

WHILTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

“BOROUGH HILL”

On 17th March the speaker was David Adams, who talked about ‘The History of Borough Hill’ in Daventry. The hill has a long and fascinating story, with prehistoric ramparts, which are clearly visible in many parts.

The many signs of human occupation there include Neolithic tools, and the remains of a large Roman villa, excavated in the 19th century and now under the golf course. We saw a picture of the patterned mosaic floor discovered there. In later times there are signs of the presence of both Saxons and Vikings. Does the discovery of Saxon arrowheads and Viking axes suggest a conflict there? As yet we do not know.

As Daventry developed in medieval times, the main settlement moved down to the present site, but there were still events at Borough Hill, including the year 1645, when Charles I’s troops camped there before the Battle of Naseby.

In the 18th and 19th centuries the long flat top of the hill was used for various communal activities and fetes. There was a greasy pole to climb and competitions of all sorts including donkey races and walking races for men aged over 45!

By 1925 the hill gained a new fame as the site from which the BBC broadcast first locally and then to the Empire and the world. David had worked there and had many anecdotes to share. The great masts were a Northamptonshire landmark and we heard how they were finally dismantled. The work-force dwindled with the coming of computers until the broadcasting centre finally moved to Wolverton and the station at Daventry closed.