



Alresford Historical & Literary Society

NEWSLETTER
1st May 2022



THE SOCIETY'S PLANS AND NEWS

We will continue to congregate in St John's for our May and June meetings, while the months of July and August will embrace our outside summer jollies. Chawton House on 20th July will host us with a guided tour followed by cream tea, organised by our Fiona Scott-Morton. I'll send details to members shortly. About The Book? Sales of "Alresford Through Time" exceeded expectations and we ran out! However more copies are now available. See "how to purchase" on our website or contact me for further information. [MD]

THIS MONTH'S TALK - 7.30 pm 18th May, St John's

'Murder, rebellion, dirty deeds, sex, bees and the theft of Alresford' by Chris Heal



Chris Heal's last book, released in October 2021, is *'Ropley's Legacy'*, the story of the enclosure of the commons and commons fields of the ridge parishes in Hampshire. In 1709, Ropley was England's very first private parliamentary enclosure and was bitterly contested. The gentry's land grab, led by successive bishops of Winchester, spread to neighbouring parishes: Soldridge, Chawton, Farrington, Medstead and Newton Valence. The gentry always won. The voiceless commoners were deliberately trapped into forced labour or allowed to drift to the

workhouses or the factory towns. However, there was retaliation: violent poaching in the bishop's deer parks and the setting up of regiments to support an invasion by the Jacobite claimants to the throne. Walpole's government responded with the 'Black Act' introducing over 200 capital offences and making transportation to Australia a part of the Hampshire way of life for the county's poor.

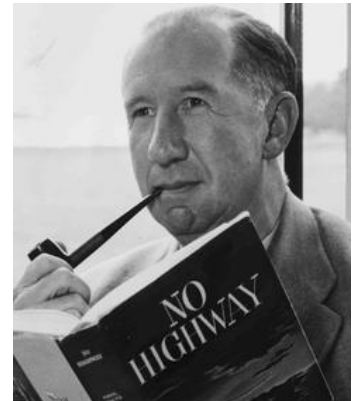
Chris talked to us via Zoom about last year's book, *'The Four Marks Murders'*, which tells of the altogether unpleasant, shocking and true underbelly of life in a sleepy Hampshire village. A second edition was released in October 2021 following suggestions from readers. Now, Chris has just finished *'The Winchester Tales'*, an Anglo-Norman love story firmly grounded in the Norman invasion and events around Winchester and north to Alton, 1050-1110 (to be released in October this year). All three books go to make up 'The Ridge Trilogy' – three different styles of books showing the considerable history of the area. The trilogy will be the subject of his talk.

Heal completed his PhD at Bristol University in 2012 when he was sixty-five-years-old. His reconstruction of almost 500 years of the Avon felt hat industry received many awards and was reviewed as 'first-rate, well-written with immensely impressive scholarship' [GG]

PREVIOUS TALK

Stephen Robson on Nevil Shute, 20th April 2022.

The son of a Post Office official who in 1899 was christened Nevil Shute Norway went on in an action-packed life, to have two highly successful careers — as an aeronautical engineer and inventor and as a novelist. His writing began as a private hobby concealed under the pen-name Nevil Shute. But it is by that name, as the author of best-sellers (and films) such *On the Beach* and *No Highway*, that he is now remembered. However, this evening's carefully researched talk was devoted to his other career and his significant achievements in that field. An extrovert rather than a scholar, all his life he loved adventure, science and all things mechanical, but (unlike his brother who died as a young officer in the Great War) a stammer prevented his taking an army commission and he served as an ordinary infantryman. In peace-time, having graduated in engineering from Oxford University he entered the rapidly developing aeronautical industry, designing propellers, working on the R100 airship and himself learning to fly and subsequently undertaking some adventurous long-distance flights. With a colleague he founded the Airspeed company and was involved in such innovations as the retracting under-carriage and in-flight refuelling. Before and during the Second World War he contributed to the development of new weapons — torpedoes, rockets, an acoustic warning device, and the Panjandrum, a rocket-firing roller for use on D-Day. He fell in love with Australia, moved there and ended his days there at the young age of 61. [BT]



A BOOK REVIEW, and an announcement, from our John Miller

Russia: A 1,000-year Chronicle of the Wild East, by Martin Sixsmith, published by BBC Books. The BBC producer has filmed often in Russia and Ukraine, and traces the history of Russia from the earliest days, when Ukraine was at the heart of what became the Russian Empire. He shows clearly why Putin still regards Ukraine as part of Russia, as it was before the break-up of the Soviet Union. It's a fascinating and most instructive read.

John would also like to draw your attention to his upcoming event of historical interest at The Theatre Royal on 5th June, see: www.theatreroyalwinchester.co.uk/whats-on/royal-throne"

A LATERAL THOUGHT ON OUR NEXT MEETING: Wed 18th May

The word “enclosures” sounded rather technical to me at first. Then it dawned on me that the dastardly deeds that Chris will divulge caused the fields and hedgerows to be created that make our local landscape special. Not sure what sex and bees had to do with it. Let's find out!

Best wishes

Mike Dickens, Secretary