

its dry point location on a gravel terrace. Here a grand mediaeval church gradually developed a cathedral style close. Outside this an early horse market became a focus of trade. Elaboration of church history revealed valuable information about its architectural features and links with Exeter as well as with invading forces such as those of William the Conqueror and King Stephen.

Professor Blair gave much prominence to Anglo Saxon settlement and pursued this topic examining the consequences of location – central church but fringe castle.

Towards the end of his address John Blair shifted his attention to Radcot and why this became more of a strategic place than Bampton. Route development favoured it whereas Bampton became a backwater. Maybe this is why Time Team was attracted to Radcot, though it could also have been due to the fact that the conflict between Stephen and Matilda was focussed on the castle. By contrast route development was more church than castle linked at Bampton.

A subsidiary theme throughout was the emergence of Bampton as a folklore centre, culminating today in such fascinating survivals as the May Garland procession and Morris Dancing.

Members who were privileged to hear this talk must have left pondering the ‘Banburys of England’ tag but more especially be inspired to visit Bampton to experience first hand the effects of church, market and castle alignment of the local ‘go west’ spirit of development.

Thursday 10th March 2011

Parks in Mediaeval England

Stephen Mileson

This lecture was about hunting and the character of the nobility, interesting topics focussed within a long-term study. Incorporated in this was a measure of social and political history together with the understanding of the development of landscapes, parks as well as gardens.

Although Woodstock was a dominant example Banbury got a mention especially in the area around Crouch Hill.

During the evening our lecturer traced roots within late Anglo Saxon hunting practices and focussed on the impact of enclosures. He also identified designed landscapes and looked specifically at areas like Wychwood Forest, an important source of timber.

A central problem about hunting was the lack of detailed recording, especially for the 11th and 12th centuries. He saw the activity essentially as a status symbol. Amongst recent slants has been that of partnership parks, a combination of house and ordered landscape. In some cases the house and park were widely separated. An area of study requiring more work is that of lord/peasant relationships. At present this is a controversial research frontier.

Overall this was a well illustrated talk with much to offer the landscape historian.