



Spring 2011

# Engagement

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

## **Introduction**

Now that spring has finally arrived after a rather bleak and cold winter we have an exciting programme of battlefield walks to look forward to during the coming spring and summer. However, that is not to suggest that we have been inactive during the winter or that we allowed the cold weather to dampen the enthusiasm of our members. On the 9th January eight of us braved freezing temperatures to walk along the Ridgeway and visit a possible site of the Battle of Ashdown (871), Alfred the Great's first major victory over the Danes and, at the end of the month, a number of LSE members joined the newly-formed Wessex Region to walk the sites of the Hampshire battles of Alton (1643) and Cheriton (1644). At Alton it was fascinating to see how the Church still bears the scars from a bloody Civil War skirmish. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2011 we again had a joint event with Wessex with a visit to Fort Nelson, one of a chain of forts built in the 1860s to protect Portsmouth from a possible French invasion. Fort Nelson houses much of the Royal Armouries collection of artillery. Over 300 large guns are on display and they range from some of the earliest cannons ever made to Saddam Hussein's infamous 'Iraqi Super Gun'. We were also privileged to see a live firing of a World War II 25 pounder field gun.

## **550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2nd Battle of St Albans.**

On the weekend of 26/27 February the Battlefields Trust, together with St Saviour's Church in St Albans, held a conference to commemorate the 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2nd Battle of St Albans fought on 17 February 1461. During the course of the weekend there was a series of talks given either in St Saviour's Church itself or in the Church

hall. The talks included not only the battle itself, but such diverse topics as the political background, weapons and tactics, early firearms, the decline of chivalry during the Wars of the Roses, the work of the Battlefields Trust, and finally the medieval attitude towards death and the disposal of the fallen after a battle. On the Sunday morning there was a walk over the battlefield and members of the Medieval Siege Society gave us a demonstration of weapons and armour from the period of the Wars of the Roses.



*Members of the Medieval Siege Society demonstrate 15th Century weapons at the St Albans Conference.*

The weekend culminated on the Sunday evening in the church with a Requiem Mass, based loosely on a 15<sup>th</sup> Century service, for the approximately 2,500 fallen from the battle who have no known grave. Over 80 people signed up for the Conference and there was twice that number of people who attended the Sunday evening service. The event was well covered by the media with several reports about it in the local newspapers and on the local radio. Grateful thanks have been extended to Peter Burley of the Battlefields Trust, and Father Peter Wadsworth of St Saviours, as well as the various organizations who helped to

make the conference such a success, including the Richard III Society, the Medieval Siege Society, the Friends of Bernards Heath, the St Albans City Museum, and the Pitt Rivers Museum from Oxford.



*St Saviours Church during the St Albans Conference.*

#### **London & South-East Region Events**

Forthcoming London & South East events for your diary include:

##### **Sunday 27th March 2011 Battlefields Trust AGM**

12.00pm in the Education Suite, Hampton Court Palace. A training conference looking at a variety of Trust activities will take place before and after the AGM.

Contact: Peter Burley 07969 861256 (AGM) Julian Humphrys 07930 432444 (Conference).

##### **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2011 Barnet**

**1471.** As part of the ongoing Barnet Project Frank Baldwin will be leading a walk over the site of this decisive battle which witnessed the defeat and death of Warwick 'the kingmaker'. Meet outside the 'Olde Monken Holt' public house in Barnet at 11.00 AM.

##### **Thursday 12th May, 2011, The London & South-East Region AGM.**

In the basement bar of 'Truckles' wine bar, Pied Bull Yard, off Bury Place, Bloomsbury, (opposite the British Museum). From 6pm onwards. Afterwards the current programme and

ongoing projects will be discussed. All members are invited to attend.

##### **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011, London**

**Blitz 1941 walk.** Laurence Burrridge will be telling the story of the 1940/41 Blitz on London. Meet at 18.00 hours at the firemen's memorial on the Thames side of St Pauls. After the walk we will be making a strategic withdrawal to a nearby pub for another of our informal social evenings. This walk was originally going to be held last December but had to be postponed because of the weather. Contact Laurence on 07947 359543.

##### **Saturday 21st May 2011, 1st Battle of St Albans 1455.**

We will be walking over the site of this crucial action which triggered off the Wars of the Roses the longest period of civil strife in English history. Meet outside the Tourist Information Office at 1.30pm.

##### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011, Battle of Britain 1940 Study Day.**

In the Summer of 1940 an outnumbered RAF Fighter Command defied the might of the Luftwaffe and prevented a German invasion of Britain. We will be visiting crucial sites connected with this crucial battle including Bentley Priory, Uxbridge and Northolt.

##### **Thursday 14 July, 2011, Meeting of the London & South-East Region.**

In the basement bar of 'Truckles' wine bar, Pied Bull Yard, off Bury Place, Bloomsbury, (opposite the British Museum). From 6pm onwards. The current programme and ongoing projects will be discussed. All members are welcome.

##### **Sunday 14 August, Siege of Rochester Castle 1215 and Battle of the Medway AD43.**

We will be walking around the ruins of Rochester Castle, scene of one of the hardest fought sieges in Medieval history, and subject of the forthcoming film 'Ironclad'. In 1215 King

John reneged on his promise to abide by the terms of the recently agreed Magna Carta and with an army of mercenaries tried to crush the rebel barons. Their epic stand at Rochester changed the course of English history. Please note that the castle is owned by English Heritage, and EH members will be entitled to free entry into the castle, while non-members will be charged £5.00. Meet at the Castle entrance at 11 am. After lunch Harvey Watson will be leading a tour around the possible site of the Battle of Medway AD43 when an invading Roman army won one of the most decisive battles in British History.

For further information on these events please contact Harvey Watson on 01296 708975 or [harvey.watson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:harvey.watson@tiscali.co.uk)

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