



Smoke Signal

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council

Leckhampton Local History Society's Newsletter

Water Diviners Investigate Ancient Leckhampton

Members may recall that a few years ago the Society arranged a geophysical survey of the field known as Church Meadow, lying between the church and the court – see *Smoke Signal* No 25, April 2015. Using electrical resistance meters, which detect and map subsurface archaeological features and patterning, we found evidence of what appeared to be the corner of a stone building having an inner and an outer wall. Isaac Levy, the archaeology student who inspired the survey, suggested that we had detected traces of a building, probably Roman – possibly a temple, located below a spring-line.

We have been keen to follow up this survey by using other techniques, for example ground-penetrating radar, but so far have not been able to negotiate a visit by any group possessing such equipment. In the meantime, we were delighted to be approached by the Cheltenham Dowzers, who offered to investigate the area using their water-divining rods and pendulums. The Dowzers, having been provided with background details, visited the site on the evening of 5th June. Despite an unseasonably cold wind and the attention of a herd of inquisitive bullocks, they managed to reach certain conclusions, which elaborated on and added to the earlier findings.

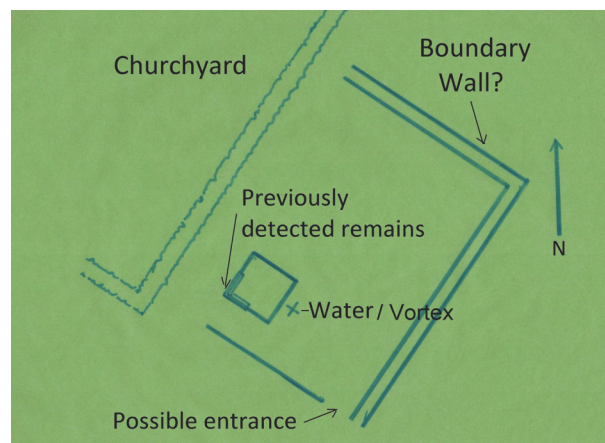
The Dowzers assessed that the building whose corner had been detected previously appeared to be 4 metres square and that it was situated over or near what was either a water source or a 'vortex' of energy. With regard to the first of these possibilities (also suggested by Isaac), Amy Woolacott comments that no spring is marked at that location on the early 25-inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map of the area.

In addition a wall, presumably of a building or an enclosure, was detected about 1 metre wide and 20 metres long oriented roughly SW-NE, then turning at a right angle towards the church for another 13 metres. Generally the Dowzers' intuition was that the age was pre-Roman. (See sketch plan *above*, which I have adapted from the one supplied by the Dowzers, set below the earlier result.)

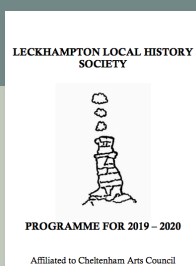
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Image showing area surveyed in 2015, the possible corner of a rectangular building and its conjectured outline



Plan of the same area showing the Dowzers' findings



New Programme for 2019/20

We hope you enjoy the enclosed new programme of talks and events for the coming year. Remember we meet on the second Wednesday of every month. The next meeting is on Wednesday 11 September at 7.30pm, St Peter's Cottages Church Road.

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Spurred on by the latest findings, the Society will endeavour to subject them to more scientific tests, for example using a magnetometer or ground-penetrating radar equipment. Furthermore, the antiquity claimed for the remains needs to be tested in the light of discoveries in other parts of Leckhampton (and Shurdington), which range from the Bronze Age through Roman to medieval. Nevertheless, the Society is most appreciative of the Dowsers' visit and their interest in the site.



By Eric Miller

Chairman's Message

I have just been trawling through our most fascinating website. It is interesting to see photos of Old Leckhampton and to learn what Leckhampton Road looked like. It was very moving for me to find my grandparents on the list of those in the graveyard. I remember Alf Bendall as a Leckhampton character so I must read on line his diary from the First World War, when he was serving in Mesopotamia. What an amazing resource, showing us his account of the life, he led there. (Eric scanned it, enhancing the faint pencil handwriting of the original.)

I really enjoyed the two walks we organised in June and July with good weather too! Thanks to Paul McGowan and Amy Woolacott for researching the information and leading the walks making history come alive over the local fields and around the Norwood Area.

I am looking forward to seeing you all on September 11th at 7.30 to learn more about Serendipity and Local History. You must agree that Sarah has done a great job in producing a most interesting and varied programme for us this year.

Do bring a friend.

Sue Marlow, Chairman

Judy Smith

On 5th May we all lost a very good friend, Gwendoline Nora Smith, affectionately known as Judy.

Judy was born on 1st November 1918 and, although frail, celebrated her 100th birthday in reasonably good health. She possessed a wicked sense of humour and she often rebuked Elaine for checking up on her to see that she was eating – “yes, Mother” was her stock response! And of course, her normal response to the offer of a glass of water was “water is for washing”.

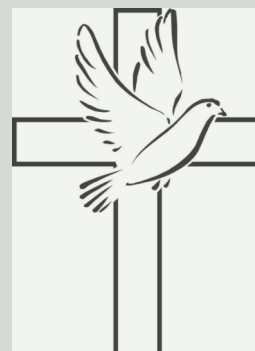
Judy married the love of her life, Peter, on 25th January 1946 but sadly they were unable to have children, a great regret for them but they compensated by the love and affection showed to family and friends and were always appreciative of the love shown in return.

When Peter passed away some of Judy's sparkle disappeared but she kept busy and it didn't stop her love of history or her enthusiasm for raising funds for the RNLI. Judy was always concerned about the well-being of others and regularly kept in touch with her friends to ensure they were well and she took a keen interest in what they were doing. I know from personal experience how much her kindness meant to me when Elaine passed away last year – something I will remember for the rest of my life.

I for one know that the passing of Judy has left a big gap in my life. God bless you Judy and thank you for being a true friend.

Geoff North

PS The plaque commemorating the 'Leckhampton Stalwarts', which the Society mounted last year on the Wheatsheaf Inn, was paid for thanks to a generous gift from Judy.



John Joseph Forsyth Grant's 'X' shaped headstone

by Mary Oliver

Continuing my search for the reason for John Joseph's unusual gravestone, I looked for the grave of his sister Everetta. I did not find it but I found the grave in the photograph. How unusual to have two such gravestones in one churchyard.

This is the grave of Robert James Irving, aged 53, who died in 1924. He was the son of James and Barbara Irving of Blackhall House, Carlisle

Robert James Irving and his wife and family lived in Priory Street, Cheltenham. He was an ophthalmic surgeon. He was born in Bowness on Solway, Cumberland. His parents had links with Edinburgh. This was the clue, the connection to Scotland. I looked at a website showing Scottish gravestones and found a similar cross. I found that some Scottish graves have a representation of the Scottish flag in its entirety while others show only the cross of St. Andrew.

When St. Andrew was crucified by the Romans in A.D. 60 it is said he believed himself unworthy to be crucified on a cross like that of Christ, so he met his end on an X shaped cross which became his symbol.

This explains the cross on John Joseph Forsyth Grant's grave. His family was proclaiming his Scottish ancestry, as was the family of Robert James Irving.



Photo: John Joseph's unusual gravestone



The Well at the Pump House

I recently looked up an article by L Richardson on the geology of Cheltenham in my copy of the *Proceedings of the Cotteswold Naturalists' Field Club* (1912). There I noticed a mention of 'The well at "The Pump House" to the north-west by north of Leckhampton Church'. The author stated it was 'from 20 to 25 feet deep, and has never been known to run dry. It supplies the cottages (Restall's) on the west side of the road.'

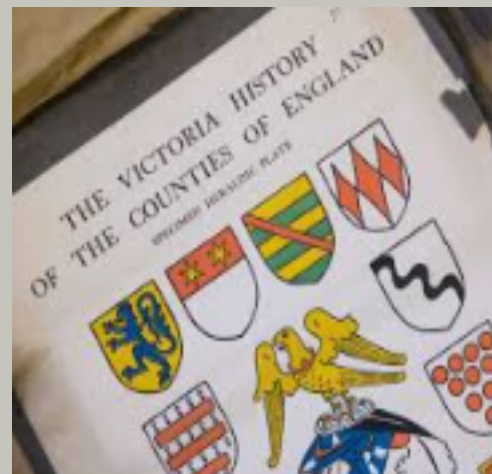
I asked the author of a forthcoming Bulletin article on market gardens on Kidnapper's Lane if he knew anything about the water tower, but he didn't. So Richardson's reference is our only reliable source of information. See left for photo, taken about 20 years ago. Today, you can't see any brickwork, as it's completely covered with ivy.

William Restall owned the market gardens and glasshouses formerly on the site of The Vineries. I do hope the developers don't do away with it.

Eric Miller

The Victoria County History

The editors of the Victoria County History have now turned their sights on Leckhampton. (A talk on the project as a whole was given to the Society in October 2016, but things have moved on since then.) The work is co-ordinated by professional archivists but volunteers are needed to help with research. Anne Gale, Mike Rigby and I are already involved, but this would be an ideal opening for anyone else who is interested in gaining a more detailed knowledge of Leckhampton's early development by looking at original source material. This would be done in the splendid newly refurbished Gloucestershire Archives under the guidance of experts. Please get in touch with Eric if you are interested. Drafts of work on Cheltenham can be found at www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/gloucestershire/work-in-progress/cheltenham



Heritage Open Days 2019

As part of this year's Heritage Open Days, don't miss the Leckhampton events.

At Leckhampton Court Hospice on Sunday 15 September, there will be talks about the history of the building, including its role as a military hospital during WW1 and as a Sue Ryder hospice today, starting at 2pm and 4pm followed by an external tour of the building. Please book in advance and collect tickets from the Tourist Office, tel 01242 387 492. Refreshments will be available throughout the afternoon.

Neela Mann will be giving a talk on '*Leckhampton Rioters: Martyrs or Thugs?*' at The Wheatsheaf, Old Bath Road on Saturday 21 September 3pm. A blow by blow account of what really happened on the hill and afterwards. This is a free one hour talk, no need to pre-book, just turn up.



Back copies of Smoke Signal

Please take a look at the Society's website for copies of previous Smoke Signals. We have now uploaded recent versions which can be found at www.leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com. There are descriptions of the main contents for easy browsing.

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