

## NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MILTON ABBAS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

7 Dec 2016

The Christmas cheer of our December meeting was enhanced with mulled wine, mince pies and stollen. This resulted in much merriment and our longest meeting ever. We apologize for that but there was a lot of really important information to digest along with the mince pies!

Perhaps of most importance to us was the finding of a truly unique document which was up for auction at Duke's, Dorchester, in September 2015:

The Batten Library, Lot 288 -

"BANCKS, Jacob. A bound volume of original plans and maps of farms and estates at Milton Abbas, Dorset, mostly by Bancks but some perhaps by another hand, Bancks' plans all dated 1734. Large folio, calf. A dozen plans, various shapes and sizes, some highly decorative with elaborate coloured titles and cartouches, others plainer but all with some colouring, seven on linen-backed paper sheets, the remainder on vellum."

We found out that this did not meet the reserve of £800 - £1200 at the auction. If only we had known beforehand! However, it was sold soon after for £1300. This document would help us understand the old town so much better - was it thriving and growing, or declining before Lord Milton destroyed it? What were the occupations and incomes of the residents?

After the meeting we have since discovered that this document is up for sale by a dealer for £15,000. That is some mark up and now beyond our reach. We are really worried that it will be sold to someone in the US and lost to us forever - what a tragedy. If any of our readers has any advice on how we could acquire high resolution images of this we would love to hear from you.

If any of our readers come across information on documents or books of historic interest do please get in touch.

Tom Roberts gave an overview of the Great Stare Project. The findings so far have been interesting and we are looking forward to the next phases of the project. We were lucky to have John Phibbs on board, who brought kudos and tremendous knowledge of Capability Brown landscapes. His very detailed report helped the HLF grant application. We were shown a copy of his lavishly illustrated *magnum opus* "Capability Brown: Designing English Landscapes and Gardens", which is now available from amazon, part 2 will be available in February 2017.

Our Old Town of Middleton project group is now in full swing and the members are finding plenty of social history. It was interesting to see the will and inventory of Henry Arnold, owner of Bagber Farm in 1643, the valuation of his "goods and chattels" shows how valuable the harvests were and the cattle - in total the farm was worth £3508 including "Debtes sperate" but not including "Debtes indesperate". That is debts to be hoped for and those not likely to be repaid..

Lord Milton's Petition to the House of Lords 1783 to move the Grammar School to Dorchester shows that the new village did NOT have an inn at this date and the cottages were so crowded that there was no rooms available for visitors to stay to visit the school boarders, nor to lodge the teachers. A search of the letters of Horace Walpole throws new light on Joseph Damer - it is suggested that his pedigree is entirely spurious and that his money came from his uncle "the old userer Damer of Dublin". "The two elder sons of Lord Milton had been in a fray with other young men at Rome, in which a coachman had accidentally been killed" - needless to say being aristocracy they got away with it.

The history group will not be meeting again until February 1st 2017.