

MARKET BOSWORTH SOCIETY

July 2019

Dear Member

Welcome to the July issue of our Newsletter. I hope it finds you well and that you will enjoy reading it.

Didn't we have a lovely time the day we went to Bradgate?



A small number of our group as this was the only chance I had for a group pic. Very sorry if you were missed off.

With profound apologies to Fiddlers Dram for mangling their song title, yes we did have a lovely time. Members assembled in the Newtown Linford Carpark in good time, those driving to the Deer Barns were let in by a friendly ranger and those of us walking were led off by Peter Liddle MBE. Peter proved to be an excellent guide as his knowledge of Bradgate Park and its history is profound. We had not walked far when he led us up a rocky outcrop which was our first site. Here he explained that evidence of Paleolithic habitation had been found in the form of over



600 pieces of worked flint in a small area. The boulders and rocks would have remained little changed and we could all imagine a man sitting on that flat rock making his flint tools, over 6,000 years ago.

The site was a canyon and ancient man liked canyons. It was how they hunted. They would drive animals, deer, wild cattle, or horses into the canyon, having blocked off the exit. Once corralled the animals could be turned into food and many other equally vital elements to preserve human life. Whilst up on this site Peter explained to us the course of the mill stream which would have fed the mill just past the ruins of the house. Next we visited the site of a lodge built from local stone. Peter was able to point out to us fireplaces and the position of stairs; the size could be estimated quite accurately as three of the corners stone survive. We went next to the Pheasantry and then to the site of the old stables, where there still exists a piece of slate.



It is believed that this piece of slate formed the bottom of a staircase which led to the stables first floor. Hard by the stables were excavated a large number of horse bones. Peter suggested initially that it was unusual to have horses buried so closely to a stable. He went on to suggest that it may have been to encourage the stabled horses to try harder. More likely is that the stables continued in use into the late 1800's when it was used by one of the Leicestershire hunts and the bones were once hound food.

Off to the house ruins where we learned that some of the architecture only dated back to 1927 when the land was bought by Charles Bennion and given to the people of Leicestershire to enjoy in perpetuity. It was considered a priority to secure the site and make it safe which meant that a lot of archaeology was removed. Peter was able to construct a picture of exactly how the house would have looked in its prime. The carriages would have been driven past the house and up the hill to the entrance which would have been through the formal gardens, North of the house, up to the huge doors and windows looking on. Some fine examples of brickwork were on show. I have loaded some of the photographs I took on the day onto the website on the latest news page should you want to see them. Do not forget you can get on-line at the Market Bosworth Community Library.



The Chapel



Ovens, in what would have been a huge kitchen



Tablet inside the chapel

Finally, we went to the Deer Barns for a cream tea (or tea and cake as some preferred) before making our way back, tired but happy to the car park for the journey home. It was a lovely afternoon spent with like minded people being excellently led by Peter Liddle who was clearly a master of his subject. I took as my guest Tony Squires who has written books about Bradgate Park the house and the Greys, one of the families that lived there. He is not a bit disappointed that recent archaeological research has changed what was known about the Park at the time he wrote his books. One of the interesting updates is that the house was much later than thought. Originally thought to be built around 1530 construction was much later somewhere nearer to 1580 or even 1600.

All of the above is reported without the benefit of notes such was my level of interest and Peter's ability to explain all about the house, stables, and grounds.

Without doubt, I had a lovely time.

Thanks to all the members who shared this lovely afternoon with me and of course to Peter Liddle who was a truly excellent guide.

The Great Escape (and a great night)



A full house. Even the balcony was packed

The Free Church was packed on the evening of the 18th July. Over 70 people came to hear the Peter Hall story. They were not to be disappointed.

For many years I have been an avid reader of aviation-based histories and biographies. I have several hundred books on the subject in my library, although slimmed down recently as we were running out of room. Alf Pallett contacted me some time ago as he was researching those named on the War Memorial at Shenton. One name came up which I recognised, that of Peter Hall. Peter was actually born and lived in Stoke Golding before moving to live in Shenton Hall in the 1950's.

I discovered that Radio Leicester had run a short series about Flying Officer Peter Hall read by his son Neville. With the help of Bridget Blair, one of the presenters at Radio Leicester I managed to track it down and received a copy of the programme. I am hoping to add the recording to Latest News page for you to listen to. If listening in the Market Bosworth Community Library, please use headphones so as not to break the silence.

Bridget also put me in touch with Neville and it was just like listening to Peter. As a young man I had attended a few events which Peter had also attended and was fortunate enough to hear him lecture on two occasions. Neville took some persuading, but he eventually agreed to look out enough of his father's books and records for a lecture. The only slot we had was this July which fitted perfectly. We had needed to move the visit to Bradgate to the week before and the committee also wanted to do something for the Leicestershire and Rutland Festival of Archaeology as they had been very supportive of Bosworth Links. The lecture was on. Neville played his trump card and involved younger brother Michael or Mike as he prefers.

Michael told us about Peter's life. Born on the 1st May 1916 Peter grew to love all things fast. He learned to ride horses and later motorbikes before progressing onto a sports car. He wanted to fly and so in 1938 he volunteered for the RAF Reserve and began his flying training. Firstly, in Tiger moths at Desford and then onto a Harvard. He received the princely sum of 1D per mile in travelling expenses and 1S per hour whilst flying. Peter was one of several dozen applicants but only three made it into the reserve. Inevitably in 1938 he was called up and fulfilled several flying roles. He eventually returned from leave to join a squadron of specialist pilots as befit his skills and determination. The squadrons role was to fly very fast, streamlined, and unarmed Mosquitoes to gather weather information. This information was vital to the planners of bombing raids. It was on one of these flights on the 9th May 1943 when he and his navigator were jumped by 4 Fokker

Wolfe aircraft. Losing the tail plane from enemy canon rendered the situation hopeless, they were shot down over Holland.

Peter evaded capture for a short while but finally found himself in custody. He was sent to Stalag Luft III where he remained until the end of the war. During his time as a POW he was in the map making team. Mike showed us some of his father's work and it was meticulously completed and extremely accurate. Also, on show were his diary and notebooks from that time. Extremely detailed and very neat, Peter used this to help to overcome the boredom of captivity. Nothing escaped his records which are a real mine of information.

On the night of the breakout Peter was numbered 121 but due to several delays and problems, one of which was the tunnel being 15 feet short, meant that the tunnel was found before he could get out. Some of you will know that Hitler wanted to shoot all of the recaptured escapees, but it was Himmler who managed to reduce it to fifty. A very sad war crime. The perpetrators of which were caught and punished.

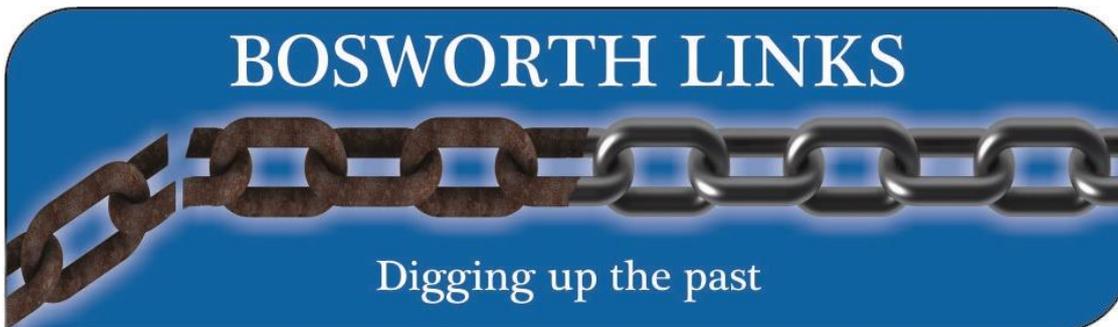


Mike and his big brother Neville

As the war neared its end and the Germans were getting worried that the Russians might reach them first they marched Peter and his comrades to Poland where they were released shortly afterwards. Mike and Neville had brought their father's notebooks and personal effects to show us. One of which was a watch returned after the war by the brother of the vicar Peter had handed it to in Holland, they also had some wooded squares, exactly the same size as the tunnel. It was hard to imagine how anyone could work in such cramped conditions.

Neville and Mike did a brilliant job and it is likely that Mike will be writing a book based on this lecture. You heard it here first folks! I cannot tell the whole story here, so am eagerly awaiting the book.

Thanks to the generosity of the audience we were able to send £100 to the Red Cross, the charity nominated by Mike and Neville who would accept no fee. Neville told me that it was the Red Cross who supported the prisoners with parcels and letters from home which meant an enormous amount to his father.



The Little dig earlier this month was an enormous success. It was lovely to meet up with volunteers from all of our previous digs and to meet a few fresh faces too. We dug 5 pits and one trench over the two days of the weekend. The first pit was in Greenways, Home of John and Till Ensor. We knew this was going to be fruitful as there was some medieval pottery and pipe stems lying on the surface! Next was Ken and Mary Lowles who live in one of the houses converted from the old primary school. Two were located just off Park Street on what is part of the Hall Hotel We are very grateful to Alex Langsam who gave his permission for us to dig there. The last pit was on the Parish Field which is where the trench was also located. The Parish Council granted us permission and whilst the Scouts had pre-booked the field they were happy to share with us. We put on a display of finds for them and a lot of the youngsters were very interested in the finds. Mathew wanted to see how far habitation extended along Park Street. He has a theory that Bosworth originated about the church, spread out to Park Street before turning West to become the centre of town we all know today. It looks very much like we have proven his theory, but the finds are still being assessed.

We found a lot of finds in all of the pits. John and Till produced a wealth of finds, as we had expected. There were also interesting finds at the home of Ken and Mary. It was there that we found a grave. It looks very much that the ground was skimmed flat to provide the boys playground when the school was built and that meant that a grave was much nearer to the surface that it would have been. Thankfully the bones were not articulated, and it could be seen to be a grave cut and therefore we did not need to inform the police or coroner. Once confirmed we refilled the pit with due reverence.



No great age but an intact bottle!

The pits in the Hall grounds produced some early medieval pottery and some Roman but we will not be able to confirm this until the analyses is complete. The Parish Field pit produced much of the same but again we will not speculate until the experts have had their chance to look properly upon the finds.

It was impossible to see where the pit was dug in 2017, so well had the ground recovered. We relied upon the measurements from the hedges and at the end of Saturday we had found a pile of rocks. You will recall that in 2017 we found some Carlton Stone, next to that some charred material and then next to that an area of small cobbles. The Carlton stone appeared on the Western edge of the pit, but we did not immediately recognise it. Tantalisingly it appeared to form a right-angle or even a circle. We decided to dig to the West and sadly the Carlton Stone petered out. The burnt material looked very much like straw but not enough to have been a thatch. It looks little more than a repair to a pothole but as there were a number of buildings in that vicinity (as can be seen on the map drawn from the 1592 survey) it may be the remains of a building but even a 6 meter by 2 meter pit could not expose it further.

We finished with tea and cakes as Mathew gave another excellent round up of what had been found and the significance of the finds. Look out for the reports and a feedback session once we have all of the data back from the experts at the University of Leicester.



The excitement mounts! What have we found? Sadly, little more than a pothole repair. Someone left a message for future archaeologists (not me)

We also had two digs at the Dixie Grammar School. The school have been involved right from the start with a few hundred pupils taking part. I shall cover this in more detail once the results are known from the two pits on Nutswood Pastures.

The Future of Bosworth Links

Seeing a lot of familiar smiling faces from the last two years amongst our volunteers for this latest weekend of digging inspired me. It was a lovely community event once again. Diggers working at the pits and washers working in, this time, the Parish Hall. Not to mention the recorders sievers and our ever-attentive collectors. I am more determined than ever to take the next stage forward. It will not be easy, and it will take a lot of challenging work and effort.

The process has started. We have been visiting with local parish Councils in order to tell them what we are planning to do. Once this stage is complete we will be approaching landowners and then seeking funding. Oh, I have not yet said what have I? We want to extend Bosworth Links out of Bosworth to link into the nearby villages of Cadeby, Sutton Cheney, Shenton, Far and Near Coton and Carlton. We want to help those residents discover the histories of their settlements as we have uncovered the history of Market Bosworth. This has never been done before. No-one has completed an extensive study of a town and then continued to neighbouring villages. My one hope is that we can pull this off. If we do it could be a steppingstone to another circle of archaeology taking in Barlestone, Osbaston, Barton-in-the-Beans, Congerstone, Dadlington, Stoke Golding and even Nailstone and Ibstock. Maybe even linking up with work already done in Whitwick. I may last that long.

So now you know. It cannot be promised as it is not within our gift, but I can assure you we, the Bosworth Links committee, supported by the Society committee will do our very best to deliver this exciting community lead archaeological project. Make sure you look out for news and if you have not already done so, please fill in a volunteer form at www.marketbosworthsociety.com/bosworth-links.

And Finally

Last month I asked you to locate this photograph. Thank you for those taking part it was of course Station Road. I was also told by a member that they recall the displays and that at that time they cost £50.00 each. I am not mentioning any names in case I have it wrong, but they know who they are and that I am grateful for the information.



The vehicle in the other photograph appears to be a Ford chassis with a Dixie body. It is thought it was built behind the Dixie Arms, but I have yet to confirm this. I am hoping someone will know and will tell me. Don't be shy, I don't bite, and I always look forward to hearing from members. Especially if bearing the gift of information.

Enjoy this lovely sunshine, I doubt if it will last, but we can always hope.

Contact Details

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