



Chaddesden Historical Group

www.chaddesdenhistorygroup.co.uk/newsletters

Newsletter 80

June 2024

Committee Changes at the AGM

John Crosby was awarded our Honorary Presidency at the Annual General Meeting on Thursday 4th April. John had been Chair of the group for 9 years, longer than anyone else. He was a founder member of the group, taking up the position of Vice Chair and Assistant Treasurer at the inaugural meeting which was held in Chaddesden Library in 2006.

Unfortunately two years later, in 2008, Larry the Treasurer passed away and John then stepped in as Treasurer. He resigned from this post in 2011 when Deryck Morley became our Treasurer. He still held his post as Vice Chair and became Assistant to Deryck.

John has always maintained his friendly approach in getting things done. He has only missed one meeting in that time and that was for a special Golden Wedding holiday with Linda in 2019.

Linda Crosby has been Secretary since 2006. She had been appealing for someone to help for some time and that is when Carol Shepherd offered her services as Secretary to the group.

Linda was also Visits Co-ordinator for the group since 2006. She retired from this role in December 2023 after 18 years service having done over 100 visits both near and far. The last one was to Fairways Garden Centre for a Cream Tea at Christmas. Linda then organised a cooked Christmas Lunch for the members at their December meeting. Linda has also been busy booking our monthly speakers for the last 15 years and is continuing to do so. We are now booked until April 2025.



The committee, from left, Marjorie Holmes, Ruth Jackson, Carol Shepherd, John Crosby, Linda Crosby, Adrian Lawrence and Michael Vickers. Robert Atkins on the right had a cold and sat apart from everyone else as a precaution. Pam Helm sent apologies for absence.

The annual subscription remains at £10 for 2024-25 but the admission charge to meetings was reduced to its pre-2022 value of £3 for members and £4 for visitors as the group has healthy finances.

We are now looking forward to another successful year.

?a ?r ?p ?

If you have read Peter Cholerton's excellent description of Chaddesden Sidings (<https://www.chaddesdenhistorygroup.co.uk/transport/chad-sdgs-tracks-thro-time.pdf>) you may have been mystified by two alphanumeric sequences that appear to refer to fields - 18a 0r 15p and 19a 3r 19p. An Internet search will find more similar sequences but not much in the way of an explanation. What do they mean? Are they some sort of referencing system for land?

Actually they are areas in obsolete units – acres, roods and perches. Most people will have heard of acres but a perch is something a bird sits on, unless you are an angler, in which case it is a fish and roods are completely meaningless unless you know they are found in churches.

If you attended primary school over 50 years ago, you were probably taught about areas measured in square inches, square feet and square yards. If your school had a piece of high-tech measuring equipment – a cloth tape – you might have measured the floor of your classroom, the corridor outside and the assembly hall, and then spent a long time converting feet and inches from the tape into a floor area in square yards. For larger areas the teacher might have said that the school playing field was so many acres with an acre being 4840 square yards but you accepted the teacher's word for that as the school did not have a tape measure long enough. The only other measure of area you might have come across was square miles in geography text books. Do you know how many acres there are in a square mile* ?

One unit the teacher probably did not mention was the rod, also known as pole or perch. This is an ancient unit of length, dating back to Anglo-Saxon times, possibly originally the length of long piece of wood used for marking out fields and later standardised at $5\frac{1}{2}$ yards. A square with sides one rod/pole/perch long is also known as a perch. To save you the arithmetic, that is $30\frac{1}{4}$ square yards. Unless you were good at fractional division, you can see why your teacher did not mention the perch or try to explain that it is both a measure of length and area.

The measuring rod/pole/perch had an important use in measuring fields before the introduction of the surveyor's chain. An area 4 rods wide and 40 rods long is an acre. Some say that an acre was the area that could be ploughed in a day by a man with a horse-drawn plough. That may have been so in the sandy soil of some coastal districts but a ploughman dealing with Chaddesden's heavy clay might disagree.

If you visit churches you may be aware of “rood” as an alternative name for the Christian cross. In terms of area, a rood is 40 perches or $\frac{1}{4}$ acre. There might once have been good reason for having another unit of measure but that reason has been forgotten. We can thank the Ordnance Survey for the demise of the rood and perch. Their maps of 1:2500 and larger scale have always given areas in acres only to three places of decimals in which 19a 3r 19p becomes $19 + \frac{3}{4} + \frac{19}{160} = 19.869$ acres and 18a 0r 15p is 18.094 acres.

The Metric System

If you have followed all the above, you will have no trouble with metric areas for which the basic unit is the square metre. As we are dealing with areas, the units go up in hundreds rather than tens. 100 square metres which might be represented by a square with 10 metre sides is an are but that unit is rarely used. More useful is the hectare which is 100 ares as indicated by the prefix “hect”. Finally, 100 hectares, abbreviated to 100ha, is a square kilometre. That's all there is to it.

For conversion purposes, 1 acre is 4047 square metres or 0.4047ha and 1 hectare is 2.471 acres. The two fields 19a 3r 19p and 18a 0r 15p would be 8.041ha and 7.322ha respectively.

A few examples of areas for you to visualise: a typical house occupies an area of around $1\frac{1}{2}$ perches (35-40 square metres), a football pitch sized according to FA guidelines is 1.6 acres (0.65ha), Chaddesden Park is about 60 acres (25 ha) and Nottingham Road Cemetery is 72 acres (29 ha).

Peter Barnes

* 640 acres = 1 square mile