



Alresford Historical & Literary Society

NEWSLETTER 1st May 2021

May

Dear Members of Alresford Hist & Lit, here's the latest news compiled by your Secretary Mike Dickens.

OUR 2021 AGM

Our AGM on 21st April was successfully completed by Zoom. It was our first AGM since 2019 as 2020 had to be cancelled due to Covid. In order to go ahead with this AGM, when physical meetings were still not legal, the committee decided that voting had to be carried out electronically before the AGM. This required a change to our constitution, which we therefore redrafted, and also took the opportunity to update generally. You voted positively on the AGM papers, including the updated constitution, by a majority of 121 out of our membership of 170, so everything was passed. We can now carry on with the newly re-elected gang-of-eight committee comprising Glenn Gilbertson (Chairman), Vic Prior (Treasurer), Mike Dickens (Secretary), Charles Ackroyd (Membership Secretary), and four members "without portfolio": Brian Davis, Brian Tippet, John Miller and Nancy Webb. The additional change at the AGM was that Peter Pooley, now our President, presided over the meeting. The meeting was carried out swiftly and smoothly in ten minutes, with 37 computers connected representing about 50 members. We had a "Banquo's ghost" at the meeting, our missing "Speaker's Coordinator" (hint!) [MD].

OUR NEXT MEETING - by Zoom on May 19th 2021

Time: May 19, 2021 7.15 for 7.30 PM London start.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87007322502?pwd=Y3BVNmUxOGRvWGQxeDYxdS9XckV3QT09>



"Green Men and Swastikas as Ancient International Multicultural Symbols of Joy in Winchester Cathedral", by Roy Weller.

There are many sculptures and paintings in Winchester Cathedral that relate directly to Christianity and are easily recognisable but there are also symbols for which the significance is less obvious to the modern

eye. Two of those symbols are Green Men and Swastikas. In my talk I will trace the long histories of these ancient symbols of Joy and well-being using easily accessible examples from Winchester Cathedral.



Roy Weller's CV: "Following retirement from my career in Medicine, I trained as a guide in Winchester Cathedral. This gave me the opportunity to study the long and most interesting history of the Cathedral and its wider international connections. My talk is the result of observing features in the Cathedral, discussions with colleagues and visitors and the examination of literature relating to the fascinating and easily visible symbols of Green Men and Swastikas within Winchester Cathedral. I hope that I can inspire my audience to seek out such interesting and ancient symbols of Joy in the Cathedral".

A REVIEW OF OUR LAST MEETING

At the conclusion of this year's AGM members enjoyed the third of Graham Lumb's entertaining and informative talks about late 18th century graphic satire. Graham concentrated on this occasion on James Gillray, a troubled, neurotic man but an immensely prolific political cartoonist. In savage bursts of satirical fantasy he ridiculed the leading figures of the age. In a typical cartoon George III and Queen Charlotte appear as misers skimping on food but guarding their wealth in an enormous safe, whereas in others their son, the Prince Regent (later George IV), is a corpulent voluptuary forever gorging, gambling or in dalliance with a string of mistresses. Prime Minister Pitt becomes a scrawny and avaricious war-monger or sits at table with Napoleon carving up the world in the form of a plumb pudding. Elsewhere Gillray transforms Napoleon into a madman or a Gulliverian midget or shows him outmatched at fisticuffs by an honest Jack Tarr. In Gillray's crowded scenes, Graham explained, every small detail has a topical meaning, but he could also endow a single dominant image with special significance. The Prince Regent's feet juxtaposed with a daintier pair signalled his philandering but the famous image of a single inflamed and gouty foot in the grip of an evil black demon seems to symbolise something even darker. [BT]



GLIMPSES OF ALRESFORD'S PAST (2)

Brian Tippett here contributes another fascinating glimpse.....The railway line through Alresford opened at the beginning of October 1865. Shortly afterwards a local newspaper carried this progress report:

"The railway from Alton through Alresford to Winchester has now been open nearly a fortnight, and from what can be seen of the traffic bids fair to a very profitable and useful line. The several trains keep their time with great exactness, and the road runs beautifully smooth and safe. ... The stations are of a very useful and pretty style of architecture and substantially built; few lines can boast of so good. The amount of business doing at the Alresford station far exceeds the expectations of the most sanguine, and there is no doubt this will be one of the best paying stations on the line. There is one thing, however, very detrimental to it, and that is the horrid approach. The roadway is inconvenient and bad enough, but the footway is worse, passengers having to pass a narrow footpath through the churchyard, a very awkward and dangerous place at night; even by daylight it is impossible to get luggage to or from the station without going a great distance round the town."

Buildings were demolished and Station Road created to solve the problem of the 'horrid approach'.

The coming of the railway to Alresford is one of many topics covered in a new full-length history of Alresford, on sale later this year. *Alresford through Time: A New History*, edited by Brian Tippett.

16th June 2021, 7.30: A ZOOM TALK

Well known Russian expert, author and broadcaster *Stephen Dalziel* presents "The Portland Spy Ring". *This was broken 60 years ago this year, was the most damaging case of espionage for British naval interests. It involved two clerks at the Admiralty Underwater Weapons Establishment at Portland; an undercover KGB agent; and two fanatical American communists. And unwittingly Lawrence Oxley's antiquarian bookshop and the public toilets near Alresford Station played an important part!*



BOOK RECOMMENATION

Graham Trasler recommends "The Fears of Henry IV" by Ian Mortimer (Vintage). This biography is awe-inspiringly thorough and absorbing. Mortimer describes Henry's rivalry with Richard II, his taking of the throne, his many skills and education, and his financial problems with parliament. The onset of his terminal illness caught this reader by surprise! This is a very informative but accessible read.