking form.

*OWHHS has also taken out insurance cover with Aviva, via the British Association
for Local History*

MEMBERSHIP AND HOW TO JOIN – we now have 28 members!

If you know anyone who would like to join the society the initial membership fee is £10 followed by a nominal fee £1 per annum. Payment by bank transfer is preferred, with a confirmation email to the treasurer and secretary providing your name, address and contact details which will be held securely in our records. Alternatively cheques payable to Old Warden History & Heritage Society may be sent to the treasurer at Orchard Grange, Old Warden, Biggleswade, Beds SG18 9HB

OWHHS Bank Account Details:

Lloyds Bank | Sort Code: 30-90-79 | Account No: 31653668

There will hopefully be something to interest anybody who is curious about Old Warden's past; events, talks, site visits and newsletters. Being a very small society at present people who would like to be active within the society, helping with research, organising events etc, would be very welcome. Please phone the secretary for a chat or send an email to register your interest.

Enquiries:

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