



October/November 2018 Newsletter

I am afraid this is a combined October and November newsletter as I shall be away in Myanmar at the end of October/beginning of November. If you have any queries during that period please get in touch with Anne Francis or see me at the November meeting.

Chastleton House as a Hunting Lodge



On Tuesday October 23rd at 7 for 7.30pm at Wychwood House, Enstone, Martin Elson author of a book on Chastleton will be talking about the family who rented it as a hunting



lodge at the turn of the twentieth century somewhat evident from trophies in the entrance hall (see above right). Martin says his talk will discuss the wealthy Richardson family, who rented Chastleton House from 1896 to 1933. Charles Richardson was a successful tea planter in Assam with three daughters. There are links to japanning in Birmingham, the Wimbledon championships in the 1880s and the participation of women in the Royal Air Force in the Great War. There are also insights into life 'below stairs', and how the management of the House was organised. The talk will be illustrated with old photographs. Please let Anne Francis know if you are attending.

Behind the Bamboo Curtain



On Monday November 19th (please note change of day); 7 for 7.30pm we are very privileged to have Professor Rana Mitter (right) to talk to us about the modern history of China. Rana Mitter is a British Historian of Indian descent, Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China at the University of Oxford where he is also Director of the Oxford University China Centre. He has written several books on the history of modern China including the award winning A



Bitter Revolution ;China's Struggle with the Modern World and China's War with Japan which was named Book of the Year in 2013 by the Financial Times and Economist and won the Duke of Westminster's Award for military literature. Rana's work has appeared on TV, radio and in many newspapers. For us Rana will be talking about How China's Wartime Past is Changing its Present and its Future. As Rana outlines it 'China has always looked to its past to draw lessons for the contemporary political scene. The world was transfixed by Beijing's successful staging of the 2008 Olympics, but China is changing and opening up to the world in a variety of new and often unexpected ways. What does renewed interest in wartime history in China mean for its new status as a global power? Using a combination of historical analysis of wartime China and an assessment of China's future goals in domestic and foreign policy, this talk will give new insight into ways to rethink how China operates as a global power in the 21st century'. The venue will be The Manor House, Church Enstone. As space is limited please let Anne Francis know as soon as possible if you wish to hear this very special speaker.

Preparing for War

On September 25, Simon Batten history teacher at Bloxham School and author of a book Futile Exercise on the British army's preparations for World War 1 gave a superb talk on how the British and other European armies prepared for war. There were exercises in the spring for the men and manoeuvres in the autumn for the officers teaching them various arts of war fare including beach landings and the rare one of how to retreat in good order, a lesson which stood them in good stead after the battle of Mons. Some of these manoeuvres were held in Oxfordshire the nearest being at Glympton. These events proved fascinating spectacles for local communities which when war came encouraged them to enlist and the manoeuvres were also visited by German, French and Russian observers as well as rulers. Although in 1912 it was known there would be war with Germany, German and Austrian observers were invited to the British manoeuvres. While the other nations were correct guests when the British visited similar events on the Continent they used them as a cover for spying. The army was reasonably well equipped with cycles considered a coming thing and as fast as the cavalry but when trench warfare arrived neither cycles nor horses were of any use; a caterpillar was the forerunner of the tank and the British army wore camouflaging uniforms whereas the French still wore blue and scarlet uniforms making them an easier target. The British army were taught practical but essential things like putting enough toilets on troop trains and learning how to march on cobbles in Belgium making sure boots fitted and were broken in. Batten believes the generals often lampooned as 'donkeys', particularly in the Blackadder programmes, were in fact able and brave men who embraced new fighting ideas. They were not out of touch though holed up in chateaux away from the battle line not for luxury but because that was where the phones and communications were. No longer could the human commanding voice lead the battles as in the days of Marlborough and Wellington. In the battle of Loos alone, in September 1915, eight generals were killed one only 25 years old. Batten underlined the difficulties of being the attackers in the early years of trench warfare but

stressed that in the final years, the British army won some of its greatest victories, a fact often overlooked.

WW1 in the Village

I have been sent this advance notice by the Adderbury History Association who are 'putting on an exhibition over the Armistice weekend to commemorate the role that all village people played during the conflict. Although Adderbury folk were living in a Midlands village far away from the front-line battles, no-one remained untouched by what was happening in the war. The exhibition attempts to present a picture not just of the men who served but of all the Adderbury people and their contribution to the war effort, from the men too old to fight or exempted for other reasons to the women and children. It will give a feeling for the part they played in fund-raising whilst trying to maintain stability and the economy on the home front. Photographs, pictures, memorabilia and original documents combine to show what life was like during the chaos of 1914 - 1918. The exhibition will take place in the Methodist Church School Room on Chapel Lane between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturday, 10th November and between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. on Sunday, 11th November. The exhibition is free to all, although there will be the opportunity to make a donation to the British Legion if you so wish. Refreshments will be available'.

WW2 In the Air

A father and son, who have spent a decade restoring "S for Sugar" - a world War 11 Lancaster bomber will tell the story of this heroic WW11 aircraft, at Hornton Pavilion on Thursday October 11 arranged by the Hornton History Group. Martin Willoughby tells the amazing story of the bomber's wartime record, which completed 137 missions during the war and their efforts to save this historic aircraft from the scrap yard. The aircraft is now in the RAF Museum, Hendon. Time; 7.30pm, Hornton Pavilion, Thursday October 11th. Admission £5 at the door to include a glass of wine. Further details: Bob Langton / bobslangton@gmail.com /01295 670359

Royal Memories.

Many members will recall Jeremy Burton's fascinating talks about the Queen Mother's life and jewellery. There is another chance to hear Jeremy speak about the Queen Mother at Castle Mey when he will be describing what it was like to stay at the Castle of Mey as one of the Queen Mother's guests. The talk is at Wootton on Wednesday, 15th November and further details can be found on www.artfund.org/get-involved/committee/oxfordshire

Bowled Over

Has anyone lost a plain white fruit bowl that was left behind after the St Kenelm's feast in July. If so, can they call Pam Foxall on 01608 677232

Finding Your Forebears

The Oxfordshire Family History Association is holding its annual fair on Saturday October 6 from 1000-1600 at the Marlborough School, Woodstock, OX20 1LP. Entry is free and there is plentiful free parking. Refreshments are available as well as many stalls helping those who wish to research their ancestors in Oxfordshire and beyond

All Paid Up

Tim Henry, membership secretary reports that all members have now paid up; for which many thanks. We are hoping to introduce a direct debit option next year which may help make it easier.

Carol Geare, Chairman, 01608 677246 / carolawt@gmail.com

Anne Francis Hon. Secretary, 01608 678820 / annefrancis1@gmail.com

Diary Dates:

Tuesday October 23, 7 for 7 .30pm, at Wychwood House, Enstone, Martin Elson on Chastleton House at the turn of last century.

Monday November 19, 7 for 7.30pm at The Manor House, Church Enstone, Professor Rana Mitter on the history of modern China

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