



Autumn 2012

Engagement

The newsletter of the London & South-East Region of the Battlefields Trust

Introduction

Now that the Autumn is well and truly with us it is a convenient time to review the progress that we have made during the Summer. It has to be said that we suffered from exceptionally adverse weather conditions all summer. As a result a number of outdoor events were washed out and cancelled at the last minute. These included the English Heritage 'Festival of history' in July and the Battle of Hastings re-enactment in October. This was a serious blow for the Battlefields Trust because it is precisely at these events that we have an opportunity to meet members of the public, explain the work that the Trust does and recruit new members. On a more positive note we have made an important contribution to safeguarding historic battlefield sites at Northampton, Naseby and Shrewsbury and our membership continues to grow, (though perhaps more slowly than we were originally hoping).

Recent Events

During the Summer members of the London & South-East Region attended a Naseby study day in August, where we were made very welcome by the Naseby Battlefield Project. During the day we had a lecture on the battle, visited the actual battlefield, witnessed the excellent work that the NBP is doing to make the battlefield more understandable and accessible to the public and were treated to a demonstration of loading and firing Civil War matchlock muskets.

In September Dave Stubbs led a walk around the site of the First Battle of Newbury, 1643, and City Guide Chris Everett led a fascinating walk telling the

story of the Blitz on the London Docks 1940/41.



The Battlefields Trust stand at Hastings. (Shortly before the heavens opened).

Members of the Battlefields Trust are used to meeting interesting people at our events but when leading a walk around Potters Bar last October Clive Hammersley was surprised to meet Lufthansa Pilot, Christian Schwertel, who had flown over from Germany for the day just to attend the walk. Clive was leading his first ever walk for the Battlefields Trust and telling the dramatic story of how German Zeppelin L-31, under the command of Kapitänleutnant Heinrich Mathy, Germany's leading Zeppelin ace, was shot down in flames over Potters Bar by Lieutenant Wulstan Tempest a Royal Flying Corps fighter pilot in October 1916. The incident marked a turning point in the aerial attack on London during the First World War. It turned out that Christian, whose grandfather had worked on the Graf Zeppelin, is writing a book on Heinrich Mathy which should be published in Germany by 2014. He's hoping that it will be published in English by October 2016, the 100th anniversary of Mathy's death. Clive said that he was very grateful to the

Potters Bar Museum for allowing members of the Trust access and letting them handle some of the artefacts. Clive was also grateful to St Mary's Church for allowing them to see the 'Zeppelin Cross' which was made from fragments of the downed L-31.

Future Projects

Magna Carta

The 15th June 2015 will see the 800th anniversary of when King John was confronted by a group of rebel barons at Runnymede and forced to agree to what became known as 'the Great Charter', or, to give it's Latin name, 'Magna Carta'. Magna Carta is seen throughout the English speaking world as the foundation stone of our constitutional freedoms. The Battlefields Trust is represented on the Magna Carta 800 committee and takes a keen interest in the preservation and presentation of the historic Runnymede site. We have always argued that it was little short of a national disgrace that the only memorial to Magna Carta on the site was erected by the American Bar Association. There are now plans to build an interpretation centre on the site and the Surrey County Council has recently agreed to fund £5 million pounds towards the required £8 million pound cost of the centre. Runnymede Borough Council are hoping that the remaining funding will come from donations, trusts, corporations and individual contributions.

The Battlefields Trust also believes that whilst the political, legal, and constitutional implications of Magna Carta are widely recognised the military aspects are often forgotten, but Magna Carta was only accepted after a series of prolonged campaigns between 1215 and 1217. The Battlefields Trust is offering to help any community owning a battlefield, siege site or other action and we will try to run battlefield walks at least 20 of the major sites. This fits in well with one of the issues concerning the Magna Carta 800 committee: that the commemorations are currently focused only on Runnymede, the charter towns and other places with a copy of the Magna Carta. This is a great opportunity for people to make the connection between a local conflict and the

development of the democracy in which we now live.

St Albans

The Battlefields Trust has long argued that the City of St Albans played a unique role in the Wars of the Roses. Not only was St Albans the only town have not one but two major battles fought there, (1455 and 1461), but most historians agree that the Ist battle of St Albans in May 1455 marked the start of the actual wars. Yet, inexplicably, the St Albans City Museum has almost completely ignored this vital aspect of the City's history. There are now plans to move the museum to larger premises and we have been assured that the Trust will be fully consulted about how the story of the two battles can be portrayed.



City Guide Chris Everett tells the story of the Blitz on the London Docks.

The Bombing of London 1914-18

As part of the 100th commemoration of the Great War the London & South-East Region of the Battlefields Trust are currently planning to run a project to study the aerial bombardment of Britain during 1914/18 and compile a list of sites connected with this campaign, this would include monuments, memorials, fighter airfields and anti-aircraft gun emplacements.

Harvey Watson, the Chairman of the LSE Region, said "*Too often when people think about the First World War they only remember the Western Front and the fighting in Flanders, it is often forgotten that London itself was a battlefield and between 1914 and 1918 it witnessed the world's first ever strategic, long-range,*

aerial bombing campaign, first with Zeppelin airships and later with Gotha aircraft. Though this campaign has been overshadowed by the much larger bombing raids of the Second World War it was an enormously significant event in military history and led directly to the creation of the Royal Air Force."

Harvey will be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to be involved with the project.

London & South-East Region Events

Please note that unless otherwise stated most LSE events are free to Battlefields Trust members, however, a charge of £5 per head will normally be levied on non-members. Forthcoming London & South East events for your diary include:

Thursday 15 November 2012, Meeting of the London & South-East Region. In the Olde London Pub, 42 Ludgate Hill. Close to both Blackfriars and St Pauls underground stations. From 6.15pm onwards. The current programme and ongoing projects will be discussed. All members are welcome.

Saturday 17th November 2012, London during World War One 1914 -18. Most people have heard of the Blitz of 1940/41, but it is often forgotten that strategic bombing began in the First World War and between 1914 and 1918 there were over a 100 German air raids on Britain, first using Zeppelin airships and later Gotha heavy bombers. Chris Everett will be leading a walk from Holborn to the Embankment looking at the first great air assault on London. The walk is approximately 2.5 miles long and will take 2 – 2.5 hours. Meet at 10.30am at Holborn Station. We will finish on the Embankment near the Circle Line. For further details contact Chris on 07775 701 833.

Thurs 13th and Saturday 15th December 2012 Battle of Alton 1643. To mark the anniversary of the Battle of Alton, (December 1643), the Wessex Region are holding two walks in Alton, Hampshire. On Thursday 13th meet at the Allen Gallery,

Church street, (Post Code GU34 2BW), at 1pm. On Sunday 15th meet at the Allen Gallery at 11am. Please note that in the event of bad weather most of the meeting will be held inside.

Thursday 17th January 2013. Meeting of the London & South-East Region.

The current programme and ongoing projects will be discussed. All members are welcome.

Sunday 17th March 2013, Siege of Berkhamsted Castle 1216.

Join Laurence Burrige for a tour around the ruins of the once mighty fortress and hear the story of the dramatic siege of 1216. Meet at 11.00 am outside the main entrance. For further details contact Laurence on 07907 050140.

Friday 5th - Sunday 7th April 2013, Battlefields Trust 2013 Conference. The 2013 Conference of the Battlefields Trust will be based at St Aidan's College, Durham University. Events will include a field trip to Northumberland to visit the battlefields of Homildon Hill and Flodden (which will be commemorating its 500th anniversary), lectures, walks and talks, a conference dinner and a number of 'fringe' events before and after the conference. The conference will be open to members and (on payment of a small surcharge) non-members and it will be possible either to book accommodation for the whole event or to attend parts of the conference. For further information contact Frank Baldwin, email: frank.baldwin@battlefieldstrust.org