

WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

John Grantham spoke at the May meeting on the 'Regulated Pasture' the story of the 500 acres of common land given to Chipping Norton by the Earl of Arundel at the end of the 12th century. This land was given for the use of the citizens for the grazing of cattle, sheep and horses, and for the collection of fuel. However, by the time of the enclosures of the 18th century all that remained of the original 500 acres were 124 acres of common land. The rest had been appropriated mysteriously.

Since then more of the common land has been taken for various buildings, and cemetery etc., so that only 60 acres remain today. The current trustees and stinholders are hoping that the present acreage can be increased rather than diminished as has been the sad case in the past.

At the last of this season's meetings Beryl Schumer talked about the Wychwood Forest at the times when it became a Royal Forest in the 12th century and ceased to be one in the 19th century. In the 1100s the Foresters of the de Langley family attempted to control the forest, and satisfy the demands of the local owners who wished to take timber and use the open spaces for agriculture. This competed with the King who needed the timber for his many building projects (including the navy) and his need for a game reserve for hunting.

Seven centuries later, the demand for more agricultural land meant the clearance of nearly 2000 acres of forest and the creation of eight new farms, and the 2nd Lord Churchill lost his office as Lord Ranger but held on to 1700 acres in lieu.

For the current and future plans for the forest read "Discovering Wychwood" by Charles Keighley and/or contact the The Wychwood Project on 01865 810266.

This society will be holding a guided walk through the forest on 6th October 2001 starting at Waterman's Lodge at 11 am.

Before then our next season of talks will have begun when John Rawlins will talk at Milton on the 20th September on "From Chipping Norton to the Wychwoods in the 1930s" (a different talk from that previously advertised).

J.R.