

No 1/07

April 2007

EDITORIAL

Society Office

Welcome to the 2007 issue of our newsletter. A year ago I reported that all the Society's equipment, our library and our stock of publications was tightly packed into a temporary office above the Colonel Noel Suite at Rutland County Museum. This was to allow work to proceed with the conversion of the southern end of the Riding School into a new store for the reserve collection and the creation of new offices for Council and Museum staff in the area above the Welcome to Rutland gallery. This work is now complete and we have been offered a new office, still above the Colonel Noel Suite, with additional storage facilities in the adjacent corridor.

Coupled with this the Society has agreed to provide a row of bookcases in the Riding School which will accommodate both the museum's and the Society's libraries, with space to spare for some of our stock of publications. The finer details of our move back to normality have yet to be agreed, but, as I said last year, it is likely to be well into the summer before we achieve this happy state!

Society Secretary

As many will now be aware, our Secretary, Sue Howlett, stepped down at last year's AGM after six years in the post, but the urgently needed replacement has not materialised. Jill Kimber has taken up the role of Correspondence Secretary, so the job is much less demanding now than it has been in the past.

What we now need most of all is a **Minute Secretary** - someone who is able to take the minutes at our management meetings, the AGM and the occasional sub group meeting, circulate them, and prepare agendas for following meetings. Please think about whether you might be able to take on this role and contact me if you think you can help your Society in this way.

Sue Howlett

Since 'retiring' Sue and her husband Ron have moved back to their home county of Essex, but Sue says that she is

missing Rutland, and the Society in particular. They remain members, and at our March Management Meeting there was a proposal to offer her Honorary Life Membership in recognition of her outstanding commitment to the Society. The proposal was agreed unanimously, and Sue was delighted to accept it.

Robert Ovens: rfovens@yahoo.co.uk

OLIVE ADAMS

Olive Adams and her husband Fred were founding members of the Rutland Field Research Group for Archaeology & History which was formed in 1971, prompted by the impending development of Rutland Water. Fred became Chairman of the newly-formed Group, which instigated survey and excavations at the deserted medieval village site of Nether Hambleton.



Olive (left, kneeling) and Fred (left, seated) supervise a group of school children working on the excavation site at Nether Hambleton in 1973.

These excavations were run on the, now comparatively rare, traditionally English system of amateur volunteers. Olive was Fred's 'right arm' and, with him, played a major

role in the RFRG's excavations, first at Nether Hambleton and later at Whitwell.

To her lot fell the job of finds washer and keeper, but Olive was much more than this. The Group held regular meetings at members' homes, checking through and numbering finds as well as planning its next moves, and somehow those at Colsterworth were always full houses. Olive's pavlovas were to die for and every year she would create monumental masterpieces to accompany Fred's homemade strawberry wine, applauded as the highlights of our annual summer picnics! Olive and Fred also found the time to field-walk, and the publication of the "Oakham Parish Field Walking Survey - archaeology on the ploughland of Rutland" is due in 2007.

Olive was a welcoming, generous, supportive, and Christian woman, endearing herself to all who had the pleasure of knowing her, whether through the RFRG, as neighbours, or formerly as school colleagues or pupils. When the Group eventually merged with the RLHRS in 1993, Olive and Fred were deservedly elected Honorary Members of the enlarged Society, and continued to participate in its events and meetings. The news of Olive's death in July 2006 was received with great sadness, and the Society extended its sincere condolences to Fred and all their family.

Tim Clough & Elaine Jones

GEORGE SOMERSET FINCH

There are few more illustrious names in Rutland's history than that of Finch. It must be rare for a Society such as ours, dedicated to conserving records relating to the county, to have had as an active member someone whose forebears feature so prominently in those records.

George Finch came to Ayston Hall in 1946. As well as farming he was a member of Rutland County Council and of the Uppingham Rural District Council. He thus continued the tradition of public service apparent in his family both locally and nationally. His involvement was always both practical and unassuming and his local knowledge was used to advantage.

He became a member of the Rutland Record Society on its formation, as did Betty, his wife. In this as in so many ways she gave him her support. She shared to the full his interest in the county and family history, always so closely linked. They were also actively involved with the Uppingham local history group as well as carrying out research for this Society.

On his sixtieth birthday sixty trees were donated by the family and planted in an avenue near Burley Fishponds. They seem a most fitting memorial to a man whose ancestors helped to form so much of Rutland's landscape and who himself epitomised a quiet and understated sense of public duty.

George died in May 2006 and the funeral service was held at St Mary the Virgin, Ayston. We extend our sincere condolences to Betty and their family

Edward Baines

SOCIETY LIBRARY

Books and documents which have been donated recently by Sue Howlett, Peter Lane, Bryan Waites, Audrey Buxton and the sister of the late Christine Hill have recently been added to the Society's collection.

Books relating to Rutland and nearby counties have now been placed on temporary open shelves in the Riding School at Rutland County Museum, by kind permission of Simon Davies, the Museum Services Manager.

Members may consult these books after notifying the Museum staff member on duty at the back desk. They should also enter details of their visit in the record book provided. Access to other books and documents held in our library will not be possible until the Society is able to move into its new office.

Note: non-members will not be barred from consulting these books but if they do so repeatedly they will be invited to join the Society.

Auriol Thomson

THE HERITAGE OF RUTLAND WATER PROJECT



Sheila Sleath is a leading member of our Heritage of Rutland Water team and at the Empingham Village Visit she received the East Midlands Heritage Stars Award for her effort and initiative in connection with this project. Jean Rider of the Countryside Commission presented the award and she is seen here with Sheila and Edward Baines

We are now well into the third year of this two-year project and there is still much to do before we can get the book to the stage where it is ready for the printer. However, a great deal of progress has been made by the small editorial group in recent months and over 80% has now been designed. It has grown to some 560 pages with 32 chapters by 26 authors - easily the largest publication by the Society. We now know that it will be printed by The Guttenberg Press in Malta and that it will be launched at Rutland Sailing Club, but the date has yet to be agreed.

One task that has been completed is the pictorial display based on the research carried out. This was launched at the Empingham Village Visit on 23rd September last year,

and then exhibited at Rutland County Museum from October until December.

Another objective achieved was the five-mile guided historical walk at Rutland Water - exploring Edith Weston and what remains of Normanton Hall, Park and Estate. This took place on Saturday 9th September in glorious late-summer sunshine. The leaders were Sheila Sleath & Robert Ovens and over 40 people took part, accompanied by several dogs, and, for part of the way, by the brass band of the Ancient Order of Foresters!



The Rutland Water Walk at Edith Weston fishponds

SOCIETY WEBSITE

Reminder - the Society website can be found at: www.rutlandhistory.org

It is a good place to keep up-to-date with Society activities and members are encouraged to make suggestions for new pages and relevant links to other sites. In fact we are willing to add any pages relating to the history of Rutland which have a well researched content. Members can now contact the Society by addressing emails to:

enquiries@rutlandhistory.org

RUTLAND COUNTY MUSEUM & OAKHAM CASTLE Exhibitions and Activities Programme 2007 - 2008

At Rutland County Museum:

9 February - 25 March

A Passion for Paper

Paper pieces - masks, pots and silkpaper collages by Tessa Angell.

30 March - 13 May

Garden Plants and Flowers

An exhibition of the work of the Leicester Society of Botanical Illustrators.

18 May - 1 July

Personal Memoirs of Interest

Still-lives, rustic landscapes and portraits by Clinton Crowson.

13 July - 19 August

Celebrating Embroidery

The work of the Rutland & Stamford branch of the Embroiders' Guild.

24 August - 7 October

Home & Abroad

A wide variety of watercolour & oil paintings by Norman Simms.

5 October - 11 November

Seaton Village Visit Display

Rutland History Society presents an exhibition of old photographs of Seaton, with maps and other ephemera.

12 October - 25 October

Sacred On Location

A touring exhibition about Judaism, Islam & Christianity, from the British Library.

27 October - 2 December

Rutland Churches

Watercolours and drawings of Rutland churches as they were 200 years ago.

December 14 - Jan 27

Rutland in Watercolour

The work of the Little Bytham Watercolour Group.

At Oakham Castle:

July 22 - September 2

Art at the Castle

Annual exhibition of local artists.

THE GEORGE PHILLIPS AWARD 2006

The 2006 George Phillips Award, jointly sponsored by the Society and Rutland County Council, was presented by Michael Tebbut, the chairman of 'Men of Stones', at Oakham Castle on 14th December.

Eight schemes were put forward as nominations for the 2006 award, and these were narrowed down to a shortlist of four;

- * Somerfield Supermarket, Uppingham - new build
- * Manor Farm Barns, Seaton - conversion
- * White Farm, Oakham Road, Whissendine - renovation and extension
- * Uppingham School Music Centre, School Lane, Uppingham - new build

Judging was carried out in November by David Trubshaw (Rutland County Council Conservation Officer), Councillors Rob Toy and Ruth Archer (Members of Development Control Committee), and Chris Wilson and Alan Curtis for the Society.

First place was awarded to Uppingham School Music Centre, the building considered by the panel of judges to be the most significant contribution towards preserving the built environment in Rutland.

Details of the award and how to make a nomination for the 2007 competition are available on the Society's website at www.rutlandhistory.org

Alternatively, please contact Jill Kimber, Correspondence Secretary, RLHRS, Rutland County Museum, Catmose St, Oakham LE15 6HW.

JOINT MEETINGS PROGRAMME

Rutland Local History & Record Society (RLHRS) and the Friends of Rutland County Museum & Oakham Castle (FRCMOC).

Thursday 17th May, 7.30pm at Rutland County Museum
RLHRS AGM

Deserted Medieval Villages of Rutland

Fred Hartley

Fred Hartley has made a detailed study of the Medieval Earthworks of Rutland. He is now Site Manager of Leicestershire County Council Collections Resource Centre at Barrow Upon Soar.

Saturday 2nd June, 7.30pm at Oakham Castle

RLHRS & FRCMOC Summer Social Event

Details to be announced

Saturday 8th September

Thatched Village and Fort Henry

A 6 mile guided historical walk exploring Exton village and estate.

Leaders Robert Ovens and Sheila Sleath

Meet at 2.00pm outside the Fox and Hounds, Exton.

Saturday 15th September

Village Visit to Seaton

Details to be announced

The remainder of the 2007 / 2008 programme will be forwarded to members when details have been finalised.

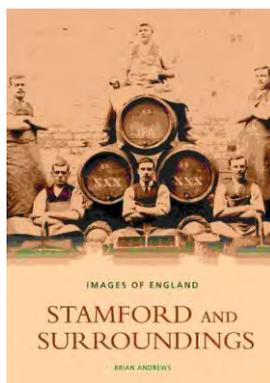
BOOK REVIEWS

Images of England: Stamford and Surroundings

By Brian Andrews,

Published by Tempus Publishing Ltd, Stroud, 2006, Paperback, 128pp, 200 illustrations, £12.99

Reviewed by Tim Clough



The author of this nicely produced compendium of photographs is founder of the Collyweston History Society. This perhaps leads to something of a bias in the images selected: besides the expected concentration on Stamford itself there are many of Collyweston (including its important limestone slate industry) and neighbouring Easton-on-the-Hill, but some of

the other villages in the 'surroundings' of Stamford are represented hardly or not at all.

Rutlanders will be interested in several nice scenes of farming in the 1930s at Tixover, and there are a few other Rutland views including a rare shot of an ice-cream van at Ketton. Otherwise those of Rutland's larger, and picturesque, villages which might qualify for inclusion - Ketton, Great Casterton, Essendine and Ryhall - do not figure. Perhaps this is partly the result of the author's heavy dependence on the Stamford Museum's excellent collection and other village collections, to the extent that he appears not to have considered the equally extensive resources of the Rutland County Museum. These include not only the Jack Hart postcard collection but also many glass negatives of views of eastern Rutland taken by Dolby's of Stamford: this is a pity. There is a view of Dolby's premises in Stamford's High Street, but the caption does not mention the photographic side of their business. Indeed, nowhere are the photographers who produced these wonderful images credited, an omission which does detract from the value of the otherwise full, well-written and informative captions.

The Stamford town pictures include a good selection of shops and other business premises, and a wide range of images of people taking part in social events or other daily activities. Some of Stamford's industrial concerns such as Pick Cars and Blackstones are included, but those in villages such as Ketton (brewing, stone quarrying) or Casterton (Knights's agricultural engineers) are not.

In summary, this is a good addition to the genre of compilations of historical photographs: the images are well reproduced and well researched. Stamford's influence has always been felt on Rutland's eastern parishes, and although its importance as a staging post on the Great North Road is not made evident, the volume nicely complements the historical picture.

Discovering Rutland Epitaphs.

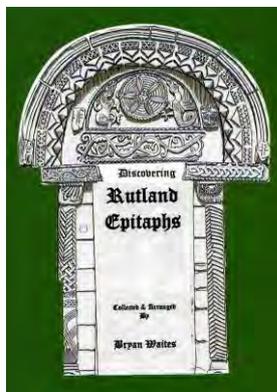
Collected & Arranged by Bryan Waites.

Published by Mulum in Parvo Press, Oakham, 2006.

Paperback, 66pp. £5.99

ISBN 0 9524544 6 7

Reviewed by Sheila Sleath



Almost 180 epitaphs from Rutland churches are featured in this publication. They date from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century and belong to people from all walks of life. Although the epitaphs have been arranged alphabetically and geographically the inclusion of a name index would have been a useful addition, particularly for the genealogist.

What may appear to be a rather macabre read is nothing of the sort. In fact it is more likely to encourage the

reader to look further and add his own choice to the author's selection.

The tips given by the author in his introduction on searching for epitaphs are very useful to the uninitiated! The thrill of the hunt however may be somewhat diminished as few clues are given to the location of the memorials. An indication of whether they are outside or inside the church would have been useful - however the inclusion of (*floor slab*) after some of the Oakham examples is very helpful. The transcript of the illegible epitaph on Robert Swann's headstone in Belton in Rutland's churchyard is an important addition - but unless you are in the know I challenge the casual epitaph hunter to find this one!

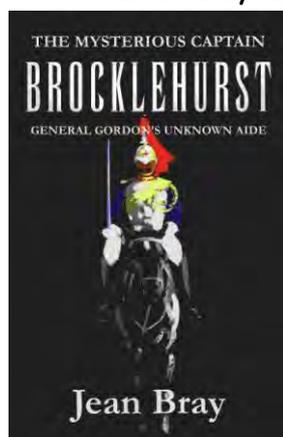
In all, an interesting and informative book which will almost certainly encourage the reader to seek and find and extend their own research.

The Mysterious Captain Brocklehurst - General Gordon's Unknown Aid

By Jean Bray

Reardon Publishing, Cheltenham, 2006

Reviewed by Robin Jenkins



This is a curious tale, told in a light and lively style. It will be of interest in Rutland because the 'mysterious captain', though he began life as John Fielden Brocklehurst in Macclesfield, finished his days at Langham as Baron Ranksborough (taking his title from the nearby hill).

Brocklehurst was a courtier and a cavalryman - and a Household Cavalryman at that. Despite the best efforts of his biographer it is hard to escape

the charge that Brocklehurst was one of life's observers rather than do-ers. Or, to be kinder, that his involvement in great events was often as a companion, even *confidant*, of the principal players. His transformation from Macclesfield radical to reactionary old courtier is well charted.

There can be little doubt that his friendship with General Gordon was mutually deeply felt. Nevertheless, when Gordon departed, in haste, for his second (fatal) sojourn in the Sudan, Brocklehurst bowed to wifely wishes and stayed at home. It also cannot be avoided that in 34 years in army uniform (not counting service as Hon Colonel of a territorial battalion and as Lieutenant of Rutland) he saw remarkably little active service.

His letters home, from the Sudan, South Africa and Russia, are livelier than we might expect, though his attitudes to native Africans (thankfully *not* bowdlerised by Jean Bray) occasionally make uncomfortable reading. If anything, I could have been happier with less of Gordon in Khartoum and even more of Brocklehurst and the relief column. The account of Brocklehurst's service in the

opening months of the South African War also is almost as thin as his own horses were after a few months of the defence of Ladysmith. Here Jean Bray does not entirely convince us that Brocklehurst wasn't the uninspiring 'Poglehurst' that Henry Rawlinson (and others) dubbed him. The cavalry didn't perform as well as they might have in 1899 and, anyway, there was little for them to do (besides converting their mounts to *chevriil*) once the siege had begun.

Readers of the *Rutland Record* will recall Jean Bray's article on Brocklehurst a year or so ago. This book, written with one eye on related displays at Sudeley Castle, expands upon that. It is not the definitive 'life' of Brocklehurst but it is an interesting, readable study of a significant Rutlander (by adoption at least).

ARCHAEOLOGY

Remarkable finds at Market Overton

Over the years there have been many Romano-British finds in and around the village of Market Overton. The Sites and Monuments Record reveals that pottery, coin, brooches and a kiln were found north-east of the church and close to The Lodge there was a find of 1,800 sherds of Romano-British pottery and masonry in 1903. At Fountains Row a resident reported finding large blocks of masonry under his garden together with pottery.

In view of this a 'watching brief' was required on a building site on the outskirts of the village. Archaeologists from University of Leicester Archaeological Services watched as topsoil was carefully scraped away. What was revealed was nothing less than astonishing. As work progressed collapsed walls, ditches and pits became apparent. An excavation was called for and a time frame of just less than two weeks was agreed with the developer. This was to be 'rescue archaeology' in its truest sense.

Excavation revealed quantities of painted wall plaster, roof tiles and pottery confirming that the site had been the location of a high status Romano-British villa. Hypocaust tiles (which formed pillars that held up the floor) and flue tiles were evidence of an underfloor hot air heating system or hypocaust. The owners of this house were wealthy and possibly administrators of the Romano-British town of Thistleton which lies less than two miles to the east. This is the second villa to be found close to Thistleton. In the early 1960s, during quarrying for ironstone, a substantial house was uncovered to the north-west of the town. Sadly it was quarried away following excavation.

Earlier features were also found in the form of ditches, pits and post holes. Pottery found in conjunction with them pointed to Iron Age occupation. Perhaps most remarkable of all was the discovery of a pit with many worked flints and cores. They were identified as being from the Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age and could be as much as 10,000 years old. Finding a 'knapping' site, or a place where flint was worked, is very rare. The people of the Mesolithic period were hunter-gatherers with no fixed abode and

finding evidence of them is difficult. This may prove to be a very significant find on this site.

Excavation was completed on 16th March and the finds removed to the University of Leicester for examination and dating. On completion of the report it may be possible to say more about the length of time the villa was occupied.

Kate Don



Clearing rubble from the villa wall



Lifting fragments of painted plaster



Samples of the painted wall plaster



Pot sherds and fragments of hypocaust tile



Roof tiles



Site of the villa wall

AND FINALLY ...

Watch out for details of the launch of *The Heritage of Rutland Water*, the Society's largest and most ambitious publication to date. The venue, appropriately, will be the magnificent club-house of Rutland Sailing Club on the south shore of Rutland Water.