

AT THE JULY MEETING Alf Wright delivered a thoroughly enjoyable presentation on 'Pillboxes and Scars of the Second World War', illustrated with a fascinating collection of photographs and documents. Pillboxes were first built from Spring 1940; some 28,000 were put up, and only 6,000 were known to have survived by the year 2000. Today their locations seem random, but in 1940 they were a planned part of the defences built along the GHQ Line, a major line of inland defence which ran from the north of England down to the Essex coast. Road blocks were constructed along this line from a diverse array of materials, including old farm wagons, upturned railway wagons and barbed wire; tank traps were also constructed, and pillboxes. Many examples can still to be found in the Five Parishes, and ten are located at Tilty; there is some speculation that the mill could provide an explanation for this level of defence. As Alf pointed out, these defences were – thankfully – never used, and their effectiveness would anyway have been questionable, as there was nobody to man them! A different system of defence was devised, which centred on military bases. Alf also proffered some entertaining advice on the best bowling techniques for grenades, and discussed the deployment of MacNaughton tubes (which produced large craters as anti-tank devices). An entertaining and informative Q&A session followed the presentation; many thanks to all who contributed, but particularly to Alf for a most interesting review of local defences in the Second World War.

ON SATURDAY 4TH AUGUST, guest-speaker Dr. Kenneth Carveley delivered a talk about the Cistercians and Tilty Abbey. Almost sixty people attended the event, which was held at Tilty Church, and the Group were pleased to



welcome people from across the Five Parishes, as well as from several other Uttlesford Local History Groups. Dr. Carveley set Tilty Abbey in the context of the Cistercian movement, tracing its 'family tree' from the foundation of Cîteaux Abbey in Burgundy in 1098, through the 'daughter' monasteries of Clairvaux (also in Burgundy) in 1115, Rievaulx (Yorkshire) in 1132, Warden (Bedfordshire) in 1135, to Tilty in 1153. However, he also explained that recent research presents an alternative view of this system of relationships; early documents are not eye-witness accounts of how the order began, and its shape and form possibly evolved in a less structured way. Dr. Carveley talked about several of the controlling ideas of the

Cistercian Order, including their requirement for solitude which led them to establish abbeys in places 'far from the concourse of men'. He spoke also of the non-religious work in which the monks and the lay-brothers were involved, and their commitment to self-sufficiency; the abbeys had land to cultivate, livestock of various kinds, vineyards, mills and fish-ponds. Proximity to water was essential, and the Cistercians carried out some remarkable feats of water engineering. Photographs of elaborate vaulted drains gave rise to speculation amongst local residents that the stories of tunnels beneath Tilty Abbey might have a factual basis!

Dr. Carveley referred those interested in further information on the Cistercians to the Exordium website: <http://www.scourmont.be/exordium/exordium.htm> which provides a programme of reflection and study on the values of the Cistercian Reform, compiled for their 900th anniversary in 1998, together with access to new translations of some important early documents. Many thanks to Dr. Carveley for presenting such an informative and thought-provoking talk, and thanks also to the Tilty Church Committee for permitting us to hold the event in Tilty Church; demonstrating the characteristic simplicity of the Cistercians in its design, and with the light of a fine August evening flooding in through the east window, the church provided a most appropriate venue. Thanks also to the Recorders of Uttlesford History for the loan of the equipment.



Thank you gift being presented to

Dr. Carveley

OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday September 11th

Presentation by Graham Jolliffe -- Chairman
and co-founder of Stebbing Local History Society

Wednesday 10th October -- 6.30 p.m.

Visit to Saffron Walden Town Library

<http://www.townlib.org.uk/>

A major resource for research material and information,
particularly from the Victorian and Edwardian collections.