

The logo consists of the letters 'BW' in a stylized, gold-colored font on a dark red background.

Bishops Waltham House History Project



INTRODUCTION

One of the prime objectives of the Bishop's Waltham Society (our local Civic Society) is to create and spread information about the history and architecture within the civil parish of Bishop's Waltham. The Bishop's Waltham Museum Trust is the custodian of local artefacts and historic material (including photographs). Together we are sponsoring a project designed to help local residents research the history of the house they own, or in which they live, both from a physical, structural perspective as well as the more personal history of previous occupants. In doing so, we hope residents will find the process fascinating and involving whilst the outcomes will provide us all with a new, rich seam of history at a very local level.

BACKGROUND

The immediate prompt for the project was a talk, given to Society members by local historian Edward Roberts in July 2013. In it he mentioned a similar project being run by the East Meon History Group. A subsequent talk in October by Michael Blakstad, a member of that group, acted as a catalyst and some 20 people signed up for our project on the night. House History is also an increasingly popular activity across the country, no doubt spurred on by the current interest in family history and the increasing access to historical information via the internet.

OUTLINE PLAN

The project itself is intended to help individuals to conduct their own research. It is likely to involve researching house deeds, census records, electoral lists, tithe maps, ordnance survey maps, rate books, directories, as well as estate or even manorial records. This may seem daunting but the purpose of the project is to provide support and help for anyone undertaking such research.

To this end, the sponsors will organise meetings, presentations and workshops for those involved, as well as training and assistance from Hampshire Records Office. But it will be up to each person how much time and effort they are able to commit and that, in turn, will affect how fast and to what depth they can go.

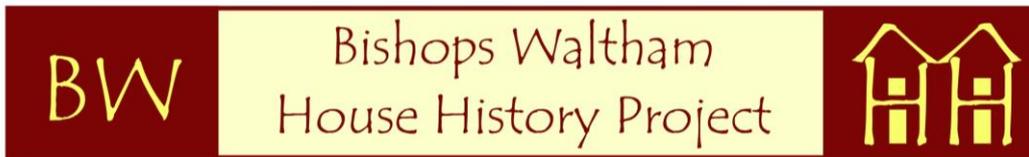
By co-ordinating the investigations, the project group will enable individuals to collaborate and share information. At the moment it seems likely that we will create some sub-groups who can share information directly – likely candidates are the High Street, Basingwell Street, the southern end of Free Street (thought by some to have once been a separate village) and Ashton. By pooling, for example census data or tithe/copyhold information, work can be speeded up, costs saved and local detail shared.

INVITATION

As a house owner, we would like to invite you to join the project and enjoy what promises to be a very rewarding exercise for those who participate.

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

As of mid-January, there are about 70 people who have joined the project and we would welcome more. But we are conscious that some people who live in comparatively modern houses would also like to be involved in such research. So we have approached some of the traders on the High Street (the oldest part of the town) who own their own premises, and asked if they would welcome someone researching the history of these premises – we are delighted that a number have agreed. So we plan to offer an 'adopt-a-shop' opportunity. It has also become apparent that a number of residents who live in houses with a considerable history would love to know what that history is, but simply



can't spare their own time to join the project. So we may be able to offer an 'adopt-a-house' opportunity as well.

Since we hope that the project will start in January, and it will be less easy to join in once it has begun, this is also an appeal to anyone who lives in an old house who would like someone to carry out research on their house with and for them.

It is an appeal as well to anyone who would like to help in other ways – from offering expertise in reading/understanding old records (e.g. experience of conveyancing) to more general help in collating information as it is gathered.

We would also welcome volunteers who would also like to join the co-ordinating group, since there will be quite a lot to organise/manage. We expect the project to last for a couple of years or more.

Please also let us know if you have already undertaken research into your own house or locality, or have been given historical information by a previous owner. For instance, thanks to Gerry Hawkes, we now have access to the history of Northbrook House, on Free Street, from 1464-2004!

OUTCOMES

We expect that the information collected will provide material for exhibitions, displays and maybe some publications.

If you would like to be involved, or know more, please contact either of us. Please feel free to mention the project to others who you think might be interested, or who have skills, knowledge or experience in this area of research (we'd like to gather all the help we can).

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