

HARPTREES HISTORY SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER No 12

AUGUST 2022

Summer is traditionally our 'close' season when we pause and take breath as well as preparing for our new season of events commencing in September. We have enjoyed a good past year with lots of informative and entertaining talks as well as some great outdoor events. We also had our usual stall at the East Harptree Village Fete, where we attracted a good number of visitors.

Our new season of events begins on Wednesday 28 September when we will be welcoming Prof Richard Coates who will give us a talk on Local Place Names based on the Tithe Schedule. Our AGM will precede the talk, at 6.30pm, with the talk at our normal time of 7.30pm. As usual please be prepared to book seat(s) for the talk. We plan to continue with the seating more widely spaced and limited numbers. Therefore, booking is essential for both members and visitors. Further details will be sent to you nearer the time.

Annual membership commences in September. We will be circulating details in advance.

This issue of the Newsletter includes an update on Project Newton and more specifically restoration works on and around East Harptree's church of St Laurence. There are months' of work ahead so we will be keeping you abreast of progress.

If you have any queries about the Society, events or suggestions or comments on our publications, do contact us at info@harptreeshistorysociety.org.

Editor: Nick Roberts

Mystery items

Here's something slightly different on which to test your knowledge. It is made of bronze and the only clue I am going to give you is that it came out of a shipwreck off the Isles of Scilly. The full story will appear in the next Newsletter.



News

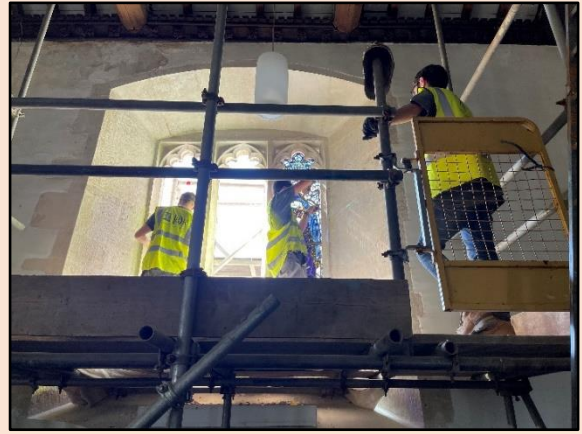
Work on the church of St Laurence, East Harptree is progressing very quickly now. Guy Stobart has kindly provided a summary of the latest work:

- **Bells** - we had an enjoyable trip in July to Bridport to Nicholsons who are restoring them and their associated equipment. They are now very shiny and the Crown Staples have been removed. They are due back on site in late August.



- The **Tower Roof** has been removed but the supporting beam is somewhat worse than anticipated. It will be repaired during the first half of August but, because we are having to erect internal scaffolding that will sit on the bell frame, the return of the bells will be delayed.
- We had another excellent tour in June this time to Holywell Glass in Wells who are repairing the **Karl Parsons Window**, the most iconic window but the one in the worst condition. The window was reinstalled on 8 August and looks truly wonderful. It is fully clean and the colours are even more breath-taking than before.





- **Excavation** on the north side and to the entrance to the churchyard is now well advanced and the services are now largely installed. Perhaps surprisingly (but for the project and the limited budget this was good news) little was discovered during the digging on the north side. A noteworthy find was part from a fragment of a medieval floor tile.



- We had an excellent visit in early August to Ellis and Co (stonemasons) who specialise on work to listed buildings. Their premises and yard is fascinating. We watched one of their stone masons working on new panels for our tower parapet and also watched them working on the new oak and glazed doors that will go in the south porch entrance.



- Of particular interest is the results of the dismantling of the low retaining wall on the left at the entrance to the churchyard. You may recall that this was falling down and our excavations to put in the drains and other services was its death knell. During the careful dismantling of the wall we have discovered approximately 50 really interesting stones which Keith Faxon (the archaeologist with the 'Watching Brief') has individually recorded. Included are some very well preserved and rare C17th grave stones. We hope that when the County Archaeologist next visits the site he will support our plea to the BANES conservation officer that these should not simply be reinstated in the wall, as our planning permission requires. We want to display the most important ones in the church, with appropriate interpretation. Watch this space!

- **Wall paintings** and Chancel issues: conservation work is almost complete on the wall paintings. We have gone as far as we can with the medieval painting. Sadly the earlier restoration works were so bad that to try and address them we would probably have had to damage what is underneath ie the remnants of the medieval painting. However when the lighting scheme is installed in the chancel (September?) the medieval painting will be much more obvious, albeit not quite as extensive as we had first hoped. In the chancel the plaster at the lower levels has now been removed and Keith Faxon is spending time looking at the stone work underneath. There are, he says, some interesting features which have now been exposed.



- **Skeletons** – We have started to lower the ground outside the south porch as part of our plans to provide level access into the south porch. That is still an important output for the project. Perhaps we should have thought about this before but we now realise that when the south porch was built onto the church in the C15th(?) it covered and encroached into the graveyard of the church, including reducing levels, thereby leaving little ground above the medieval burials. We have now started to find a number of articulated skeletons in front of the south porch as part of our digging/ground lowering. They are remarkably well preserved and interestingly, because their diet included no sugar, their teeth are first class - a lesson to us all! We hope we can leave the skeletons in situ and find an answer to our ground lowering/level access. All of this is being recorded by Keith Faxon and we hope to provide more information, including photos, in a future issue of the Newsletter.

History Society visit to the Chained Library in July

We had a most enjoyable and fascinating visit to the chained library of Wells Cathedral in July. Due to its popularity we had two groups of ten people and we were guided through some of the incredible books held by this, a national treasure, which contains a staggering 4,000 volumes of printed books many of which are medieval. For those of you who missed the opportunity don't worry, as you can still book to go on a tour privately. Contact visits@wellscathedral.uk.net for further information.



Attendance at the EH Village Fete

We were fortunate to have a lovely sunny day and just ahead of the very high temperatures that soon followed.

New faces were welcomed and we had a chance to catch up with our many friends. Our stand included books and magazines for sale as well as having our photo library available to peruse.



One of the popular attractions was a bucket of dry sand full of historic objects for children to find and identify – a treasure hunt with a difference!

Snippets

The life of a boatswain, from the Cotswolds to Wuhan and a daily cold-water swim

Steve Ward

For those of you with the stomach for another bric-à-brac find

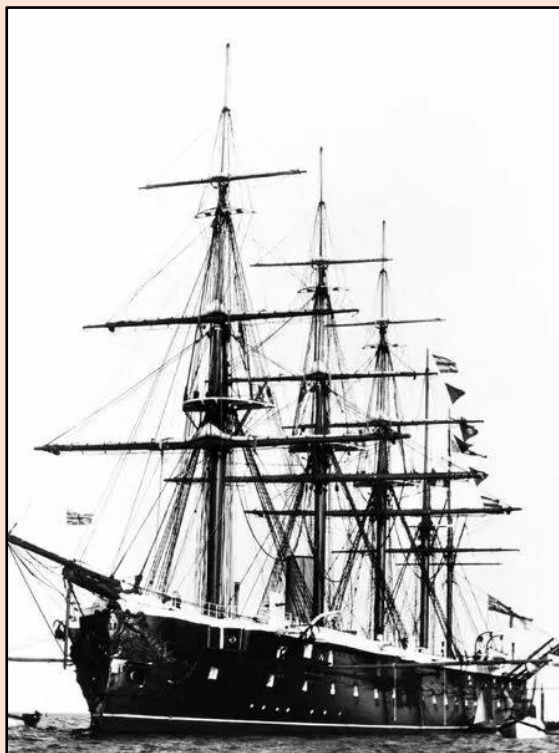


In July 1910 James and Ada were in Stratford on Avon and sent a postcard of Anne Hathaway's cottage to their uncle Lieutenant W. Lediard R.N. at Hankow House, 11 Livingstone Road, Gillingham, Kent. Google Maps shows 11 Livingstone Road to be a neat but ordinary small late-Victorian terraced house. Who was Lieut. Lediard and why was his house called 'Hankow'?

He was born in 1842 in Moreton-in-Marsh. By the time of the 1851 census, the family had moved for some

unknown reason to Chatham. By 1861, according to the 'Royal Navy at Sea and in Ports Abroad, Ships and Overseas Establishments' section of the census, the young William was on Vessel no. 62 Edgar 'eastward of the English Channel'. On 1 January 1873 he married Ellen Jarman from Broadstairs, aged 20, daughter of a postman.

He clearly had something about him, for in 1879 he was appointed boatswain on HMS Druid (a wooden-screw corvette) which generally plied between Havana and Bermuda. Boatswains (bosuns), the oldest rank in the [Royal Navy](#), were appointed by the Admiralty and were responsible for the care of rigging, cordage, anchors, sails, boats, flags and other stores. Less educated than the more senior warrant officers, they nevertheless needed to be good at maths. They rarely rose to commissioned status.



Retaining his boatswain rank, he steadily moved up the hierarchy of Royal Navy vessels - in 1882 to HMS Pembroke (a 74-gun 'base ship' launched in 1812), in July 1889 to HMS Assistance (an iron-screw storeship launched in 1874), in October of the same year to the more powerful ironclad HMS Sultan and, according to the Torquay Times, in 1890 to HMS Howe, a steel twin-screw battleship built in 1885 at a cost of £725,000 (a staggering £99m in today's money). William Lediard's last posting seems to have been in 1893 to HMS Agincourt, an armoured frigate. The Admiralty thought highly enough of him to grant him the rank of Honorary Lieutenant on his retirement in November 1898 aged 56.

HMS Agincourt

He travelled the world but found time to come home every so often to father nine children, of whom five were still alive when the 1911 census was taken. His family had followed him around, depending on where he was based – Chatham, Portsmouth and back to Chatham. None of his children followed him into the Navy – those who survived childhood were all girls.

In 1911 he was living as a Royal Navy pensioner at Hankow House with his wife Ellen and 20-year old daughter Mabel. Was the house already called ‘Hankow’? If not, did the name have a special significance for him?

[Hankow, today part of the city of Wuhan \(alleged source of Covid-19\), lies at the confluence of the rivers Han and Yangtze](#) and was the highest point that could be reached by large ocean-going merchant ships on China's longest river. Britain, France and Russia had administered concessions in its commercial centre. The American travel writer Harry Franck wrote in the 1920s, "Hankow is a bustling city, wholly western in its architecture and layout, even though completely surrounded by China, its buildings looming high into the air, with automobiles dashing their imperious way up and down the river-front Bund." The concession owners (and especially Britain) were not averse to protecting their interests with gunboats, but there is no evidence that any of Lediard's ships was ever involved.

Several ships over the years had been given the name ‘City of Hankow’, but it doesn't seem that Boatswain Lediard ever served on any of them. Had he perhaps nevertheless been to Hankow on one of his ships to acquire replacement stores or arrange repairs? Or was ‘Hankow’ simply one of those exotic-sounding names beloved of Victorian housebuilders? We may never know.

Lieut. Lediard RN (Ret'd) died in December 1931 in Gillingham, Kent, aged 89. His wife Ellen had died in 1928. Not a wealthy man, his effects on death totalled £190.10.2 (ca £14,000 in today's money). But he left his mark as far away as the West Country:

A Western Daily Press headline of 4th December 1931 read: *DEATH OF MAN WHO SWAM DAILY AT 89. A remarkable old swimmer passed away at Gillingham, Kent, yesterday in the person of Lieut. William Edward Lediard, R.N. (retired). Despite the fact that was in his 89th year he had up few weeks ago attended the Gillingham swimming bath and had his swim. He also had a daily cold bath at his home whatever the weather.*

Sources: census records, shipping lists, Wikipedia, Bank of England inflation calculator
