

HANLEY MATTERS

the newsletter of
The Hanleys' Village Society

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FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

24 October

First Annual General Meeting in the Village Hall, 7.30 pm.

28 November

Potters Hanley – In Your Garden. A talk by Peter Ewence on pottery in the parish. Village Hall, 7.30 pm.

23 January

The Hanleys – Our Earliest History. A talk by Malcolm Atkin, County Archaeological Officer. Village Hall, 7.30 pm.

26 March

History Forum. A talk by Robin Whittaker on the activities of Worcestershire's local history societies.

DOWSING IN HANLEY SWAN

The Society's archaeological officer Peter Ewence conducted a dowsing walk around the village on 31 August. Starting in the field adjoining the Village Hall carpark, he quickly mapped out the site of two medieval cottages.

Walking along Picken End, he stopped at John and June Boardman's cottage to point out the route of a road that once ran through their property.

In medieval times Picken End apparently continued on as a road and was crossed by another road running along the route of the footpath to Roberts End.

At the far end of the field that now forms the boundary of Picken End, Peter Ewence plotted the outline of a large, possibly tythe, barn. Then he positioned people over what had once been post holes for a circular house, before identifying its entrance and the spot where its stone hearth lay.

In the next field the spring that now serves as a cattle watering hole was shown to have once fed a large rectangular pond, probably supplying the medieval community with water.

Although most people on the walk tried their hand at dowsing, no one was able to get so much as a twitch out of the forked buddleia stick that in Peter's hands responded immediately to even slight changes in energy. A remarkable demonstration.

NAVIGATING THE RIVER SEVERN

Civil engineer Don Shuker, who spent all his working life on the river Severn, delivered the Society's inaugural talk on 26 September.

Although not exploring how the Hanleys have been affected by the river, as members were expecting, his theme of the navigation of the Severn provided an interesting insight into the workings of a busy and at times highly dangerous river.

Before the installation of weirs the river was tidal as far as Worcester, where the flood range was as much as 25 feet. Sail-assisted trows had to lower their sails to pass under the bridge.

Between Worcester and Tewkesbury the river had a navigable depth of 9 feet and Don Shuker remembered the problems of trying to control big barges with deep drafts eroding the banks as they raced along at up to 18 knots. There were times when he was shot at with airguns by bargees trying to scare him off as they travelled too fast or heavily laden.

But without commercial barges, which used to keep the silt moving, the river is becoming more prone to flooding as deposits build up. Dredging is not cost effective, since every flood brings down fresh silt. And flood protection measures taken upstream just seem to move the problem further down.

ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

by Peter Ewence

My dowsing survey in The Hanleys has been focused this Summer on two areas, one near Quay Lane and the other on land behind St Marys Villa, northeast of Hanley Swan crossroads.

The survey at Quay Lane has produced a pattern of signals bearing characteristics of a Roman Military Camp. Roman pottery and coin finds on the surface in recent years lend credence to this interpretation. Members have dug two 1-m square test pits, which have located abraided Roman pottery at several levels and an accumulation of 2 m of clay and gravel eroded from higher up the site.

Further investigation will be needed to establish the nature and date of the dowsed features. Roads from the centre of this feature run West towards British Camp, South to Upton, North towards Cleveoad and East across the river.

Dowsing near Hanley Swan crossroads has indicated earlier lanes, fields and cottages on what is now pasture. One feature, which may be a tile kiln, measures 10 m x 2 m. Overfired tile waste can be found around this feature, which may call for a few more afternoons of hard digging in order to sink another test pit.

I will endeavour, in the next few months, to visit all those members who have expressed a wish to have

their land surveyed by dowsing and I will be delighted to add others to the list. The larger the area that can be sampled the better will be the picture of early Hanley.

ORAL HISTORY

Jenny McGowran has agreed to lead a project on the oral history of the village by recording the memories of individuals and families who have lived in the area for 40 years or more. Jenny would like to hear from anyone who could contribute to this history. She can be contacted on 311820 or email: jandt.mcgowran@virgin.net.

PARISH PLAN

The Society notes the high level of interest in local history talks and courses expressed by respondents to a questionnaire issued in connection with the Parish Plan.

Places of interest identified in the survey included Hanley castle, St Mary's church, cider mill/press, medieval deer park at Blackmore End, water mill at Tuck Mill, Trescothic boiler, village pump and Three Kings pub.

Among the suggestions for improving knowledge of the area were open days at private properties with historic features, conducted tours, a historical paper or book of the area, and a story board on the Parish noticeboards.

The most important change that residents would like to see is an improvement to the Swan.

SWAN UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Following a year off after selling the Village Stores, Alan and Caroline Sutton have decided to tackle the Swan. Owned by Punch Taverns, one of the country's largest pub-owning property development companies, the Swan is currently in a poor state of repair.

The Suttons are moving in as tenants initially to see how things work out and then hope to negotiate a long lease to enable them to restore the pub to its rightful place in village life.

"We want it to become the heart of the village again," says Caroline, "and welcome any suggestions for making it a place that all kinds of people will be happy to visit."

"The first thing we want to do is knock the two bars into one and open a coffee shop with home-baked cakes," she adds. "We intend to provide simple home-cooked food in the evenings and at weekends, with the help of our children, Andrew, 18, and Lizzie, 15."

They plan to open for business on Saturday, 8th November, at 6pm, when complimentary drinks will be available. And they will be serving breakfast on the Sunday, when a large TV screen will be installed for people to watch the rugby World Cup quarter-final that, hopefully, will include England.

Then the pub will close temporarily while the owners carry out a major refurbishment before opening again in the New Year.