



AMBLECOTE HISTORY

Number 8

The Newsletter of Amblecote History Society

July 2004

EVENTS AUGUST - NOVEMBER

SEPTEMBER 22nd: General Meeting.

Amblecote Church Hall 7.30pm

OCTOBER 20th: War Memorials of Amblecote.

Amblecote Church Hall 7.30pm

NOVEMBER 17th: A History of Amblecote Pubs.

Kieron McMahon. Amblecote Church Hall 7.30pm



ADDITIONAL EVENT

AUGUST 25th:

CORBETT PERIMETER SURVEY

Walking survey of the Corbett site.

Meet on the Church Hall Car Park 7.15pm

For further information on any event contact the Secretary, Nick Baker on 01384 89446 or info@amblecote.org



he past two months have been extremely busy ones for the Society with several events crowding in during May and June that have provided as much variety as the weather! We now take a summer break with the next general meeting of the Society scheduled for Wednesday September 22nd at Amblecote Church Hall. However, consistent with our policy of allowing no one to rest in the pursuit of Amblecote's heritage we have arranged an additional event for **Wednesday 25th of August.**

Corbett Survey Perimeter Walk

Following on from our successful Gas Works Survey in April a second walk is planned for the perimeter of the Corbett Hospital estate on August 25th. This is doubly important as there are serious changes afoot during the coming months as the hospital is closed and development planning begins. It is vital that Amblecote History Society is engaged with this process from the start in order to lobby for the preservation of important features. A perimeter survey walk is the first step, allowing a collective view of what there is and what we feel should be preserved.

Church Hall Car Park 7.15pm Wednesday 25th August. If you need further details call Nick Baker on 01304 894446.

AMBLECOTE HALL



he last newsletter included an appeal for further information about Amblecote Hall, the importance of which was reinforced by John Hemingway's inspiring talk on the ancient history of Amblecote at our June 9th meeting.

If, as seems entirely likely from John's researches, Amblecote Hall and the area and structures around it represented a nascent centre of Amblecote that, for whatever reason, failed to develop into a village proper then its history is of absolutely vital importance to us all.

Sadly we shall never be able to confirm anything through archaeology, as all trace of the hall and its surrounding farms and buildings were utterly destroyed to a depth of hundreds of feet during the open cast operations of thirty-odd years ago. All that remains are paper and photographic records and – absolutely vital – the recollections of those who can remember the area before its destruction.

We intend to 'theme' a general meeting in 2005 at which a discussion will be held on Amblecote Hall and hopefully individuals who can recall the area, no matter how briefly or vaguely, will come forward and allow their memories to be recorded.

In the meanwhile **Kathleen Grainger** has spoken to **Bella Robinson** and together have provided the following recollections on the Hall area which we hope will provide a 'jogging point' for other memories.

The Hall was lived in by Marjorie and Donald Gittins (bother & sister) who bred Pekinese dogs. Donald married Kathleen Wooldridge.

There was a Lodge to the Hall where Mr & Mrs Robinson lived and where Bella was born.. Dumford's Farm occupied a site to the north of the Hall.

The Stevens family occupied another large house that overlooked the rail

way line at the corner of the lane to Dumford's farm and the Murder Bridge. The house had tennis courts and a ballroom. The Edwards occupied a house overlooking the railway line on the opposite (south) side of the road. This was later made into two cottages.

QUEENS CRESCENT VICARAGE

Kathleen has also kindly responded to the appeal for further information on Amblecote Vicarage, which once stood on land now occupied by Queens Crescent off Vicarage Road. The specific question asked was; when was the building demolished? Kathleen has provided the answer by supplying a copy of the deeds to her house which stands on land occupied by the grounds of the former residence. These date the sale of the Vicarage (though not occupied by the vicar since 1925) to April 1959 when Whiting and Dudley the builders purchased the house and land; whilst the conveyance of Kathleen's property from them to her and her husband took place in September 1960. It is a fair guess that demolition would have taken place soon after the builders purchase, thus reasonably dating this to 1959. In the last newsletter the date of construction of the vicarage was given as 1885; extracted from *Kelly's Directory* of 1912. In fact this is erroneous, the building date was more likely 1855 as consistently described in the *Stourbridge Directory's* of 1905-1917. Interestingly this is five years before the conveyance of the land took place. Thus the life span of the Queens Crescent Vicarage was, we can reasonably assume, 1855 to 1959. Finally, Kathleen's deeds reveal a number of previous owners of the Vicarage, not least Albert Harris ("of Amblecote Hall") who purchased it in 1925. Is there anyone out there who can help in translating the 'legalese' in order to extract the maximum information from this important document?

ON THE NET

The web-wise can keep abreast of Amblecote History Society activity at www.amblecote.org together with a wide range of additional Amblecote history information. Now possessing reciprocal links to several high performing sites, including www.stourbridge.com, the Amblecote site is now firmly established in the top five 'hits' for a Google search on "Amblecote+history". Don't worry if this means nothing to you; just believe it's a good thing!

IN PRINT

Tim White has suggested (and offered to help with) the production of a year book for the Society which would contain transactions and other material of interest. This excellent idea would certainly allow scope for additional articles alongside our increasingly crowded newsletter. If you have any ideas for content, or would like to submit an article, please let the Secretary know.



RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY

THE WORK OF THE WEST MIDLANDS HISTORIC BUILDINGS TRUST

On May 6th Alan Smith, Chairman of WMHBT, present a fascinating talk on the work of that organisation and the rescue of the Harris and Pearson building in Brettell Lane.

Alan began with a general history of organisations dedicated to preserving historic buildings, before outlining the history of WMHBT. This had its origins in the West Midlands County Council which existed between 1974 and 1984 before being dismembered into its seven constituent parts (including 'Dudley'). One of the few good things to emerge from the WMCC was a regional listing and funding mechanism for historic buildings. As non of the resultant Boroughs wanted to assume responsibility for this, an independent trust was set up to continue its work. Originally little was achieved. The trust was a closed organisation recruiting local retired 'leaders' to its executive, thus providing plenty of chiefs but no indians. In 1990 a change of officers, which included Alan who had considerable experience in canal restoration, brought much needed reform. WMHBT became membership based and local authority conservation officers were recruited to its executive. Thus it became proactive rather than reactive, better able to draw on local knowledge and expertise.

WMHBT have a number of criteria for involvement with a building. It must be listed, in a conservation area if possible and have a willing seller (though the exact definition of willing can fluctuate!). There must be local authority planning permission and an end use identified. These criteria give the Trust total control which, although funding is still an issue, mean they are not constrained in their requirement by cost; which would be the case if, say, a third party developer were involved. As Alan pointed out, in some cases restoration costs far outstrip final market.

The first project tackled by the new style trust was a 17th century timber framed building at 19/20 High Street, Kinver. Although technically outside the West Midlands WMHBT were prepared to stretch a geographical point having been approached by South Staffs Council. The building had been virtually destroyed by a builder who obtained development permission under the guise of a number of restoration promises, only to completely ignore them. Amongst other unforgivable acts an original flagstone floor had been covered with several inches of concrete! Eventually the builder abandoned the building and the trust purchased it for a token £500.00. Even so it cost more to restore that its final sale price with, for example, the trust utilising only local oak for replacement beams. Alan pointed out that although the building was ultimately sold and has changed hands since, clauses (which include inspection) ensure that no further inappropriate changes can be made.

Following this success the trust have gone on to restore some forty buildings and Alan outlined their general operational procedure. He made the vital point that the most difficult part of any project is between identifying the building and beginning restoration. Once building work has begun the project is in fact in its final stage. Before that lies an arduous process that may take several years involving surveys, legalities, plans and permissions. In addition, whilst the trust expect to raise some 75% of costs via the Heritage Lottery Fund, there is an inevitable funding gap at the start when, with nothing tangible to show except a dilapidated building and an unconventional idea, conventional lenders are reluctant to get involved. Thus the trust relies heavily on the goodwill of its many consultant specialists who, as enthusiasts themselves, are happy to provide services at reduced rates.

Alan then moved on to the Harris and Pearson offices, familiar to everyone as a Brettell Lane landmark. Just over the 'border' in old Brierley Hill this was once at the centre of a large brick making operation that involved Amblecote clay and Amblecote people. Built in 1888 it comprises a huge brick arch, constructed using a vast range of brick styles and types both inside and out. Although listed, it was very nearly demolished and was saved literally at the eleventh hour by the personal intervention of a WMHBT member who informed Dudley Council that a demolition team was about to begin work.

This was in 1996 and Alan outlined the many trials and indeed tribulations that have dogged the Trust during the intervening years as it sought to save, preserve and finally restore this important example of local architecture. Bringing gasps of amazement from the audience

Alan showed and discussed the results of a series of deliberate corporate attacks and prevarication that ended with an almost (though not quite) sympathy for mindless vandals in that they, at least, know not what they do! Alongside straightforward arson and theft were the actions of the building's former owners and neighbours who, at 'war' with each other and with the trust, sought and to a lesser extent still seek, to throw every imaginable legal and physical spanner in the works. Whilst rationally one might expect sympathy or at least indifference from local business', the trust encountered obstacles ranging from attempts at 'delisting' to access restrictions that can only be described as infantile. Throughout, the trust stayed firm and true to purpose and in a classic case of good prevailing, finally completed the purchase of the building for a symbolic £1 in January 2003.

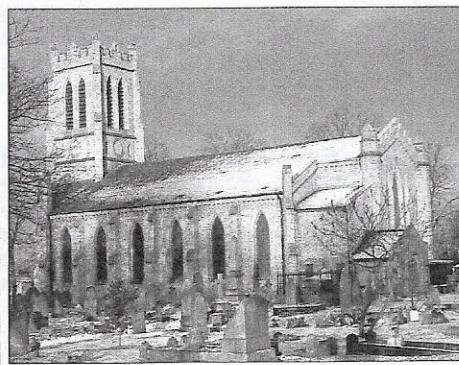
Specialist restorers Sapcote, who recently completed the central Birmingham back-to-backs, moved directly from this site to Harris and Pearson. Alan showed slides of volunteers and contractors at work and included photographs of many important and some 'mystery' objects. Ever anxious to ensure authenticity, Alan posed a number of questions about unexplained features and was delighted to discover an ex-Harris & Pearson employee in the audience. She received a swift "see me later" to discuss office speaking tubes! Indeed Alan took the opportunity to introduce a dedicated web site at www.harrisandpearson.info where a standing appeal is made for memories and photographs.

On the subject of photographs Alan was keen to point out the importance of obtaining these whenever the opportunity presents. Several slides taken in the early days are now being used to reproduce original features including the wrought iron staircase (stolen) and engraved glass windows (smashed), damage that occurred before the building was secured. Nevertheless there are still many surviving original features and Alan explained how these will be complimented by reproduction replacements. New 'old' gates (although minus the spikes to prevent accidental damage to vandals) will be placed across the archway and a wrought-iron roof sign re-erected. Details within the building include a still functioning weighbridge and unusual sash windows with chains instead of cord. Throughout there are wonderful examples of Victorian brick and tile work - even within the roof spaces. Some of this hidden work will be re-used within the public areas and Cradley Special Brick will be engaged to reproduce others. Finally Alan showed some of the incredible architectural detail of the brickwork which is already attracting international interest.

The building, which will be offered for use as offices, is scheduled for completion by Christmas 2004 at a cost of £889,740. Its 'estate agent' value will be an estimated £175,000. The gap - and the *raison d'être* for the trust - is obvious.

To conclude Alan discussed other examples of the Trust's work. This includes giving advice to other organisations on building use and preservation and as an example he showed photographs of the wonderful gothic chapel building in Lye and Wollescote Cemetery on which the Trust has been asked to comment. More directly engaged projects include the canal dry dock at Horsey Fields in Wolverhampton and Corngreaves Hall in Cradley where an ambitious plan will convert it into a series of new dwellings. Another potential project is that of New Hall Colliery in Halesowen where the surrounding land is already under the greedy eye of a major developer and the present owner 'unknown' - both the kind of challenges that the WMHBT relish!

Building Church History



Fifty-seven people attended a talk by Father Paul Tongue on the history of Holy Trinity Amblecote, held in the church on Wednesday the 23rd of June. Despite a mid-summer storm of unprecedented proportion (the worst since D-Day we are assured) which caused the cancellation of the external tour, Father Paul provided a visual description of the outside of the church, explaining its origins in the 1840's and the various additions and alterations that have since taken place. Perhaps the most striking was the removal of the ornate spiked pinnacles from atop the corners of the tower and main church, taken away for safety

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AMBLECOTE, ARCHAEOLOGY & ARCHIVES

Fifty five members and guests gathered at Amblecote Church Hall on the 9th of June to hear Borough Archaeology John Hemingway deliver an inspiring talk entitled *Amblecote, Archaeology and Archives*.

John began by showing a picture of the earliest man-made object discovered within the wider Dudley area, a crude Palaeolithic hand-axe that may be attributable to *Homo erectus*, a tool using humanoid known to inhabit Europe before the emergence of *Homo sapiens*. If so, the tool might be as much as 475,000 years old. As John pointed out "a lot has gone on in the area since then", and promised to elucidate a fair amount of it during his talk; provided the 21st century technology encased in his lap-top computer held out!

Keeping in mind the vast swath of time since *Homo Erectus* walked the land, John painted a picture of the earliest midlands landscape we can possibly deduce with any certainty. This was formed as a result of ice-age activity when huge glaciers ebbed and flowed over northern Europe carving valleys, creating rivers and causing sea levels to rise and fall. Obviously many landscapes came and went, but evidence remains in our area of the time between the penultimate Ice Age and the present when the British Isles including Ireland was part of a single European land-mass. Then, a great river ran from west to east draining into what is now the North Sea. The evidence for it is beneath our feet and occasional becomes spectacularly exposed, such as during construction of the motorway cutting at Quinton. The 'first' Amblecote pre-historic landscape would have been influenced by this great river "its bed some 50 meters above our heads". Geology, John pointed out, is vital to an understanding of all archaeology, with the land under our ancestors feet and ours "All we have, and we have to deal with it."

Moving forward to the later Stone Age, John showed a picture of a superb collection of flint objects, again found within our area. This was, he pointed out, a *Homo sapiens* 'tool kit' with a range of specialised stone objects far more sophisticated than *Homo erectus*' crude axe. Some 20,000 flints have been found locally perhaps indicating that even in the remotest times of modern man the Dudley area was a cross-roads or meeting place. Remarkably, no flints have ever been found north of the Stour – although John attributed this more to a lack of discovery than a previous absence of hunter-gatherers. Indeed at this point he made a plea repeated several times; that members of the audience look carefully in their gardens for objects of interest. Gardens are in many cases the last survival of the 'natural' landscape and its archaeological inclusions and he is always be pleased to look at any find made by a member of the public – even if it turns out to be nothing.

John now looked to when, with the Stour formed, man first settled within the area. He postulated that the A491 through Amblecote was, as a road, extremely ancient indeed with the lie of the surrounding land and river systems pointing to its possible existence as a migration route for large mammals moving north/south. Human hunters naturally followed these and the shallow river crossing at what is now the Stour bridge would have formed an ideal funnel point where pre-historic man could ambush game, prompting a semi-permanent settlement. With the 'road' thus established a permanent way between other settlements would have arisen, driven by the inevitable human needs of trade and genetic exchange. From these main roads man-made tracks would have radiated to new settlement points and local hunting / gathering grounds, some linking up to form the famous ridgeways that criss-crossed ancient Britain. One such track would have led up Amblecote Bank, making the original

centre of Elmlecote (though long before it was named as such by the Anglo-Saxons) on high ground at the top of Vicarage Road.



By Iron Age times there was undoubtedly considerable settlement in the wider area as the 'fort' on Wychbury Hill testifies. John described its appearance in some detail, remarking that as a defensive structure it made little sense; nearby Clent being much more favourable. Instead, he believes, the western side of the hill is composed of a series of cattle corrals. This structure would have formed a kind of 'customs post' where local tribes extracted 'dues' in the shape of cattle, an acknowledged medium of exchange. Archaeological evidence increasingly indicates that the Iron Age population of Britain was much larger than previously thought and John described a fairly populate Stour valley with an indigenous peoples exploiting their ability to watch and control the trade routes (the salt of Droitwich was particularly important) that passed through their lands.

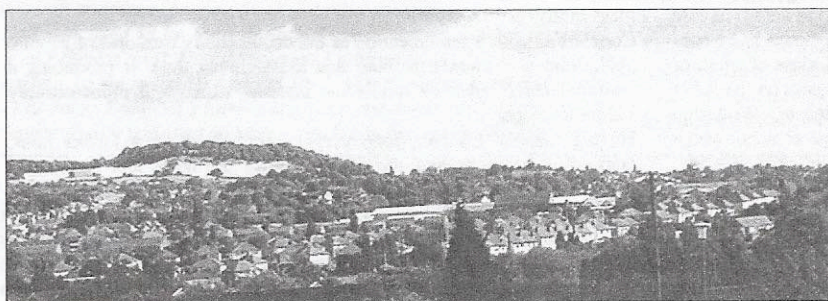
Moving on to Amblecote itself John noted that the first glimmer of definite settlement may date to this period, with the name Hanbury (fields) occurring in documents. Hanbury is Anglo-Saxon for 'high fort' and, as the Anglo Saxons themselves did not generally build permanent forts but always named things literally, this interferes a reference to an earlier structure. Was there an Iron Age structure on Amblecote's high ground overlooking the valley road? Sadly we will never know – the entire area having been utterly destroyed by open cast mining; though John, as always, beseeched us to keep looking in our gardens!

Early mining also played an important part in Amblecote's ancient history and John suggested that mineral extraction might well have brought the area to the attention of the Romans. Previous wisdom has the entire Stour valley utterly bypassed by them but, as John pointed out, the Romans did not usually miss the chance to explore and exploit any area under their control (which the midlands most certainly were). He believes it entirely possible they sought iron-ore in the Delph / Pensnett area and took it to Worcester "a great Roman iron-town" for smelting. The wider point is that even in Roman times the Black Country was providing supply side materials for manufacturing purposes.

Referring now to historical evidence, John outlined some of his discoveries made using documents held at Enville Hall. Amblecote was obtained by the Grey family in the mid sixteenth century and some early and exciting records are still held by the estate, including the earliest map of anywhere in the Dudley Borough, dating to 1688. Another estate map of 1750 reveals in great detail the pre-industrial landscape of Amblecote with attendant possibilities of projecting these features back in time. Showing his own interpretations of these maps John illustrated how Amblecote - conforming to the medieval norm - once had three great fields known as Waterfield, Littlefield and Hanburyfield. Going even further back in time the distribution of fields and minor settlements demonstrated a wider aspect of the past landscape, and one that broaches the vexed subject of Amblecote's peculiar status of being in the Diocese of Worcester and the County of Stafford. John speculated that the authorities based at Worcester desperately wanted Amblecote to remain as part of their territory when, in the 600s, the new Diocese of Lichfield was first created. Thus Amblecote obtained an 'artificial' Diocesan border which ran along what became Brettell Lane, a phenomenon completely at odds with the logical (and later county) border of the Stour and its tributaries. Furthermore, the existence of such an ancient border along a road indicates that the road was older than the border, making Brettell Lane another very ancient route indeed.

Expanding the map evidence wider still John was able to demonstrate further borderland phenomena. The original Worcestershire area was one of complex lanes and little villages whilst that of Staffordshire was of large open areas, fewer settlements and straight line roads. Perhaps Amblecote, as a highly productive pastoral area intruding above the Stour, was so prized as to be 'land grabbed' by the Dark Age border commissioners? Perhaps, even, its ancient (strategic?) status under the Weggorian tribe after whom Worcester was named by the Romans, required it to naturally fall under Worcester control.

However, by the 10th Century Amblecote Manor was in Staffordshire and is recorded as such in
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Wychbury Hill from Amblecote Bank. Was the first permanent human habitation in Amblecote a 'twin' to the hill's Iron Age settlement?

DENNIS HALL OPENING

Over 100 members and guests gathered at Dennis Hall on the evening of the 16th of June for a Local History Open Evening courtesy of Lord Edward Developments. Glorious mid-summer sunshine along with our host's generous hospitality combined to produce a convivial atmosphere that recalled the buildings centuries old past as a place of family, social and corporate entertaining.

The aim of the event was to allow everyone a chance to explore the refurbished hall prior to its new owners taking up occupancy. Having been rescued from ruin the building now consists of nineteen fully fitted apartments along with a magnificently refurbished entrance hall that incorporates a plaster cornice and frieze created from salvaged original items. To celebrate the hall's history the developers have also commis-



sioned two wonderful glass sculptures by local artist Iestyn Davies of Blowzone, consisting of glass hands holding glass crucibles pouring 'molten' metal. One flow is clear, symbolising crystal glass, the other coloured representing iron, both cru-

cial to the history of the hall and the Amblecote area. In addition, and in consultation with Amblecote History Society, two plaques have been placed on the building. The first, by the gates, briefly outlines the origin of the Hall as the home of the Hill family and the second, by the main door, its dates of construction and modern refurbishment.

The formalities for the evening began with the Society's Chairman, Father Paul Tongue, thanking Lord Edward Developments and in particular Tony Stapleton, Paul Tibbetts and Chrissie Gough for their hospitality. He then said a short prayer appropriate to the opening of a new house and, equally appropriate, written in the 18th century by Bishop Thomas Ken.

Secretary Nick Baker then outlined the history of the house. Beginning with the medieval origins of the name Dennis, through its construction by the Hill Family in the 18th century, to its use as part of the Thomas Webb glass works in the 19th and 20th. He concluded by 'confessing' to a surreptitious visit to the building when it stood in a ruinous state, remarking that he genuinely thought the Hall, devastated by fire, vandal and water damage would be demolished. Highly delighted to be proved wrong he was now pleased to be partaking along with so many other people in an event that brought the hall 'back to life'.

Paul Tibbetts on behalf of the developers then concluded the formalities by thanking everyone for their attendance and especially for the forbearance of the Hall's neighbours whose properties should now be enhanced rather than degraded by the buildings presence.

With plenty of food and wine to hand and the setting sun bathing the front of the building in a glorious golden glow, the rest of the evening was given over to general bonhomie. Dennis Hall, it was generally agreed, is now once again a living addition to the Amblecote landscape.

More pictures and a history of Dennis Hall at www.amblecote.org

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BUILDING CHURCH HISTORY

reasons sometime after the Second World War. 'Moving' inside the church Father Paul described in detail a number of main features and how, over the one hundred and fifty odd years of its existence, hardly anything has ever 'stood still'. Furthermore, alterations in church style and fashion to say nothing of social transformations have resulted in sometimes startling changes to interior decoration and layout. Assisted by a number of vintage drawings and photographs Father Paul painted a series of verbal pictures of the church during various stages of its life. When first constructed in the 1840's it contained the then conventional pew boxes assigned by rent or gift to the rich or poor according to status and income. He noted that the church originally had accommodation for some 800 people, though wondered whether the huge attendance generally claimed in those times were not in fact some form of retrospective wishful thinking!

He noted that various alterations to the internal structure were driven by a number of separate factors. Firstly there was simple structural necessity with, for example, the organ occupy-

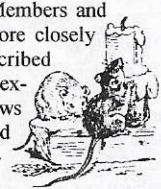
ing a number of stations over time as its use and power supply changed. Heating too caused changes as fuel supplies and congregational tolerance to cold has altered over the centuries. Secondly there was worshipping style, itself influenced by the views and practices of various incumbents; and finally there was changing fashion with succeeding generations making sometimes subtle, sometimes less subtle, alterations according to the decorative and social mores of the time.

As well as the interior appearance of the building Father Paul described a number of the monuments and fittings, including the stained glass. This is all modern except that the magnificent east window, in memory of the industrialist James Foster, is a fine and acknowledged example of rare early Victorian work. It is also full of astonishing detail and Father Paul explained how it was obviously designed to engage its audience in an exploration of the subtleties of the life of Christ; something it continues to do to this day. The rest of the stained glass, with the exception of two rescued pieces of Victorian work, is post Second World War though all is significant in commemorating parishioners and former vicars.

Overall Father Paul described a change from a dark, somewhat enclosed, heavily draped interior to the light and airy space we see today, though retaining enough of its original architectural structure and historical inclusions so as to remain wholly connected with its own history and that of Amblecote Parish.

Fortunately for this reviewer, the church and Amblecote History Society, Father Paul has been led to conclude that his researches into the Holy Trinity's history could and should be consolidated into a booklet, thus updating and expanding previous smaller works. Over the next year or so he intends to gather and edit further material with such an outcome in view, something in which we should all assist and encourage him!

A cheese and wine 'social' organised by the congregation of Holy Trinity (to whom many thanks) followed the talk. Members and guests were able to look more closely at the interior structures described by Father Paul as well as exchange information and views about Amblecote history and the success of our first official six months existence.



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AMBLECOTE, ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHIVES

Domesday. From this a population of about 35 may be deduced, working a manor centred around what later became Amblecote Hall on the high ground of Amblecote Bank. Again John pointed to an earlier origin for the settlement and track (now Vicarage Road) that would have connected it to the main (A 491) thoroughfare. It was, he noted, unwise for Iron Age man to live right on a primary route. Far better to be connected to it via a track at a point that afforded a good view of what, or who, was travelling the road. Most of the early settlements on the A491 north of Stourbridge conform to this idea; Amblecote, Wollaston (around its Hall) and Kingswinford all have ancient centres, whilst Wordsley is the exception. Stourbridge is, in comparison, a 'new town' that grew up around its medieval bridge.

Discussing Amblecote Hall still further John was able to demonstrate that the layout of the old roads and fields that existed before open cast mining ruined the area forever, were those of a typical manor / hamlet. There was even a 'village green' area, whilst evidence tends to show that the old Amblecote Hall Farm (known within living memory as Dunford's Farm) was most likely the original ancient hall.

Unfortunately running short of time, John was forced to 'whizz through' the remaining millennia, noting that the Normans did little for Amble-



cote apart from change the management, and that extraction industry proper took off in the 16th century when coal came first into marginal and later general use. Collieries had appeared by the 1500s and remained a permanent feature of the landscape until the 20th. By the 17th century the areas pre-industrial industrial revolution was in full swing with important early ironworks and, of course, the advent of the glass industry.

Concluding with a final mention of the documentary treasures of Enville Hall, John was pleased to note that the archivist there is producing a comprehensive index of Amblecote material which will immeasurably aid future research.

Having finished his talk, John very kindly stayed for a further hour, answering questions and showing copies of the maps and documents used in his research. There is no doubt that John Hemingway will be asked to return to Amblecote to continue his fascinating elucidations of our very local past placed in a truly global geographical and historical context. Indeed he has said he will; provided we all promise to continue looking in our gardens!

John Hemingway may be contacted at Dudley MBC on 01384 814188 or email him at john.hemingway.dudley.gov.uk. and he will be more than pleased to talk to anyone who thinks they might have made an archaeological discovery large or small.