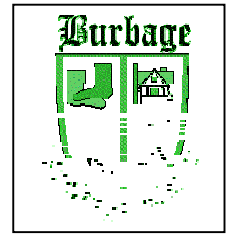


Roots to Routes

A Talk given by Sylvia Whitworth & John Robbins of
Burbage Heritage Group



In keeping with the subject of this years Conference, This is a talk about BHG Past (Its Roots) Its Present (where we are) and the Future (Routes, we will take).

In 2001 at the first Conference, A speaker gave a presentation on the Forming & running a group, this proved to very useful. We would now Like to pass on some of our experiences in a hope that it may be of use to other groups.

Burbage Past and Present

Burbage Heritage Group put down its Roots in December of **2000**. It was nurtured by **Heritage Watch**, a Project. Supported by the **Heritage Lottery Fund**, and was part of a three year project.

The Idea, was to encourage at **Parish level**,

“The Access and collection of Information, and to safeguard and manage Natural and Local History, of the area.”

Burbage Heritage Watch was set up, and held its first meeting in December of 2000, after **Peter Hall**, a **Burbage Parish Councillor**, and **Heritage Warden**, had placed an advert in the **Hinckley Times**, for like minded people to meet at the **Millennium Hall**.

The newly formed group, found that it had a wealth of talented people, who, over many years since, have

collected information, Photographs, and Memorabilia.

Amongst those people who have blazed the trail, so to speak were **Betty and Denis Byrne**, (Local Botanists & researchers). **John McNaughton** (Author & Local & Natural Historian), who has published **2 x “Around Old Burbage”**, Books from his extensive Photographic collection, (With a **3rd** planned). And **John White** a **Land owner & Farmer**, who has held the rights of a **Commoner on Burbage Common**, for over **40 years**.

Other Parishioners, wishing to protect and preserve their local heritage, have also contributed.

The group met on a monthly basis, (The first Thursday of each month.) and a **committee** was formed, which adopted its **Constitution** in **July 2001**. then a name change, and it became known as;

The Burbage Heritage Group.

A programme of meetings was arranged, however due to an epidemic of **Foot and Mouth Disease** during this year, We had to rethink our strategy, and with suggestions from the membership, the first years work was based upon staying in the near local area and avoiding any rural pursuits.

The first Exhibition, **“Remember your schooldays in Burbage”**, in Conjunction with the **Annual Arts festival** was held, and Four local Schools along with the **Hinckley**

Museum provided Information, Photographs and memorabilia for the occasion. It proved to be a great success, when over **400** people attended, during the two Day period, (Some even came back a second time.)

The group had by now found its feet, a full programme of talks, Visits and Exhibitions, were arranged for its growing membership, this involved integration with, and vital to its growth, the **Holly Hayes, Environmental Resources Centre at Birstal**, who had an excellent line up of notable speakers, amongst whom were **Tony Squires**, on landscapes, **Tony Fletcher** on Natural History, and **Carolyn Holmes** who pulls everything together, including the **BHG**.

We realised that good way to form links with the Community was to help celebrate local Anniversaries of events that have taken place.

In 2002 the group helped with a **75th Celebrations** of the **Burbage Infants School**, from which a growing, and on-going link with Local schools has since developed.

After this we were invited to run **Natural History Activities** with the Schools, including **Tree measuring, & Pond dipping**, with the **Infants school**. And **John McNaughton** regularly provides Illustrated Talks on the **Local History** for the year 6 of the **Junior School**.

At the **Hastings High School**, a **50th Anniversary Celebration** was organised by Governors and staff who are members of the group. Former pupils came from all parts of the world and the event was a great success. A useful tool for publishing this event was our **Web site** which has now been operational for over five years

and has formed valuable contacts and contributed immensely to the knowledge of Burbage past from a vast web of information, which established our roots world wide.

A spin off from the 50th celebrations is an exhibition this year in **Hinckley museum** and a series of talks on the school to local groups. Joining with **John Cleveland College** in this years **National Maths & Science Week**, we provided material relating to **Charles Chamberlain Hurst**, A world renowned **Geneticist**, whose research in **Burbage** laid down the foundations of **genetic research**, which is still used today

In **2003 The Hinckley Museum** Invited the group to display its **National School Exhibition** since which we have regularly provided material for its annual displays. **Hugh Beavin the Curator** and staff have provided support, information and even speakers over the years. We are privileged to have a museum in our area and I urge the local groups here today to support it in every way possible.

In **December 2003** the original grant from the **Heritage Lottery Fund** for a three year project ended, this had kept the **Heritage Watch** financially Independent, however they were awarded another **£516,000** on October 3rd 2004, from the **Heritage Lottery Fund**, this ensured continuing support until November **2008**.

One of the criteria for this award was involving more participation with young people, but as reported we are doing this.

Funding

Financial support ended in the form of speakers and room fees, with the original heritage watch grant, however by this time we had our roots firmly in the financial ground, thanks to our annual **Old Burbage Nights**.

For many years local historian and author **John McNaughton's** guided walks around the Village, and his illustrated talks based on his **Around Old Burbage books** had established a interest in the villages past, and if it had not been **John's** enthusiasm and foresight, in to preserving of this valuable collection, we would not have a photographic archive and seeds for all our research.

Annually we hold an **Around Old Burbage Night**, an illustrated talk using this archive. This is an on-going Smash hit, to which large audience's regularly attend, and it has necessitated a move to a larger venue.

This is an ideal way of promoting the work of the group, as well as keeping us funded for the following year, also it often yields more archive material.

After attending a couple of courses on funding at **Holly Hayes**, In **2003** a small group of **Committee Members**, led by group members **Bob & Ann Crabtree**, applied for a grant to write the **History of Cricket in Burbage**, resulting in **2004** with a grant for nearly **£16000**, this had an immense effect upon the group, we were able to obtain badly needed equipment to produce this book, which proved to be a monumental task, for the research of it which, went the length and breadth of the country, and beyond.

Another source of funding is **Sponsorship**. An exhibition held in **2004 The changing face of Burbage** highlighted the growth of the village

and a celebration of some of its buildings. A local builder desperate to build in our parish sponsored us for the costs of the event, it only took one letter to its MD.

We keep a close watch on building development and are often consulted on the history and environmental aspects of anything which may be under expansion and its impact on the environment.

A derelict builder's yard was sold in **2002** and although it was not viable to save as an industrial site, we were invited by the former owners to make a photographic record of the area. The present developer then asked for a history of the site and developed an architectural plan which incorporated many of the building styles in Burbage also suggestions for a name, this was then included in the sales brochure and we received a handsome donation for the group.

Publicity

As I mentioned, our **website** continues to be the main contact for the group, from this we have developed a quarterly newsletter in which members contribute articles and photos, this has evolved into an on going **Oral history project**. Have you ever tried to record the voices of wisdom? when after repeated pleas our excited OAP's drowned each other out trying to get in their penny worth. We learned a valuable lesson that day, and have now started to put to good use the training received from the **East Midlands Oral History Archive**.

On the local front, we held a "**Swans & Kings**" exhibition for 2 of the local **Hauliers** from, the past, both are no longer in business. However we did

acquire a collection of old rural working implements, Which have been used to enhance many of our exhibitions.

Fortunately for us the conserved old vehicles are kept by a local business man.

Members regularly contribute articles to local newspapers, journals and radio. **John Robbins** even made a full page three spread in the **Hinckley times**, with his detailed and moving article on a visit made to the **First World War** battlefields of **France**.

Every important event is now filmed for posterity, by **Ron Malin** a talented film maker in the group, who then issues DVD's and videos.

A bonus of this publicity is that we have been asked to speak and work with other local groups in exchange for speakers rather than fees.

Publications built on the success of The two **Old Burbage** books of **John Mc Naughton**, **A soldiers Tale** by **Eric Parker** and our present work the **History of Cricket in Burbage**, which will be in full publication soon.

Peter Hall the third Heritage Warden, in conjunction with the **Parish Council**, produced an excellent leaflet on walks around Burbage, which has become a popular activity for the group at Summer meetings. and from this we are building a future project of a **Heritage Trail**, linking up work done by members of the group in the past such as,

The American 82nd Airborne Divisions occupation of the village, **The Horsepool Conservation area**, **The Wellington Bomber Crash site**, and future project of the **Horticultural Heritage** site opening on **July 7th**, along with securing the ancient **Aston**

Lane as a preserved footpath for the enjoyment of the village.

So What !

But is the community better off for having a Heritage Group??

Well! we have had a lovely ramble through our first 6 years, but as mentioned earlier, the Original Aims of the Group, was to encourage at **Parish level**, **And I'll Quote**.

"The Access and Collection of Information, and to Safeguard and maintain the Natural and Local History of the Area".

Burbage was an **International** centre for **Genetic research** in the 1900's, extensive studies on many of the population, with studies on animals and plants, lead to the establishment of the **Burbage Research Station**. It was also a centre for **Roses and Horticulture**, with 2 Nurseries, many world wide hybrids were nurtured here. prominently **Roses**.

We believe we are achieving this aim, both is our past work, and our planned future routes.

The present project of the **Horticultural Heritage of Burbage**, combines funding from the **Parish Council**, with **Rose research** from the **Gardening Club**, and **Historical research** within our own group, and has lead to the finding of 4 types of long lost varieties of rose.

Those four Rose types, have now been planted, (40 in all) incorporating an Information Board, and a Plaque in the restored **Parish Garden**, known as **Pughes Paddock**, for the enjoyment of present & future local people. This Garden will have a

Celebration, an Exhibition and a Presentation on July 7th this year.

All this, and an accumulation of the adoption of **Aston Lane**, an ancient footpath route, the **Women's Institute Wildflowers Survey**, an **Ancient Tree**, and **Hedgerow** record,

will be part of the **Proposed Heritage Trail around the Village**.

May 2007 at the **Countryside Open Day**, on **Burbage Common** will see the Launch of **The History of Cricket in Burbage** book, thanks largely to the tremendous effort and perseverance of members **Bob & Ann Crabtree**.

In 2008 the future will see us going from **Route to Roots**, with an **Exhibition** to commemorate the **Burbage fallen**, on the **90th anniversary of the end of WW1**.

This is the result of One of the most evocative times of 2004, when members visited the battlefields of **The Somme**, to try to locate the **15 graves or sites**, of **Burbage** men who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Our 5 day quest was rewarded by the finding of the entire list, supplied by **Greg Droztz, The Hinckley Historian**, to whom we are most grateful for his research, as they took us to the Grave, and or site with the block and Column number, where our men were to be found.

The heritage Initiative has opened many doors for us, its active ongoing training, and has lead to our group being consulted, recognised, and even awarded for outstanding work to the community.

We can now answer that question,

“But is the community better off for having a Heritage Group?”

We think so .

JRR

