

BAS

Summer Excursions 2016

*Cotswold Country Estates: Chedworth Roman Villa &*



First we visited to **Chedworth** for a guided tour of one of Britain's grandest villas: a nymphaeum, mosaic floors, hypocaust systems and bath house rooms plus Roman finds and artefacts.

Then we went on to nearby **Cirencester**, Roman Corinium, where we had choices to visit: the 18c forest garden landscape of Cirencester Park boasts the longest avenue in England, Broad Ride which extends 8 km west of the town and mansion, but we took a shorter way through the centre of the park from the south to the garden buildings around the Hexagon and can then break away for more time in the park or, for some, a less energetic - a guided visit to the magnificent parish church of St John Baptist. The excellent Corinium Museum was open all day and had extensive new displays and some of the finest Roman objects from this always prosperous town.

*Tour round Old Buckingham 11th June 2016*

Julian has written three books connected with Buckingham - A Pictorial History in 1994, a History of Castle House in 2007 and a History of Hill House in 2008. We assembled at the Hunter Street Car Park on the University of Buckingham. This was the site of the Prebendal House, the manor house of the Prebend End of Buckingham until its destruction in the Civil War. We saw the corn mill of the Prebendal manor which is now the university refectory.

We proceeded to the ancient churchyard where the old gravestones remain but there is no sign of the church. It was explained that the steeple of the old church fell in 1699 and the poorly restored church tower fell in 1777. We continued along Church Street, stopping outside the old Vicarage and John Barton's Almshouses. Next stop was the modern church a fine product of the Enlightenment, unfortunately gothicised by local boy made good, George Gilbert Scott, in the 1860's

We then entered the charming garden of Hill House and took in the view down to the river which Edward the Elder must have enjoyed when he fortified the town in 914. We walked along Castle Street, observing the fine 18th century facades which were the result of the devastating fire of 1725. Continuing along West Street we passed the old Cross Keys Inn, a victim of intense competition in the late 18th century, and Cobham Arms Inn, closed in the 1850s after the coming of the railway. Our final stop was at Castle House, where the owner, Stephen Grey, shows the recent repairs to the west wing and gave us the run of his beautiful garden. A good time was had by all. We finished with tea and cakes at the Old Gaol.

## *Into Hertfordshire, 13 August 2016*

Peter and Diana Gulland started the day at Chorleywood, just on the Herts. side of the border with Bucks.. There, in a remarkably peaceful corner of Herts. (if one ignores the distant roar of traffic on the M25) they led their party around the narrow lanes of the village built by the Chartists; it is now called Heronsgate but was originally known as O'Connorville.

While some members of the Chartist movement for parliamentary reform sought confrontation with the establishment, those led by Nottingham M.P. Feargus O'Connor tried to enfranchise workers by making them property owners. Their Chartist Land Company acquired marginal agricultural land in six locations from Herefordshire to Hertfordshire and, on five of them, built settlements in which former industrial workers could be self-sufficient by cultivating the land around their dwellings. For several reasons the project failed and most of the settlers went back to whence they had come, leaving a varied group of "villages" to be taken over by non-industrial incomers.

Heronsgate was the first Chartist community to be built (in 1846/47) and was the place where O'Connor found that two-storied houses were too expensive to build, so that this was to be the only Chartist settlement which does not consist of bungalows. We perambulated the 1½ miles of narrow, hedged, estate roads, viewing a number of the eighteen recognisable surviving Chartist houses (others have been so extended that their origins need more interpretation than we had time for). By kind permission of Linda Fernandes, a life-long Heronsgate resident, we were able to visit 'Crowthorne', the least-altered Chartist house and now listed Grade II.

After lunch in Chesham, during which hour some members fitted in a high speed visit to the town's excellent small museum, we headed for Berkhamsted. Here the party was split into two, one half following BAS member Ken Wallis on a guided tour of the extensive remains of the Norman castle while the others followed Peter into First World War practice trenches on Berkhamsted Common which had been largely dug by members of the Inns of Court OTC for training before departure to the real trenches in France. Half way through the afternoon the two groups used the coach to swap sites and Ken and Peter started their tours again. It needed visitor participation to appreciate the layout of the practice trenches because they had been dug when the common was undulating open grassland resembling locations in France, whereas they are now partly hidden from each other by the hawthorn and oak thickets which have subsequently grown up on this part of the common.

### *Church Crawl on 8th October 2016*

For our 2016 Church Crawl I chose an area which was mainly to the south and east of Winslow. Of the seven churches we visited, two had never been visited by BAS, one had not been visited since 1889, and two had not been visited since 1904. I thought that most of the churches we were visiting were particularly good examples with architectural clues that illustrated how they had grown, or shrunk, over the centuries.

Our first church was All Saints at Oving, where we started with my worst problem of the day, when we had a delay getting into the church. A quick phone call sorted that out, and we were soon inside a church of early 13<sup>th</sup> century origins, clearly seen by the interior stonework of the lancet windows in the Chancel. As can be seen by the impressive and detailed list of Rectors since 1241, in the S Aisle, for over 3 centuries the Patrons of the church were the Knights Hospitallers. Such outside influences wanted their churches to be noticed, and often meant that churches were expanded in more ambitious ways than might have happened by local needs. So, around 1280, the Chancel Arch was rebuilt and an Aisle added on each side of the Nave, by cutting two arches out of each of the Nave walls. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the S Aisle was extended to the east and a S Porch added, and a very impressive large ogee arch was also built over a recess in the S wall. A clerestory was added to the Nave in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, much of which still survives. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the tower was built on the much lower ground at the W end, and sometime later the N Aisle was demolished. George Edmund Street restored the church in the late 1860s. There are 12 stained glass windows in All Saints Church, and they are all made by Clayton and Bell. I think they were all inspired by one man, the Rev Isaac Hill, Rector from 1881 to 1902. 2 windows commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> years of Queen Victoria's reign, perhaps not surprising as the Monarch was the Patron of the church from the Dissolution until 1902.

Our next three churches all share a common and unusual history, as they were subject to King Offa's Winslow Charter of 792, which granted the Manor of Winslow to the Abbey of St Albans. In some ways they did not come under the normal Diocesan control until Buckinghamshire was transferred to the Oxford Diocese in 1845.

Our first of these 3 churches was St John the Baptist at Granborough, which as part of Winslow Manor, was a Chapel-of-Ease, with the first known Rector of Granborough not being until 1508. The Nave walls date from around 1330 and one of its original windows still exists, along with two doorways. The Chancel was rebuilt around 1400, when the Chancel Arch was probably modernised. In the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century new western windows were added to the side walls of the Nave. At the end of the same century, the Nave walls were raised, needing a new flatter roof, a tower was built, and new tall windows added at the eastern ends of the Nave side walls. Luckily for us, a jamb for each of the previous 1330 windows were left exposed beside the new windows. I can only guess that all this work could have coincided with the building's status being raised from a Chapel-of-Ease to a Parish Church. The Chancel was then given a new high pitched roof, giving the exterior of the church a distinctive look. The church still has 2 Victorian Cast Iron stoves that are used to provide very effective heating for the church. There are now even more modern facilities in the tower, from which the churchwarden, Jenny Dean, kindly provided us all with a cup of coffee and biscuits.

At our final church of the morning, St Lawrence at Winslow, I pointed out the splendid S Porch through which we had entered the church. As work of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was a splendid piece of work that must have been influenced by St Albans Abbey, which could originally have established a church here in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. The current church has fragments that could be Norman, but the bulk of the church as we now see it, dates from around 1320. That time saw a peak of monastic activity, which would soon be curtailed by the Black Death. The Tower, Nave with its Arcades, and the Chancel all date from that time which is in the middle of the Decorated Style period. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century many windows enlarged in the church, particularly the large E window, in a mixture of Perpendicular and Tudor styles. The clerestory was raised, which can clearly be seen by the exterior stonework, but two of the earlier small round clerestory windows were left, one above the middle of each arcade. The belfry was rebuilt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. John Oldrid Scott restored the church, in 1883, a couple of years after he had restored Granborough church. His work at Winslow seems to have been a little more severe, but that often seems to be the case with work done to town churches compared to village churches. He fitted higher pitched roofs to the Nave and Chancel. However, on the Chancel he left the medieval timbers of the old roof which now form a ceiling. At the E end, the space between the old and new roofs has been filled by a rather unusual timber-framed gable wall. A spell of wet weather then coincided with our lunch break spent in Winslow. However, from my seat in a tea shop window, overlooking the Market

Square, I could see that it did not stop some of us exploring the town. For those who wish to explore the history of Winslow in the comfort of their own homes, I can thoroughly recommend the vast amount of information available at [www.winslow-history.org.uk](http://www.winslow-history.org.uk)

Our first church in the afternoon was St Nicholas at Little Horwood, the last of our churches from the old Manor of Winslow. The Nave and 3 bays of the S Arcade date from around 1200, although I suspect that the Arcade may have been moved outwards at a later date, to increase the width of the Nave. The chancel was rebuilt around 1320 when it was widened to the S. In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century the S Aisle was extended to the E, S and W. Such a complicated enlarging must again show the influence of St Albans Abbey. The W Tower dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and to me its most remarkable feature is the massive W Door at 10 feet high. The reason for having such a tall door is



*St Nicholas at Little Horwood*

not easy to understand though. The church is well known for its wall paintings on the N wall of the Nave, which form up to 6 different schemes of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The problem in interpreting them is that they were all painted in succession on the same piece of wall. They were first discovered in 1889, and BAS were early to view them as they visited on a supplementary excursion the same year. Other details were discovered during conservation work in 1995. The church has some monuments and windows from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which recall

the residents of two large houses in the parish. The village had an Apple Day at the old school behind the church, but of course, my timetable does not allow time for such frivolities.

Our fifth church of the day was the Church of the Holy Cross at Hoggeston, a church which developed over 5 centuries, from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup>. Its Norman origins are clear to see inside, with the remains of original windows over the S Arcade, when 2 arches were cut from the wall in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The arches and pier have the plain but elegant character from the beginnings of the Early English style. On the N side we see a more refined arcade which dates from around 1350 when the Nave was extended, the N Aisle built, and the S Aisle extended to match the longer Nave. The Chancel was

also rebuilt then and houses a contemporary effigy in a wall recess beside the Altar. It is said to represent William de Birmingham who founded a Chantry at Hoggeston in 1342. However the identity of the effigy is by no means certain. The S Aisle has a monument with a clear inscription to the 19 year old Elizabeth Mayne, deceased 1599, wife of Joseph Mayne of Creslow. There are also ledger slabs to other members of the Mayne family. The church has an impressive timber bell turret dating from around 1500, although its present condition means that the bells cannot be rung. The church was restored by William White in 1882 whose work included fitting out the Chancel with some very appropriate fittings.

Over the day we actually travelled in a large circle around the large estate of Creslow, whose pastures provided livestock for the Royal Family. With only one house, its parochial status had been withdrawn by Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> soon after her succession in 1558, so subsequent families at Creslow Manor tended to use the various parish churches around the estate, including others we visited today, and Whitchurch which we visited in 2002.

St Martin's at Dunton is very close to Hoggeston, and was quite a surprise to those who had not seen it before. Outside we see a fairly plain tower, a Nave with a very Georgian look, and a Chancel with small medieval windows. Inside the Nave looks very Georgian with its splendid set of box pews, probably from around 1790. The round topped windows, the smooth plastered walls, the plain flat ceiling, and the W Gallery complete the Georgian atmosphere. The Chancel with its lancet windows is Early English work of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However in between Nave and Chancel, the width of the Chancel Arch is our real clue that we are in an older building. Although rather a conglomeration of stonework, the jambs of the Arch have Norman stonework, although the arch itself dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. We really need to look outside at the N wall of the Nave to realise that most of the wall is Norman from around 1140, still with its blocked up Norman doorway. The S wall of the Nave was rebuilt by the Georgians after it collapsed. I hope that those who were with us on the day will remember the church as much as they will undoubtedly remember sitting in the box pews and enjoying the sumptuous tea that we were served on our arrival, from a very welcoming group of local ladies.

Hoggeston and Dunton churches are both in parishes with very low populations of under 100 people, and as I said on the day, the people who look after these churches deserve our extra special thanks for the hard work that must be involved in keeping their churches in the best order that they can.

Our last, and seventh church of the day was St Nicholas at Cublington. This church does not need any interpretation of when it was built, as it was built as a complete entity around 1400. It is a splendid example of a small medieval church, 600 years old, that

has never been expanded or drastically altered. We know this as a brass plaque dated 1410 says it is in memory of the 'First Rector of this church'. The previous church was 500 yards to the West, but the village was moved in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, although the reason is not clear. I think we can say that the previous church dated back to at least Norman times, as the church chest seems to be an incredible survivor from those times. Although the exterior stonework of the windows has been replaced, the interior stonework is still fairly original. 1400 was a time when the Decorated Style had already been usurped by the Perpendicular style in many places, however rural communities were (and probably still are) the last to follow the latest trends. So, the side windows of the church are all Decorated, but we can presume the E window was built last, as that is Perpendicular. I think the church has a simple harmony with little decoration, except the chancel arch corbel figures of a man and a monkey. One original feature that we cannot see is the original 15<sup>th</sup> century Queen Post roof which still survives between the later additions of a flat ceiling and a higher pitched roof.

As always, we were made very welcome at all the churches we visited, and people are always pleased that we want to visit their churches. In turn, I was pleased that we had 52 people on our 2016 Church Crawl.

Michael G Hardy