

# Wye Historical Society



**Newsletter May 2021**

# **Society Matters**

## **Draft Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting**

**Wednesday 28 April 2021 at 7.30pm**

Held by zoom owing to Covid-19 restrictions

The AGM was opened by zoom on Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 7.30pm. Following concerns that IT issues meant that some members may not have received all papers ahead of the meeting, the Chair, Tim Betts, proposed that the AGM be adjourned until Wednesday 28 April 2021 at 7.30pm. The motion was passed unanimously.

About 19 members of the Society attended the adjourned AGM by zoom on Wednesday 28 April at 7.30pm. The Chair of the Society, Tim Betts, welcomed everyone to the AGM.

**1. Apologies** were received from the President, The Revd John Makey, Ellie Morris, Tom and Jean Bates, Duncan Walls, Graham Thorn, Mary Stewart, Robin Pelham-Reid, Leslie Smith, Margaret Bray and John Mansfield (Independent Examiner).

### **2. Minutes of the last AGM held on 4 March 2020**

It was agreed that the Minutes represented a correct Record and were approved.

### **3. Matters arising from the Minutes - None**

### **4. Hon Secretary's Annual Report 2020.**

The Secretary's Report had been circulated in advance and was approved by the meeting.

### **5. Hon Treasurer's Annual Accounts**

The Treasurer's Annual Accounts, authorised by the Independent Examiner, Professor John Mansfield, had been circulated in advance and were approved by the meeting. The Chair commented that the accounts confirmed that the Society was in a secure financial position.

### **6. Election of the Executive Committee and Officers**

Revd John Makey is Honorary President of the Society and continues in office.

**Members of the Executive Committee are elected and serve for two years.**

Tim Betts, Maureen de Saxe and Jonathan Timms were elected in 2020 and are willing to continue in office.

Paul Burnham, Anna Clark, Cilla Deeks, Rosie Fletcher and Ellie Morris were elected in 2019 and are willing to stand for re-election. Margaret Bray has been co-opted to the Executive Committee and is willing to stand for election. There were no further nominations. All six individuals have been duly nominated and their re-appointment was approved unanimously.

Brian Roberts, Kathy Roberts and Sarah Morris have retired from the Executive Committee and the Chair thanked them for their support.

**The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are appointed for one year.**

**Chair:** Tim Betts is willing to stand for re-election. There being no further nominations, Tim Betts was re-elected unanimously.

**Secretary:** Cilla Deeks is standing down after many years of service but remains a member of the Executive Committee. The Chair thanked Cilla for her wonderful service to the Society and, in particular, thanked her for her exceptional support during his first year in office. Jonathan Timms has been duly nominated as Secretary to the Society and, there being no further nominations, his appointment was approved unanimously. The Chair thanked him for his willingness to take on this responsibility.

**Treasurer:** Anna Clark is willing to stand for re-election. There being no further nominations, Anna Clark was re-elected unanimously.

Website Manager, Ellie Morris, Archivist Maureen de Saxe and Programme Secretary Rosie Fletcher continue in office.

**7. Any Other Business**

7(i). Rodney Schofield asked about the relationship between Wye Historical Society (WHS) and Wye Heritage (WH), recognising that WHS communicates with members mainly through lectures, while WH mounts public exhibitions from its premises. He suggested that, where a WHS lecturer presents display material, that material might be put on display at WH during the following month, if appropriate. The Chair responded positively to this suggestion and said that co-operation between the two charities was very much on the Society's agenda, it being important to maintain progress on a step-by-step basis.

7(ii). Rodney Scofield asked, additionally, whether WHS planned to hold future lectures in the Lady J primary school. The Chair responded that WHS was looking at two potential locations (including Lady J) and would report back in due course in the |Newsletter, along with details of the autumn programme.

7(iii). The Chair thanked everyone for attending, with a level of attendance higher than he had expected, given the constraints of both Covid-19 and zoom.

The AGM closed at 7.50pm



## A HISTORY OF THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR IN 10 MINUTES

In his informative article about Cardinal John Kemp in the January 2021 Newsletter, Rodney Schofield referred to Kemp's important service to both Henry V and Henry VI during the latter stages of the Hundred Years War. This article takes a whistle-stop tour of some of the events leading up to that time. Although the kings take the headlines, it should be remembered how young some were when they acceded. Edward III was 14 years old, Richard II 10 years and Henry VI just 9 months.

### Edward II (1284-1327: King of England 1307-1327)

Edward II succeeded his father, Edward Longshanks (known for "Hammering of the Scots") in 1307. The French were allies of the Scots so, to ease tensions, Edward II married Isabella, daughter of Philip IV of France in 1308. He was 23, she just 12. At the time, Edward was infatuated by Piers Gaveston, but Gaveston was murdered by English barons in 1312 while Isabella was pregnant with the future Edward III. The couple went on to have three more children, the last (Joan, Queen of Scotland) in 1321. However, in 1322, Edward's new favourite, Hugh Despenser, was successful in side-lining Isabella and reducing Edward's contact with her. At about this time, Isabella formed a relationship with Roger Mortimer, who had already been part of a rebellion against the King and had been imprisoned in the Tower.

Edward controlled lands in Normandy and Aquitaine, originating from William I and Henry II's wife, Eleanor, respectively. In 1325, he came under pressure to pay homage to the new French king, Charles IV, in respect of the Dukedom of Aquitaine. To avoid humiliation, Edward created his 12-year-old heir Duke of Aquitaine and sent him to France with Isabella, who was Charles IV's sister. This proved to be the king's undoing, as it enabled Isabella to link up with her exiled lover and mount an invasion that led directly to the Edward's abdication in January 1327. He died in September of the same year.

Edward II



Edward II shown receiving the English crown in a contemporary illustration

Edward III



### **Edward III (1312-1377: King of England 1327-1377)**

14-year-old Edward III became king, with Mortimer acting as regent. However, it did not turn out well for Mortimer as Edward resented his level of control and lured him into a trap. Edward had Mortimer executed for treason in 1330, but Isabella survived until 1358 without further involvement in court proceedings.

Following Charles IV's death in 1328, with no direct male heir, Philip VI was chosen as his successor in preference to the English king's closer claim through his mother, as the only grandson of Philip IV. In May 1337, Philip's Grand Council in Paris ruled that all English possessions in France should be taken back because of breach of homage obligations. In retaliation Edward declared himself King of France, an action that marked the beginning of the Hundred Years War. Things started slowly, but Edward's crushing military victory at Crecy in 1346 was a decisive moment. The majority of the French army, led by Philip's son, Duke John (later John II), had been tied up at the siege of Aiguillon, on the Garonne, South West France. Edward collected 700 vessels and landed in northern France, laying waste to much of the countryside and reaching within 2 miles of Paris. He then marched north to meet an allied Flemish army that had attacked through Flanders. Hearing that the Flemish army had turned back, Edward set up a defensive position on a hillside near Crecy, which was familiar territory inherited from his mother. The English were rested and well refreshed, while the French arrived from Aiguillon undernourished and exhausted. The French attacked immediately, but English and Welsh longbows did devastating damage, while the French cavalry struggled to charge uphill through heavy mud and newly dug defensive ditches. Edward III's eldest son, the Black Prince, distinguished himself in leading one vanguard and was said to have "won his spurs". English losses were no more than 300, while French losses were probably over 10,000. On the way home, the English stopped off to lay siege on Calais, which remained in English hands until 1588.

The Black Death caused a pause in hostilities (Edward lost his daughter Joan and Philip his wife, also Joan) and in 1350 Philip died, to be succeeded by his son, John II. In 1355, Edward drew up plans for a second campaign in France, attacking through Normandy and Bordeaux at the same time. The main action was in Bordeaux, where the Black Prince was cornered by a very much larger French army. Offered the opportunity to surrender, the Black Prince agreed to give up all towns and cities conquered, set free all prisoners and not to oppose the King of France for 7 years. However, the French insisted that the Black Prince and all military leaders should be taken prisoner. The Black Prince asked for time to consider, using that time to reinforce his defensive position ahead of the Battle of Poitiers (1356). The French attacked with four divisions behind each other, which allowed the English to repel them one at a time. The battle resulted in an outstanding victory for the English and the capture of King John II along with much of the French nobility. France was left under the control of Dauphin Charles (later Charles V), who became unpopular because of his need to raise taxes to defend his country and secure the release of his father. Poitiers led directly to the Treaty of Bretigny in 1360 (later ratified as the Treaty of Calais), under which England secured their territorial gains in Aquitaine, on the condition that Edward III renounced his claim to the French throne.

Charles V succeeded to the French throne in 1364 and immediately repudiated this treaty. With Edward ageing and England weakened by further waves of plague, lands in France began to be lost.

## THE BLACK PRINCE (1330-1376) AND THE FAIR MAID OF KENT (1327-1385)



In 1361, Prince Edward married Joan, Countess of Kent. Joan had an “interesting” past. She was the granddaughter of Edward I and Margaret of France, so was great granddaughter of King Philip III of France. Her father, Edmund of Woodstock, had been a strong supporter of his half-brother, Edward II, and had been executed in 1330 when Edward was overthrown by Queen Isabella and Mortimer. Edmund’s widow and four children (including Joan) came under the protection of Edward III.

In 1340, aged 12, Joan was secretly married to Thomas Holland of Upholland, aged 26, without seeking the consent of the King. Almost immediately, Thomas headed off to fight in France. A year later, Joan was married to William Montague, heir to the 1st Earl of Salisbury. It was said that Joan neglected to mention that she was previously married for fear that Thomas might be punished. The earlier marriage was not revealed until 1348, when Thomas returned from France. Pope Clement VI annulled the marriage to Salisbury and Thomas and Joan went on to have five children.

Thomas died in 1360 and little time was lost in arranging his widow’s marriage to the Black Prince, although four dispensations were needed from the new Pope, Innocent VI. With Edward III increasingly ill, the stage was set for the Black Prince to be next King of England, with Joan of Kent as Queen – a popular and powerful couple at a “what might have been” moment. However, in 1362 the Black Prince was invested as Prince of Aquitaine and the couple spent the next 11 years living there, with the Black Prince becoming increasingly ill with dropsy (oedema) while fighting rearguard battles to defend his lands. Their elder son, Edward died in 1370, aged 5, leaving their younger son, the future Richard II (born 1367), as heir apparent.

By 1371, the Black Prince had become too ill to continue his duties in Aquitaine and the family returned to England. The situation in Normandy was worsening steadily, so the Black Prince felt obliged to undertake a further campaign to save English possessions, but this was unsuccessful and he returned to England on 7 June 1376, dying from “exhaustion” in his bed the next day, aged 45. His father died almost exactly one year later, leaving Richard II as



king, aged 10, with Joan influential behind the scenes. The Black Prince is buried in Canterbury Cathedral where he had built a chantry chapel for Joan, with ceiling bosses in the likeness of her face. Joan was made Lady of the Garter by her son in 1378 and died in 1385 aged about 58. First love won out and she is buried beside her first husband, Thomas Holland, in Lincolnshire.

**Richard II (1367-1400: King of England 1377-1399)**

Richard was only 10 when he succeeded to the throne in 1377 and was very much subject to his uncles (the Black Prince's younger brothers), John of Gaunt and Thomas of Woodstock (later Duke of Gloucester). It was a difficult time to rule England, with manpower shortages following the Black Death. During the Peasants' Revolt against taxation (1381), Wat Tyler led Kentish rebels to capture Canterbury, the Savoy Palace (John's home), London Bridge and the Tower, before being attacked and killed by the Mayor of London at a truce meeting at Smithfield. In 1387, a group of aristocrats (including John's son, Henry Bolingbroke, later Henry IV) opposed Richard's autocratic and factional style of rule. Known as the Lords Appellant, this group took control of government, with Thomas of Woodstock one of the leaders. When Thomas died in 1397, Richard seized the opportunity to execute or exile many of the Lords, though not Henry. In 1398, Henry faced a duel with the Duke of Norfolk so John of Gaunt asked Richard to exile Henry, for his own protection.



**HENRY IV (1367-1413: King of England 1399-1413)**

On John of Gaunt's death in February 1399, Richard disinherited Henry and made his exile permanent.

Only four months later, in June 1399, Henry invaded England with a small force while Richard was on a military campaign in Ireland. Attracting support along the way, he was able to depose and imprison Richard in September 1399 and by-pass his 7-year-old heir, Edmund de Mortimer. Richard died in prison less than 6 months later aged 32, in mysterious circumstances. Henry was the first English ruler since the Norman Conquest whose first language was English.

Although Henry re-asserted the claim to the French throne, he spent much of his short reign facing rebellions in Wales (Owain Glyndwr) and the North (Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland), during which period his heir, Henry V, demonstrated his considerable military capabilities. Because of the King's poor health, Henry V was the effective ruler from 1410, becoming King in when Henry IV died in 1413, aged 46. Henry IV may have justified two Shakespeare plays, but merits only two paragraphs in this article.

### **HENRY V (1386-1422: King of England 1413-1422)**

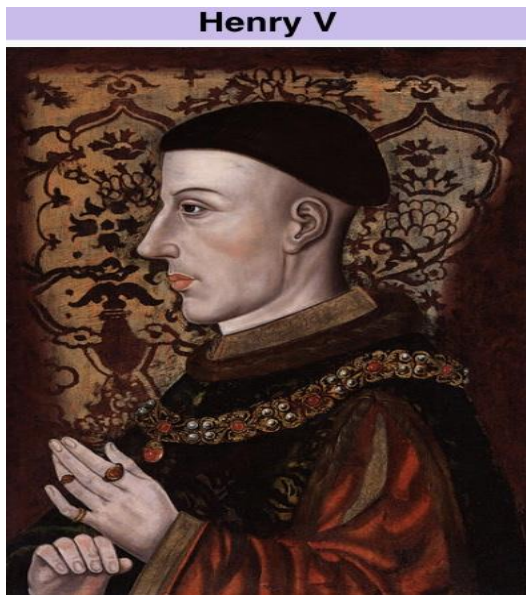
Henry V was 26 when he came to the throne, determined to re-assert the claim to be King of France. Thanks to his military reputation, he was able to gain support for a 1415 expedition to France with 12,000 men. The first point of attack was the siege of Harfleur, but this took longer than planned and Henry's army was significantly weakened by casualties, disease, and desertion. By the time Harfleur capitulated in October 1415, winter was approaching and Henry decided to march north to Calais, thence back to England. He was shadowed, en route, by a large French force which confronted him at Agincourt on 25 October 2015.

Henry's decisive victory at Agincourt has been described memorably by Shakespeare, so does not need further comment here. It was followed by ruthlessly successful campaigns against Caen (1417) and Rouen (July 1418-January 1419). In September 1419, supporters of Dauphin Charles assassinated John, Duke of Burgundy and this caused the new duke, Philip the Good, to side with the English. Henry appointed John Kempe to be Chancellor of Normandy and he may well have been involved in the successful negotiations with Philip. Under the terms of the Treaty of Troyes, signed in May 1420, Henry married Charles VI's daughter, Catherine de Valois, and was recognised as heir to the throne of France, disinheriting the Dauphin (later Charles VII). Charles VI was 51 (18 years older than Henry) and in poor health, so the way forward to a unification of the crowns seemed clear. Henry entered Paris in 1420, with the support of the local population.

In March 1421, while Henry was back in England, his brother, Thomas Duke of Clarence, led English forces to disastrous defeat against French forces (reinforced by a strong Scottish contingent) at the Battle of Baugé. Henry returned to France in June 1421 meeting success at Dreux and Chartres and then laying siege to Meaux from October 1421 to May 1422. Although the English were eventually successful, large numbers of English soldiers died of dysentery and smallpox during this siege.

This was another "what might have been" moment. Just as all was going well, Henry suddenly died in August 1422, aged 35, at Chateau de Vincennes, East of Paris. The cause is not clear but may perhaps have been dysentery, perhaps heatstroke. His heir, Henry VI, was just 9 months old, so Henry V had named his brother, John, Duke of Bedford, as regent in France. When Charles VI died just two months later, his son, Charles VII claimed the throne, but was only recognised in his own lands South of the Loire.





**HENRY VI (1421-1471; King of England 1422-1461 and 1470-1471. Crowned King of France 1431)**

Kempe must have been very much part of the diplomacy of these years, even though he was at the same time being appointed successively Bishop of Chichester, Bishop of London and Archbishop of York. On Henry V's death in 1422, Kempe resigned as Chancellor of Normandy and returned to London to be a member of the Regency Government for the infant king. The nominal head of this government was John, Duke of Bedford, but as he spent much of his time ruling the English possessions in France, effective leadership was split between Henry V's other brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (Lord Protector), and Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester and legitimised son of John of Gaunt (Chancellor). Gloucester favoured seeing the French war through to victory, but Beaufort (supported by Kempe) saw this war as expensive and unwinnable.

The English had marked success at Battle of Cravant in July 1423 (the English and Burgundians joining forces to inflict heavy casualties on a large Franco-Scottish army) and again at the Battle of Verneuil in August 1424. In the latter battle, the Franco-Scottish forces were reinforced by 2,000 Milanese heavy cavalry, who routed the English lines but then left the field of battle to raid the English baggage train. By the time they returned, some 6,000 Franco-Scottish troops were dead.

In 1426, following conflict between Gloucester and Beaufort, Parliament sacked Beaufort as Chancellor and appointed Kempe, almost certainly a compromise candidate. He held this position until 1432, when he was succeeded by John Stafford (Chancellor 1432-1450), who was later appointed Archbishop of Canterbury 1443-1452. Ironically, Kempe came back to succeed Stafford in both roles.

By this time the tide of war had turned against England and Kempe's diplomatic skills and connections were badly needed in France. The first significant French victory since Agincourt was at the Siege of Orleans (1428-29), the northernmost city under French control. The English-Burgundian armies were held back by the River Loire and a well-organised defence, while one of the key English leaders, the Earl of Salisbury, was killed by cannon fire late in 1428. Nevertheless, French defeat seemed inevitable and, in March 1429, the city offered to surrender to the Duke of Burgundy, which would have released English troops to

attack other targets. The English refused and, in the same month, Joan of Arc arrived in Orleans, reviving French resistance. While the extent of the part she played is disputed, the English were forced to abandon the siege on 8 May 1429.

Very soon afterwards, on 18 June 1429, the French dealt a crushing defeat on the English at the Battle of Patay, following which the population of Rheims switched their allegiance. Charles VII was crowned King of France at Rheims Cathedral in July 1429, just as Joan of Arc had foretold. In response, Henry VI was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey on 6 November 1429, aged 7, and, following successful resistance to the French siege of Paris later that year (and the burning of Joan of Arc in 1430), Henry VI was crowned King of France at Notre Dame de Paris on 16 December 1431, the only English claimant to wear the crown. Kempe resigned as Chancellor in 1432 but remained on the Regency Council.

The Congress of Arras in 1435 cemented Charles VI's growing strength. Kempe led the English delegation but had instructions to make only limited compromises with the French. John, Duke of Bedford, the long-term link with Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, died aged 46 during the Congress and, one week later, the Treaty of Arras was signed between Charles VI and Philip, breaking the latter's alliance with the English. Philip recognised Charles as King of France but was exempted from homage. In return, Charles undertook to punish the 1419 murderers of Philip's father. In 1436, England was forced to surrender Paris to the French.

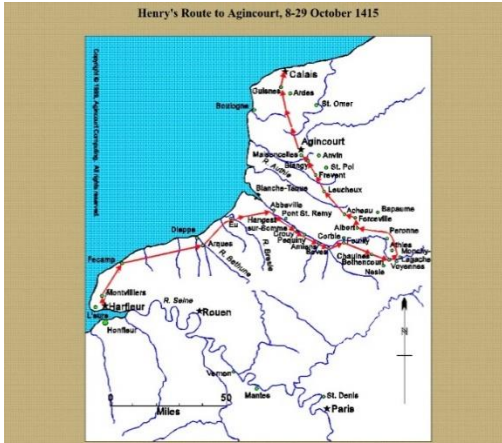
Kempe also had his negotiating hands tied at a further congress at Calais in 1439. Henry VI was fighting to defend Normandy and Aquitaine but increasing French use of cannon made it almost impossible for cities to withstand bombardment during siege. Normandy was lost first and in 1453, after the French won a decisive battle over English forces led by the Earl of Shrewsbury at the Battle of Castillon on the river Dordogne, Aquitaine was lost too, after three centuries. Only Calais remained – to be engraved on Queen Mary's heart after its loss in 1588.

Jonathan Timms  
E&OE

*Footnote. The following diagrams show the routes taken by Edward III on the way to Crecy and by Henry V on the way to Agincourt. Both leaders faced the challenge of how to avoid exposure to enemy action while crossing northwards over the River Somme. Edward achieved this by heading west and unexpectedly fording the shallows near the river mouth. Henry went east, taking advantage of the large northern loop in the river that lengthened the French army's march, allowing the English to cross unopposed near Nesle.*

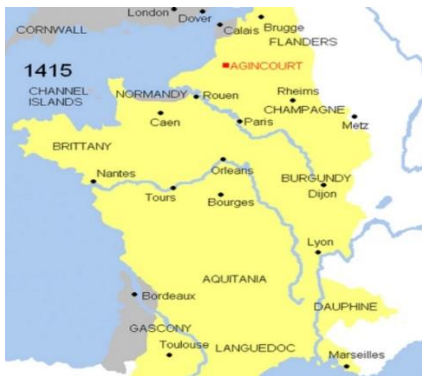
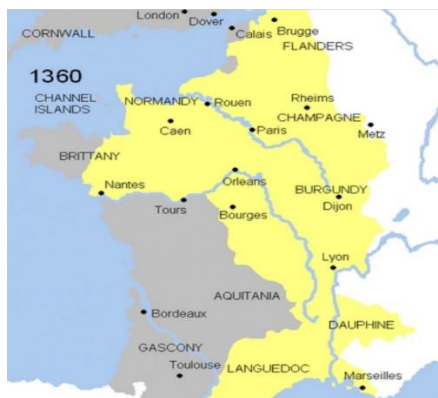


Map of the route of Edward III's chevauchée of 1346



The red arrows show Henry's march. Each arrow is one day's travel. The French forces on the east bank of the Somme simply gaged Henry, until he was finally able to get ahead of them by cutting off the loop of the river between Fouilly and Nante.

The changing shape of France. English possessions shown in light grey, Burgundy in darker grey.





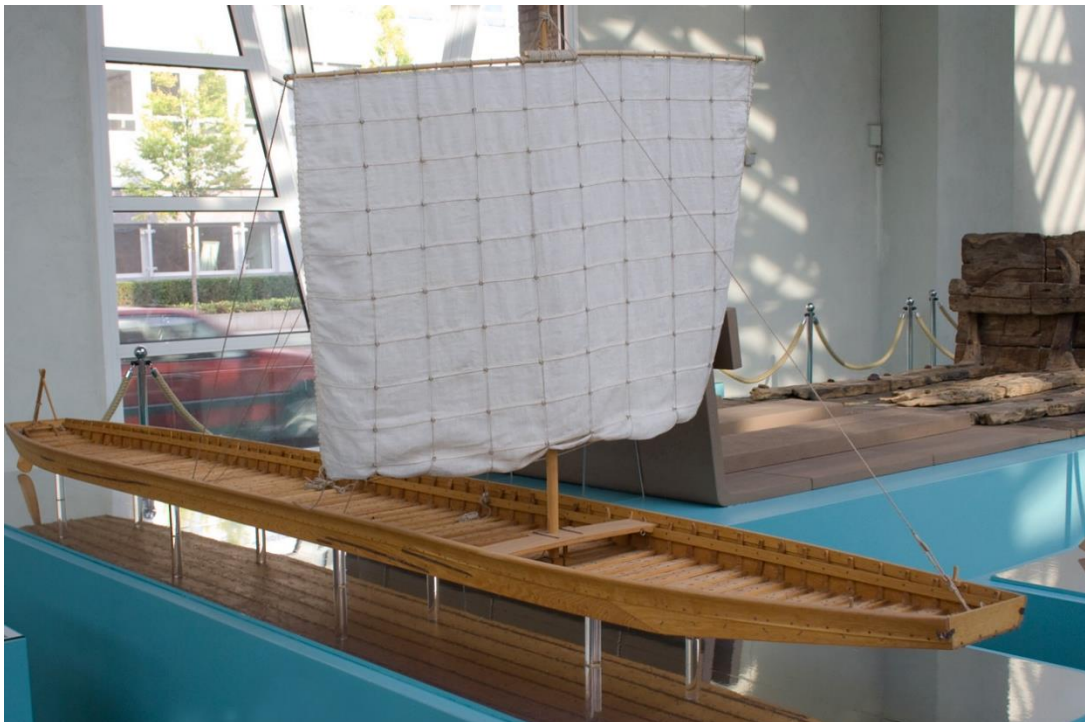
## The possible use of the River Stour for navigation in Roman Times

Before the Haviland's estate was built on the site of the second world war Oil Depot there was an archaeological excavation. The excavation provided support for the possibility that the river Stour was used for navigation, at least seasonally for small boats when there was sufficient depth of water. Before there were weirs for water mills, and, more recently, heavy abstraction from aquifers, this would have been much more likely. Some support for a deeper channel was found during excavation for a weighbridge at Wye Mill, when a peat filled channel extending below present river level was discovered.

The Oil Depot excavation yielded an enormous quantity (71.6 kg.) of Roman pottery, including a considerable number that had been buried intact. A large proportion was high status pottery, especially table ware and drinking vessels. 5% of the material was Samian ware from Gaul, again an unusually high proportion. There was much other pottery that had been imported from Gaul, and 83 shards of Boetian amphorae from Spain. Of the pottery manufactured in Britain, much came from the Canterbury area.

All this suggests that in Roman times there was an emporium here for the sale of ceramics, which had been brought either from Canterbury or from ports near the mouth of the river, why was it here, near the riverbank, and not, for example, at Kempe's Corner on the main road? And why was 71.6 kg. Of pottery found, but only one horseshoe.

An attractive answer to these questions is that the ceramics were brought up the Stour in small boats. Water transport has obvious advantages for material that is both heavy and fragile. But were boats with a very shallow draught that were capable of carrying heavy weights available in the First and Second Centuries?



Model of Roman Barge (Martin Bahmann) sail appropriate for the Rhine

The answer is probably in the affirmative. The well-preserved remains of a small Roman barge, shaped like a punt but much longer, have been found at Xanten which is on a small tributary of the Rhine north east of Duisburg in Germany ,and is in the museum there. One end is lost, but it was between 14 and 15 metres long. Thus, it could carry a load weighing ten tonnes with a draught of only 50 cm. It was hauled by a rope tow but could presumably be steered with a large punt pole. The use of such boats could well have been possible on the middle Stour between Canterbury and the confluence of the West and East Stour, although perhaps only in winter. Such seasonal navigation occurs on the Loire and the Upper Severn today. It would have enabled Wye to be supplied not only with goods from Canterbury and from abroad, but also with ragstone, sand and fullers earth from around Willesborough. It would be interesting to seek any evidence that there was a towpath beside the middle Stour in Roman times. Sadly, any evidence of a wharf close to the ceramic's emporium would have been destroyed when the railway and station was built.

**PAUL BURNHAM.**

**Footnote:** This will be the last newsletter until September/October, when we will bring you the 2021/22 programme and meeting details.