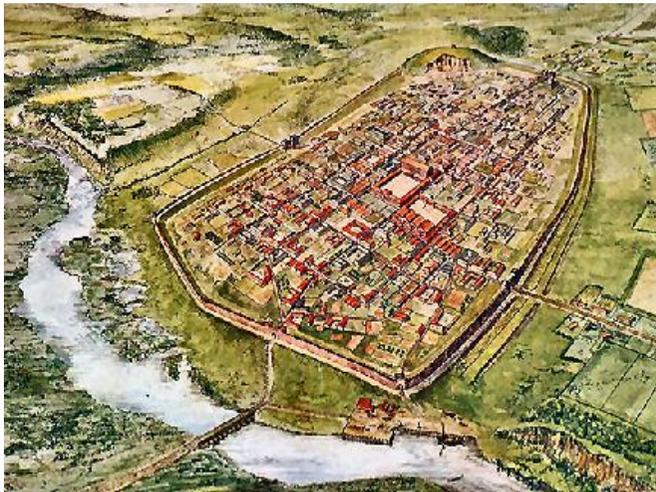




The Roman Army in Exeter



At the last meeting, John Smith, a living history archaeologist, taught us all about the Roman history of Exeter and what life as a Roman soldier would have been like.

The Roman army reached Exeter around AD 50-55 during the conquest of south western Britain. As well as constructing a fort on a spur overlooking the River Exe, remains have been found of a

Roman edifice at St Loyes, to the south of Heavitree. John agrees with John Allen (see article in Newsletter no.5), who thinks that there would have been more than one road going into Exeter, and that Roman soldiers almost certainly would have marched through Heavitree. In fact, we have the name of one such soldier, Lucius Julius Hipponicus, which was found on a broken cup in Exeter.

Most Romans would have joined the army because it was well paid. An eighteen year old legionary at the end of his training could earn the equivalent of £18,000 a year, although, just like today, a large percentage would be deducted (in this case for equipment, pension, burial fund, mess and spending money). Ten thousand men were recruited a year, but only the best four hundred were retained. Legionaries would have carried out their training in Exeter, completing thirty mile marches, just like the marines do today.

The Romans came to Exeter because it was a rich, prosperous city with ample natural resources. They came to 'Romanise' the population, that is, not just to conquer the country, but because they believed they would be improving the lives of the people. Under the command of Vespasium troops moved rapidly down to Exeter - within eight

years they had a settlement housing four thousand legionaries and eight hundred cavalry. Vespasium opened up the South Coast so that ships could bring supplies to the troops. When the Romans arrived in Heavitree they would have found small farms, livestock and arable crops; the people would have been living in roundhouses: one



room wood and thatch dwellings that took five days to build. The Romans changed the shape of these houses to rectangular, with rooms, separate bathrooms, window glass, water pipes and heating.

John showed us a range of Roman clothing, and contrasted the real artifacts with the often inaccurate Hollywood depictions of Roman soldiers and gladiators. It is likely that most Roman soldiers wore chain mail, which was quick to put on, allowed one to ride a horse and did not have

to be individually tailored. If buried in the ground only the bronze clips would have survived, so any trace of mail in Exeter has not been found; we have yet to find a legionary scrap yard. John also presented different types of helmet - the Roman ones left the face open to enable team work and communication with the locals, contrasted with Viking style helmets which would have completely obscured the face.

Although there is no evidence of the Romans ever fighting anyone in Devon, you would still have seen columns walking through Heavitree every day for practice. From April to September the men would have worn hob-nailed boots, the sound of them on the gravel road in combination with the jingling of the men's metal aprons would have made an intimidating sound as they marched. A legionary would have had a dagger, a fighting spear, a throwing spear, an expertly crafted sword and a shield. Even in Heavitree the men would have used the spears for hunting: there were wolves here until the 1200s, as well as boar and deer.

Exeter (and Heavitree) would have changed dramatically under the Roman occupation. In addition to the new roads, built of chalk cement and gravel, spices like black pepper, dill and coriander would have arrived in Exeter for the first time. Cotton and silk from China, glass from Germany and red pottery have been found all over Devon. The bathhouse (located three feet under today's Cathedral Green) was a splendid three storey stone, cement, mosaic edifice, with a hot-room reaching temperatures of 30 degrees, where one could have one's skin scraped clean! Hundreds could have been accommodated at one time, and the baths were supplied by an aqueduct pumping water from a nearby spring.

By around AD 70, the Legion abandoned Exeter for South Wales, leaving a Roman administered town called Isca Dumnoniorum. It is worth having a look at some of the archaeological finds at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter if you would like to find out more about the Romans in Exeter. SK

Heavitree Boundary Walk

Six members completed the Beating the Bounds walk this year. They walked 14.3 miles, visiting nine stones. It took them just six hours, with three short breaks, and was enjoyed by all.

Some History Behind the HLHS Boundary Walk

In 1975, the Heavitree Community Association (HCA), then only four years old, decided to reinstitute the practice of beating the boundary of Heavitree.

It was more probably that of Heavitree Parish rather than the Urban District, which has disappeared over the years. Heavitree itself was absorbed into Exeter in 1912-13. (Note the various inscriptions referring to Colonel Northcott).

David Morrish, the then Chairman of HCA had researched documents relating to the beating of bounds in 1897. This account referred to several walkers (men only!) who accompanied a few horse riders following the line of boundary stones then prevalent in the vicinity. A map of the late 1890s showed the location of about 35 of these stones, but as the boundary deviated from the 'sensible' route, the beaters kept to a more feasible path. For example, the boundary went from the top of Wreford's Lane down to the River Exe, went upriver for 50 yards then back uphill towards Stoke Hill Farm!

The 1975 route, the first of the present series, started from Livery Dole with well over 20 taking part. This number included some 4-year-olds from the local playgroup, at least one of whom finished the whole 16 miles! Other youngsters walked in relays so that more children took part both in walking and in offering themselves to be beaten over a boundary stone to ensure they didn't forget where Heavitree's boundary was. The first walk took in Ellen Tinkham School for a mid-morning break, the by-pass and Woodwater Lane to Digby Arch. The then route went to Clyst bridge and along Old Rydon Lane to King George V Playing Fields, took in the detached area of Bromham's Farm on the west bank of the Exe and back to Livery Dole. The party then went to Evensong at the parish church where the rector introduced us to the congregation.

I mentioned at the previous HLHS meeting that some deviation of one kind or another had been made on each subsequent boundary-beating. I can't remember every alteration, but route changes have been made for a number of reasons: a) building of housing estates, especially in the Newcourt area, b) locating paths closer to the 1897 boundary (e.g. on the edge of Pinhoe), c) locating suitable stops for elevenses, lunch and afternoon breaks, and d) avoiding fast-moving traffic on the by-pass.

One line of the old boundary led from Stoke Hill Road at Rixlade to Pinbrook Mews at

the city end of Harrington Lane. This is still the ecclesiastical boundary and can be traced following the hedge-line south-eastwards. Unfortunately, a small estate of bungalows at the lower end prevents us from walking the precise route; a pity, as it by-passes Mile Lane and Beacon Heath, less salubrious parts of the entire present-day route.

I have no statistics for the 1975 route except that it was slightly longer than any subsequent route. The 1978 walk took 7½ hrs whilst most recent walks have been slightly less as one gets to know much of the route and fitness reigns!

Boundary-beating took place every three years up to 2011* then, to commemorate the annexation of Heavitree in 1913, the bounds were beaten again and once again this year, 2015. It's more than likely that the next will be also be in two years' time as we are all getting older and there seems to be no under-30s to take on the tradition (as yet).

A booklet on beating Heavitree's boundary is still available, although no boundary stones have been unearthed since 2005, when one of our members noticed a dressed stone sticking out of a pile of rubble while the widening of the A30 near Gypsy Hill was taking place. The previous walk had found the stone north of Livery Dole, which was forming part of the kerb where the pedestrian crossing is now. On the opposite side of the road to this, there was a stone with the same design as that in Magdalen Road built into the wall of the YWCA, but I noticed that during the holidays of whichever year that was, the wall had been redesigned and the stone moved away. What a pity that some developers have no sense of history!

* In 1990, I waited at Livery Dole until well after 9.00 but no-one turned up, so I took myself off to Dartmoor by bus for a walk! I wasn't stropky just somewhat disappointed but I had a great time anyway. Terry Bound

A Scrap of Exeter History

I recently needed to have a window replaced in my house on Regent Square, Heavitree. I was thrilled when the builders discovered a piece of newspaper dating from August 27th, 1909, stuffed into the side of the old window. It is just a tattered scrap of The Devon and Exeter Gazette, but even that single page reveals some interesting details about the time. One side is taken up by small ads, and the other with exam results and an obituary. It was interesting to see what Heavitree residents would have been reading about in 1909.

I've re-typed a few of the small-ads for your enjoyment:

HOME-KNITTED HOSIERY - Gents' socks 1s6d; Gents' Stockings, 3s; Ladies' Stockings 1s9d and 2s. Samples free. Wools knitted. Refooting a speciality - Apply Mrs Leach, Hosiery Knitter, Morchard Bishop.

VOLLYMAR WASHING MACHINES - Price £3 5s each; Wringers extra. Henry Norrington and Son Ltd. Bonhay, Exeter.



DAVEY & SONS have about 100 SECOND-HAND FREE-WHEEL CYCLES some with two and three speed gears all to be sold cheap for cash or easy purchase at prices from 20s to £7.50. Several ladies' and gents' smart cycles about £4 each. Let them know your requirements and they will try to meet them...156 Cowick Street and 73 Union Street, Exeter

PATENT (?) APPARATUS for EARTH CLOSET for SALE, or with License - Fore Street, Exeter

SECOND HAND BINDERS for SALE, in good condition, cheap - J Glass, Okehampton

HIVES of BEES for SALE - G Blanchford, Tedburn St Mary

JOHN COLLINS, Retail Market, Leicester, will return you Better Prices for your Rabbits and Poultry than any other

Salesman in England. Hampers sent out to any station. Cash daily. Correspondence invited. Look out for weekly prices.

FARM (cheap) of 50-100 acres required to PURCHASE, with House and Buildings. Price £800-£1500 - Full particulars to F., care of Rippon, Bowell and Whittaker, Exeter

LEFT-OFF CLOTHES (Ladies' and Gents') wanted for export. Ladies wanted by appointment. P.O. sent country wide. Mrs Cann, 1 James Street, South St, Exeter

PENNY BAZAAR, goodwill fixtures, £40. Stock optional. Owner returning to South Africa. 146 Fore Street, Exeter

SOUND TOBACCONIST's & FANCY BUSINESS for SALE main street, good town, Somerset, good dwelling-house; doing £850 per annum. Price, fixtures and stock, about £400 - Apply, H.J. Reddrop, Richmond-road, Taunton. SK

Update on HLHS Display Material

We are continuing to meet as a small working party, and have been selecting old photos of Heavitree to compare to modern day images on our display boards. It has not been straightforward as we need high quality images to produce displays that look appealing, but we are making steady progress.

Devonia Pottery

Does anyone have any information about the Devonia Pottery company? There is a building at the bottom of Birchy Barton Hill with a Devonia Pottery sign on it, that looks to be from around the 1920s, but we can't find any information about it.

Upcoming History Society Events

(held in the St Michael's and All Angels Church, Rifford Room, 7.30pm)

Wednesday 9th September 2015 – AGM

Non History Society Events

31st August 2015, 12-5pm - Heavitree Community Association are holding their 'Party in the Park' event at Heavitree Pleasure Ground.

5th September 2015, 2pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - History of Exeter Fire Brigade

11th September 2015 - Exeter History Society - Great Duryard Reborn

16th September 2015, 2pm - Exeter Civic Society - Visit to Larkbeare House

4th October 2014, 2pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - The McGahey Dynasty

8th October 2015 - Exeter History Society - History Behind Force Estate Agents in Exeter

24th October 2015, 7pm - Todd Gray will be talking at St Michael's School - subject TBC

8th November 2015, 2pm - Exeter History Society - Tour of WWII Graves

If you know of any events that you think members might appreciate, please contact me and I will include them in this section

This Newsletter was published by the Heavitree Local History Society

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