



ABBAY CHURCH
PRESENT

THE
SEALED
KNOT

Scenes from the Civil War-glimpses of 17th Century Fair

on ELSTOW GREEN

SATURDAY/SUNDAY 23rd & 24th JUNE, 2.30 pm

× 1984 ×

Adults £1.00 Children 50p Admission by Programme

ELSTOW ABBEY RESTORATION APPEAL

FOREWORD

Many of those who saw the Sealed Knot perform on Elstow Green in 1978 have asked when they would be returning. At that time they helped to celebrate the tercentenary of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". I am delighted that today they are helping us in our task of raising £65,000 for the restoration of Elstow's ancient Abbey Church.

In 1628, John Bunyan was baptised in the font which still stands in the Church and it is appropriate that we should be reminded of the turbulent times in which he lived.

All the proceeds of today's event will be given to the Appeal and I am deeply grateful to the Sealed Knot and to Alan Chapman and his Committee of helpers, mainly present and former members of the Parent/Teacher Associations of Elstow Abbey and John Bunyan Schools.

Sam Whitbread
Appeal Chairman

THE SEALED KNOT SOCIETY

The Sealed Knot Society takes its name from a royalist secret society which plotted during the Commonwealth (1649-1660) for the Restoration of the Monarchy. Its symbol is taken from the Chancellor's chain where the Knot alternates with the Tudor Rose.

The modern society was founded in February 1968 as a supper club but has grown to a membership of 5,000. The society is organised on strictly military lines with over 50 regiments, with pike, musket, artillery and cavalry, with promotion from the ranks being by merit. Each member is a volunteer, paying his or her own expenses and dressing and equipping him or herself as authentically as possible. Members come from all walks of life from the unemployed to the aristocracy, historians and scholars to dustmen and window cleaners. The society has two aims: the first to arouse interest in and help research into the English Civil War period, and the second to assist in the raising of money for charity (over £1½ million so far!). The society has re-enacted battles and skirmishes of all sizes all over the United Kingdom, with 'guest appearances' in Germany and Holland. Among the more important achievements are the presenting of a petition of Loyalty to the Queen after a full parade through St James', guarding the Queen during the lighting of the Silver Jubilee bonfire at Windsor, various battles including Newbury and Naseby, and participation in various films, including the recent BBC production of 'By the Sword Divided'. Brigadier Peter Young DSO., MC., FR Hist S., one of the original founders and the present Captain General, is a leading Civil War authority with a distinguished career as Reader in Military History at Sandhurst, as Commander of the Ninth Arab Legion 1953-1956 and as Commander of the First Commando Brigade during the Second World War. The local organising Regiment is Sir Henry Bard's Regiment of Foot, a royalist unit. The Colonel is Stephen G Thompson of 25 Connaught Street, Northampton, telephone number : 0604.27647.

ELSTOW CHURCH

The Saxons had a church on this site and an extensive burial ground, but the present church was founded exactly nine hundred years ago by a niece of William the Conqueror. She founded the Benedictine Abbey of Elstow to atone for having betrayed her husband's execution. Over the centuries the Abbey grew rapidly in size and power. The Church was extended and improved several times, and the Abbey owned lands in many counties in England.

The Abbey was surrendered to the Crown in 1539, and at first it was proposed that the Church become a cathedral for Bedfordshire, but in 1580 all but the nave of the once huge Church was demolished and it became the parish church for the village of Elstow.

Less than a hundred years later an event took place which gave Elstow Church another claim to fame. In 1628 John Bunyan was brought from a nearby hamlet where he was born, to be christened at Elstow. John Bunyan grew up in the village, played on the village green, worshipped at the Church and rang the bells. When he wrote his books he used local scenes for inspiration. The Church Tower is thought to have given him the idea for the Tower of Beelzebub and the small West Door of the Church was the Wicket Gate in 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

Elstow Church is not, though, just a beautiful building with historical association - it is still, as it was in Bunyan's day, a parish church where people come to worship. It is a big responsibility, as well as a great privilege, to have such a beautiful and famous church in the village.

Do come and look round our Church, it is a history in stone of 900 years of Elstow, an important part of our country's heritage, but also a living part of our community today.

JOHN TIBBS (Vicar)

ELSTOW ABBEY RESTORATION APPEAL 1984

The Abbey Church was completely restored in 1880 under the direction of Sir Thomas G Jackson R.A. At that date both north and south aisles were restored and a turret added at the south west corner. The cost of that massive restoration was £14,000 a considerable sum a hundred years ago. One of the most interesting parts of the church is the vaulted chamber believed to be the nun's outer parlour. It dates from the same time as the two early English bays of the west end of the church. There is a fine central Purbeck Marble Column and the ceiling is vaulted. This is one of the area's now requiring urgent repair and conservation to arrest further decay being caused by dampness.

Since the great restoration of 1880 the task of looking after the fabric of the church has mainly fallen on the generosity of succeeding congregations and friends of Elstow Abbey and in the late 1950's and the 1960's various projects were undertaken including the re-roofing of the nave and the restoration of the Tower and the East End of the Abbey, some considering that the East End was over restored. However, external decay to stonework and Aisle roofs has been a problem for some years. Slowly but surely, the works are being done. In the last few years both north and south aisle roofs have been replaced and the clerestorey walls and outer parapets have been repaired. Parapet repairs to the nave and work to the south side turret are all complete but much still needs to be done. The buttresses, the walling, windows and low level repairs are urgently needed. Rainwater pipes and drains need urgent attention. The west end needs urgent repair in order to retain one of the best architectural features.

Carrying out these works depends on money being available and in spite of the Department of the Environment giving a generous grant for works completed the parish has to find a large sum of money. The present works will cost almost £100,000. Since the Appeal was launched last July over £20,000 has been given and this together with a grant from the Department of the Environment has enabled us to carry out some of the most urgent work.

Only by the generosity of those who love and care for ancient buildings can this work continue.

COLIN ALBON
Appeal Director

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

2.30 pm Scenes from 17th Century Fair including Morris Dancing, Wrestling, Country Dancing and a Masque, Orange sellers, criminals in the stock and pillory are all in evidence adding to the flavour of the period.

3.00 pm Militia Drilling, followed by re-enactment of Press Gang episode as it might have taken place on Elstow Green. The "pressing" of Bunyan. An execution and flogging typical of the period.

3.15 pm Sealed-Knot re-enactment of a battle - Royalists versus Roundheads, Musketeers, Pikemen, small cannon are all in evidence in this demonstration of 17th Century warfare.

4.00 pm Battle ends, March off.

Display of rural crafts and other attractions throughout the afternoon.

Visitors are invited to look round the Abbey, the Moot Hall and Bunyan's Mead during their afternoon in Elstow.

Geoff and Rene welcome you to

THE SWAN
HIGH STREET
ELSTOW

where you can enjoy Green King ales and
cold snacks in a traditional atmosphere

Garden

Car Parking

THE RED LION ROAST INN
HIGH STREET
ELSTOW

Traditional Carvery Dining Room

Bar Snacks available

Beer Garden

Telephone: Bedford 59687

Car Parking

We wish you success in your fund raising appeal

TOBLER SUCHARD LTD
MILLER ROAD
BEDFORD

Telephone: Bedford 55141

Manufacturers of Newbury Fruits - Toblerone

NOTE ON SEALED KNOT RE-ENACTMENT OF A CIVIL WAR BATTLE

ELSTOW GREEN - JUNE 1984

Although no major battle was fought in Bedfordshire in the Civil War the county was the scene of several minor engagements and saw the presence of comparatively large detachments from both royalist and Parliamentary armies.

In October 1643, royalist soldiers entered Ampthill and then fought their way into Bedford but later left when large Parliamentary forces entered the county. In June 1644 royalist detachments ravaged south-west Bedfordshire, particularly Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard. Oliver Cromwell was at Bedford in June 1645 with 1,100 Parliamentary cavalry before setting out for the battle of Naseby in Northamptonshire.

Two months later, in August 1645, King Charles I with an army of several thousand men marched from Huntingdon to Bedford. 300 royalist horse mustered on the Ouse meadows at Great Barford on the 25th. Next day there was fighting at Goldington and Bedford and the royalist army occupied Bedford for a few hours before going on to Woburn. A part of this royalist force was defeated at Luton by a Parliamentary force from Hertfordshire.

In this Civil War the royalists were unable to maintain any continuing presence in Bedfordshire, and Parliament was able, in theory at least, to rely on the trained bands of the county which in June 1642 were stated to be 500 in number. Although the trained bands of London were reasonably well trained, those of the counties were largely untrained and, as the Parliamentary commander Sir William Waller said of the trained bands of Essex and Hertfordshire, they were "mutinous and uncommandable" when ordered to active service and indeed were "only fit for a gallows here and a hell hereafter".

In October 1643 only 18 of Bedfordshire's trained bands answered a call to Bedford to assist its Parliamentary commander.

In addition to the unreliable trained bands, Bedfordshire had to rely on conscripts. These were raised by demands from the Parliamentary Committee on the various towns and villages. Bedfordshire was called on to supply for the Parliamentary machine 340 men in 1642, 425 in 1643, 600 in 1644, 680 in 1645 and 150 in 1646. Men under the age of 60 were eligible for this conscription.

Complaints about Bedfordshire's failure to raise its various quotas of men (e.g. from the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament) were not uncommon, and desertions from those raised were not unusual. Of 150 raised in Bedfordshire early in 1646 and destined for the Newport Pagnell Parliamentary garrison, 80 ran away "before they were clothed and armed".

ELSTOW NEWSAGENTS

for early, reliable delivery
- every day of the week -
and money collected at your door

Member of the N.F.R.N. J & R LANGLEY
Bedford 60754

CRAFTY ELSTOW

Did you know that Elstow has its very own Craft Centre? (Situated behind Elstow Lower School). Courses run parallel to school terms, plus weekends and we also have a flourishing creche.

If you would like our Autumn programme, please send a SAE (size A5) to: Elstow Craft Centre, Elstow, Beds. Telephone 50594.

Sally Freer

LACEMAKING IN ELSTOW

Lace has been made in Elstow for over three hundred years. Probably the best known of Elstow's lacemakers was Ann Harding who was born in 1834 and lived to the ripe age of 89. She was frequently featured in many early picture postcards and was usually photographed lacemaking in the doorway of her cottage which was sited opposite 'Bunyan's' cottage in the High Street.

Elstow had a lace school at the turn of the century, where girls and boys were taught to make lace. The fees were tuppence for girls and fourpence for the boys. It is reported that the boys were not eager pupils! A delightful story is told of one Ernie Cooper, who when goaded by the cane, ran from the school and threw his lace pillow down the well on Elstow Green - the same well from which John Bunyan had drunk.

Three generations of the Cooper family were lacemaking in 1911 and the lacemaking equipment used by them has been handed on and is today used by an Elstow lacemaker and her two sons.

The 'Aragon Lacemakers' are a group of local people whose aims are to encourage a continuing interest in the craft of Lacemaking. Meetings, talks and courses in Lacemaking are held throughout the year and for further information please contact Mrs Sandra King, 22 Lynn Close, Elstow, Bedford.

BEDFORD LACE

Suppliers of Hand Made Lace -
Requisites for the Lacemaker
Bobbins - Pins - Threads - Beads
Pillows & Patterns etc.

4 Newnham Street
BEDFORD
0234.47006

CHERUB
ANTIQUES

Mon - Sat
9.00 am
5.00 pm

BEDFORD JUDO CLUB

Bedford Judo Club was formed in 1951 and is now well established as the premier Judo Club in the Eastern Region, with an excellent reputation. Players of the National Judo Squad are amongst the large membership of the club, which includes some of the top players and coaches.

The club is privileged to meet at the Abbey School, Elstow, at the following times:

Monday, Thursday	-	7 - 10 pm
Saturdays	-	2 - 5 pm

For information telephone Bedford 768601

The club has researched records to establish the type of wrestling which took place in the time of John Bunyan and the result of our findings is that which you see taking place today. The wrestling varied from County to County and this afternoon's programme is an interpretation of the style prevalent in Bedfordshire. Wrestling should not be confused with Judo but the members have entered into this new venture with the enthusiasm and good spirit which prevails generally within the club. We hope you will enjoy the end product.

WARNING

SEALED KNOT BATTLES CAN BE DANGEROUS

Admission is subject to the following:

In no circumstances can the Sealed Knot Ltd, its members, those taking part, or the promoters of this event, accept liability for any personal injury, loss or damage of any kind suffered by any spectator or any other person howsoever caused or arising out of or in connection with this event.

Cover designed by Mr John Nixon - John Bunyan School
Programme produced and printed by John Bunyan School