Reports on our past lectures in 2023

27 January 2023 (Online via Zoom)

13th Nick Fuentes Memorial Lecture

'Managing the archaeology of Inner London: current issues and new directions'

Sandy Kidd, Team Leader (GLAAS) London & South East Region Historic England

Inner London covers the largest and most complex area of urban archaeology in England, and managing that resource in a modern 'world city' poses particular challenges. Previous generations of archaeologists fought to get the value of London's archaeology recognised. Today we are benefitting from their achievements with archaeology recognised and managed through the planning system. Sandy Kidd explained how the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) works today and particularly how the capital's Historic Environment Record is being developed and made more accessible. What challenges do we face today and how do we help the sector remain positive and progressive?

Sandy began by describing the history of archaeological recording in London. Originally GLAAS acted as advisor to all of Greater London, except the City and Southwark, but latterly the City has been included.

The Future of London's Past in 1973 was an important survey 50 years ago of archaeological research. Time on Our Side in 1976 set out an agenda. The 1970s and 1980s were the era of rescue archaeology which was followed by the era of Planning Policy Guideline 16 from 1990 to 2012. This meant developer funded archaeology embedded in the planning system with an emphasis on preservation in situ. In 2012 PPG 16 was revoked and the National Policy Planning Framework replaced it. This document contained many fewer words on archaeology than PPG 16 but Sandy believes it is much better than what preceded it.

There is a London plan that runs from 2019 to 2041 and archaeologists try to influence this. In particular there is far more time depth in term of archaeology in London compared to many other large cities, which Sandy showed as a plot. We now have far more archaeological data so GLAAS are updating standards, to make them more London specific. They are reviewing archaeological priority areas. Greater London is divided into four tiers of which any areas in categories 1 to 3 are treated as an archaeological priority area. This is still work in progress but most of Greater London is done.

The Historic Environment Record is being updated using the Arches platform developed jointly by the Getty Conservation Institute and World Monuments Fund. This is web based and should be publicly available from 2024. A London Urban Archaeological Database project is bringing data together with Inner London defined by the English Civil War defence lines.

Colin Jenkins

24 February 2023

'The Mercenary River'

Nick Higham, journalist and author

Nick has recently published the book of this title, (available via the link above). He began by saying that the title came from the publishers to increase its appeal. It is not a book about the River Thames but about Londons' Water supply from the earliest times to the present day. In his talk he was only able to cover some episodes from this interesting history.

The first section covered the history of The New River. Not new and not a river but an aqueduct dug in the early 17th Century from Hertfordshire to the north of the City to bring water from the area of the source of the River Lea. It was 41 miles long and followed the 100 foot contour with a fall of 5.5 inches per mile so the water would flow by gravity. The man who made the project happen was Sir Hugh Myddelton (1560-1631), a goldsmith in the City. To finance it, one of the first permanent joint stock companies was created and research has shown that up until it ceased operation in 1904 when the Metropolitan Water Board was created, the New River Company gave a return on investment greater than any other company in history.

Before the New River was built water was supplied from sixteen conduit houses, People had to queue to collect it or you could pay for water to be delivered by a water carrier. Old London Bridge had a water works, with water wheels in some of the arches using the flow to pump river water into wooden mains. This was the first modern public utility company. By the early 19th century there were a number of London water companies competing with each other but no one made money and the companies came to secret agreements with eventually eight companies covering the whole of Greater London.

Nick talked about the polluted Thames in the later 19th century and how the water companies were all forced to move their intakes upstream and introduce sand filtering of the water. The Lambeth company was the first to do this and in a cholera outbreak Dr John Snow showed that users of their water had far fewer deaths from the disease compared to users of a rival company that was still taking its water from the polluted tidal Thames. It also appears from a cartoon of the 1840s that it was generally known that cholera was a water borne disease even though it took much longer for the medical profession to accept this.

A very well presented talk and this reviewer would thoroughly recommend the book. The author is giving the talk to many local societies in 2023 so catch it elsewhere if you can.

Colin Jenkins

31 March 2023

'History of Fulham Palace Moat'

Alexis Haslam, Community Archaeologist at Fulham Palace

Alexis began by saying that the Fulham Palace site is on the Kempton Park river terrace gravels and then explaining some of the historical geography of the River Thames. It appears most likely that the area that became Fulham Palace was once a river island or Ait, The Roque map of 1741-45 in fact shows an Ait still existing at what is now the eastern end of Wandsworth Park on the Surrey side.

Lots of flints have been found showing that the Fulham Palace site was occupied before the Romans arrived. There is evidence for a late Roman settlement at what was a conjectured Thames crossing point. This leads into early Saxon activity. In the 1970s excavations revealed two long dry ditches, one parallel and the other at a right angle to the river and he now considered how to date these.

The ditches are clearly not Roman or earlier because the bank of the ditch seals Roman layers. Could they be Viking as it is recorded that there was a Viking encampment at Fulham, however this is unlikely as their fortifications were D shaped and enclosed much smaller areas than that enclosed by the ditches at Fulham. Alfred the great defeated the Viking Guthrun at Edington in May 878 and then decided to build fortifications alone the River Thames. By similarity with other sites it appears likely Fulham was one of these. The is supported by the fact that Fulham High Street was once called Bury Strete, from Burgh - a fortified place.

In later times the fortification ditches were developed into the medieval type moat. The most likely period for this is the early 14th Century. Harvest failures in 1315-1317 led to widespread famine and lawlessness so there would have been a need for such a defensive feature around the lands of the Bishop of London. Moats were also fashionable with around 5000 built in England between 1200 and 1325. As well as security they were status symbols and also acted as fish ponds. Excavations have revealed 2 timber bridges over the Fulham Palace moat and the 1647 Parliamentary Survey provides a brief description. The moat became increasingly expensive to maintain and keep clean so was filled in by 1923, only for parts of it to be restored in 2011.

Colin Jenkins

28 April 2023

'Inspiring women of Battersea'

Jeanne Rathbone, Battersea Society

Jeanne's talk was about women connected with Battersea in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who had, against all the odds, carved out a career and name for

themselves. Some concerned themselves with 'social work', some were in the political sphere - although these often overlapped - others gained fame through their artistic or sporting ability. All lived, for at least part of their lives, in or near Battersea. Lavender Hill was a particularly popular area, and often the women were neighbours and friends. When Jeanne began her research there were 17 English Heritage blue plaques in the area, none of which were commemorating women. She has campaigned to remedy this, and continues to fight for more recognition both by English Heritage the Wandsworth green plaque and local society schemes.

Among her heroines are Jeannie Nassau Senior, the first female civil servant, who devoted her career to the improvement of workhouse conditions; Deaconess Isabella Gilmour, who can be called the forerunner of the acceptance of women in the highest positions in the Church of England. Several generations of the Diederichs Duval family campaigned tirelessly for women's suffrage. There is Marie Spartali, now a recognised Pre-Raphaelite painter and recently awarded a blue plaque. Wilhelmina Stirling, the sister of Evelyn de Morgan, who saved Old Battersea House from demolition. The early aviator Hilda Hewlett gained a blue plaque at the site of her pioneering aircraft factory in Battersea and the novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson was similarly recently recognised by the Battersea Society, as too Evelyn Dove, a famous inter-war cabaret artist of mixed heritage, deserves to be. All these, and more, were recalled for us by Jeanne.

Celia Jones

26 May 2023

Battersea Channel live broadcast: *the archaeology of this lost landscape.*

Mark Stevenson, Archaeology Advisor GLAAS - South London

Mark Stevenson, Historic England's local Greater London Archaeological Advisor, gave us an overview of the Battersea Channel Project which he is overseeing and co-ordinating. The Project includes archaeological work before and during the redevelopment of an area covering parts of Battersea, Nine Elms and Vauxhall, together with surveys of the adjacent foreshore. Investigation of this huge area has revealed changes in the landscape and its use around a former channel of the Thames which had created an island (eyot). Though now buried under later housing and industries, the Channel is still visible today as a dip in the ground.

Finds from the excavations and fieldwork show human activity relating to the eyot during prehistory. Revetments were constructed in the 18th century and barges deliberately wrecked on the foreshore in the early 20th century. Part the project included overseeing the restoration of Battersea Power Station's iconic chimneys.

In the course of the works, 93 burials from 86 graves from the former St George's church cemetery, ones that had not been removed in the 1960s, were excavated and are now being studied. The church burned down in 1960.

While much field archaeology has finished, the analysis and work on the finds is underway. An understanding of a buried landscape, its vegetation and the people using it for thousands of years will be the result of this major project.

Pamela Greenwood

30 June 2023

'New research on Wardley Street, Wandsworth, and the history of Romany Londoners.'

Anna Hoare

Dr Anna Hoare, formerly of University College London, introduced members to the people of Wardley Street, Earlsfield. She began with an overview of the history of Romany Gypsies in Wandsworth, which stretches back hundreds of years. Travellers' settlements were generally at pasturing points where green roads crossed rivers and there were several notable locations in the area, then on the outskirts of London - one of the most famous being Mills Yard, Battersea, vestiges of which remain to this day.

The Wardley Street settlement came to prominence in the late nineteenth century, when the Penfold and Mills families acquired land that they had been settled on for many years. This was developed by them, although most Travellers did not to live in the houses they built, preferring their caravans in the 'yards' behind. Most lived a peripatetic life, working as costermongers, flower-sellers, gardeners and hawkers.

In 1949 almost all residents in Wardley Street, Lydden Road and Grove and Bendon Valley still had Gypsy, Traveller or Romany names. An article in Leader magazine in 1948 depicted the close-knit community just as it was about to disappear under the improving hand of the borough council, who condemned and demolished almost all the houses in Wardley Street to make way for industrial buildings. Nevertheless, recently the work of Anna and of local historian Geoff Simmons has revived interest in this history and uncovered the memories of many locals whose roots lie in this almost forgotten corner of the borough, and in 2022 a plaque was unveiled on the street commemorating this lively and proud group of people.

Celia Jones

28 July 2023

'60 years of Archaeology in Wandsworth 1962-2022: important discoveries and iconic finds'

Pamela Greenwood, WHS

The origins of Wandsworth Historical Society's involvement with archaeology go back to the discovery of some burial urns at 4 Bemish Road in March 1962. When first spotted they were thought to be bombs but expert advice soon correctly identified

them. The first organised dig was at Gay Street from September to November 1962. The early digs used the method of Sir Mortimer Wheeler where 10 foot square trenches were dug with a 2 foot wall between each one. Only later was the open area digging method used.

In the 1960s there were many volunteer groups digging and each had their own colours, to allow tools to be identified when groups were working together. The WHS colours were red and yellow as can be seen in an Easter 1972 photo of the dig at Baynard's Castle in the City of London with the WHS trailer attached to the mini of Nick Fuentes. WHS members helped with digs in the City in collaboration with many other volunteer archaeologists but Baynard's Castle was the last of these.

Nick Fuentes was the leading light at the beginning, He founded London Archaeologist in 1968, was supervisor on many digs and trained quite a number of people who started as volunteers and then went on to be professional archaeologists.

Things were difficult in the 1960s due to vandalism when sites were left unattended and digging in the winter was almost unknown. Despite this an impressive number of sites mainly in Putney were dug, including Bemish Road, The Platt, Felsham Road and Sefton Street. This allowed a picture of Roman Putney to be created.

After the 1980s no more dry land sites were dug by the WHS but one activity that continues to this day is monitoring of the Thames Foreshore which began in August 1964. Information about the fishtrap at Putney is already available elsewhere on the website. Processing of the finds and records from the earlier digs is also a continuing activity.

This is just a summary of a fascinating talk about a lost world of volunteer archaeology.

Colin Jenkins

29 September 2023

'Layering London's History: Layers of London and the Possibilities of Digital Mapping'

Justin Colson who is Senior Lecturer in Urban and Digital History in the Centre for the History of People, Place and Community at the Institute for Historical Research

Dr Colson's talk was a mind-stretching explanation of the IHR's programme to create a layered history of London. The project began in 2017 with funding for three years and has developed into a website that, by positioning maps from different centuries and with different information one on top of another, has been built up to an in-depth resource for both academics and amateurs alike. Much information has been added from nineteen London borough archives (although sadly not Wandsworth's - yet), local history interest groups - particularly from East London - and interested volunteer groups, including the inclusion of the RAF archive of aerial photography.

To date there are 400 overlays, among the most popular of which are the LCC bomb damage maps of 1939-45 and the Booth Poverty Maps first published in 1889. We were shown a case study of Hogg Lane, Spitalfields, beginning with John Stow's description of the essentially rural area in the early 16th century, moving on to the Agas map of 1561/33 depicting increasing urbanisation, and then in the early 17th century the lane's development into a road selling second-hand clothing and known as Petticoat Lane, with numerous alleys and courts already surrounding it.

Many happy hours can be spent at www.layersoflondon.org.

Celia Jones

The software to support the project has been developed by a company named Humap and they are now licensing this on a commercial basis to others. Prices are listed on their website. This inevitably means that the Layers of London project has a dependency on a commercial software platform with the lock in that this involves. The speaker did stress that the underlying data is held in a format that could be ported elsewhere should the need arise in future.

Colin Jenkins

27 October 2023

An Update on Wandsworth's bid to be London Borough of Culture 2025

Councillor Rex Osborn

The London Borough of Culture has been in existence for around 8 to 10 years. The Greater London Authority will make available £2.29 Million to two winning boroughs, one of which will be the borough of culture in 2025 and the other in 2027. Thus Wandsworth could receive over £1 Million from the GLA but needs to match fund to the tune of 30%. This is the first time that heritage has been explicitly included and to this end the winning borough will be able to bid for around £0.5 Million from the Heritage Lottery.

The bid specifies that the borough must include activities that are Ambitious, Unique and provide a Future Legacy. Rex explained in more detail how Wandsworth might fulfil these criteria and highlighted 3 points, A Borough of Contrasts, Connections and Compassion.

The bid judging is based on the criteria: Making and Impact (30%), Clebrating Creativity (30%), Deliverability (25%) and Financial Management (15%).

Following the presentation there was a lively discussion with many comments and suggestions from the audience which Councillor Osborn noted to feed back to those writing the bid. He believes that we have a good chance of winning without being over confident.

Colin Jenkins

24 November 2023

Our last Friday meeting of the year is given over to short talks by members. This year the following were featured:

Philip Boys began with 'Some remarkable photographs of women in Wandsworth, c. 1851', a collection of striking photographs taken by Hugh Welch Diamond, the psychiatrist superintendent of women at the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum (now Springfield Hospital). Although superficially objective images, Philip pointed out the subtle and not-so subtle poses and additional props Diamond used to indicate the desired diagnosis of the subjects. These photographs are now in great demand by international collectors, but curiously not those in the UK.

In 'Chatfield Road revisited' **Norma Cox** examined the changes that have occurred in Chatfield Road, Battersea, which she knew as a child. Beginning with its change of name from Sewell Road, over the years the terrace of houses, once the subject of a crowded VE-day party photograph, has disappeared beneath large new buildings, including low-income studio flats, and the pub on the corner is now a boarded up and, presumably, also awaiting redevelopment.

Philip Bradley focused on 'A Tooting Council House' in Freshwater Road - now his own house. The house, part of Wandsworth's post-First World War building campaign, is very well documented in the borough archives and Philip has been able to track its history from its origination as part of Wandsworth's Homes for Heroes drive to the present, including its two previous residents. Philip recommends, John Boughton's blog, for those interested in the subject.

In 'In service with the Cokaynes of Putney and Roehampton, 1868-1932' **Dorian Gerhold** examined the records of their servants revealed in the accounts and diaries kept by the Cokayne family. George Edward Cokayne was a Herald at the College of Arms (Norroy Road in Putney is on the site of the family's first house), and the family had a comfortable income, large houses and a considerable number of indoor servants, including a French governess, a ladies-maid, a nurse, a cook and several under-servants. Over the years the turnover is recorded, with details as to the reasons for hiring, firing, resignations and also, occasionally, long service with the family.

Celia Jones