

Pope Adrian story clarified thanks to the Revd Dr Anders Bergquist at our February meeting

by Joy Mann

Wasn't it wonderful to get a scholarly explanation of our own very special, Pope Adrian IV? Not only was he the only English Pope in history to date but also – he was local to us. The Revd Dr Bergquist clarified the difference between documented history and locally received knowledge. 900 years ago, very little was documented but local received knowledge has put Pope Adrian's birthplace firmly at Breakspear Farm in Bedmond, Breakspear being his family name – he was Nicholas Breakspear.

I was delighted when Dr Bergquist eliminated the numerous apocryphal stories that embellish this so-called history because they are confusing and easily discredited. His talk kept to known facts, which, as Nicholas' career progressed towards papal eminence, were recorded by contemporary commentators with reference to known personalities.

English chroniclers have different stories to



Roadside plaque in High Street, Bedmond, commemorating birthplace of Nicholas Breakspear. Photo: Gwendolyn Ball

explain why St Albans Abbey turned Nicholas down when he wanted to join, but perhaps he never asked to join at all. It could well have been awkward, as his father had important responsibilities at the Abbey; and though it might not be that unusual for a mediaeval priest to father a son, it would certainly be unusual to have them both in the same community! At any rate, Nicholas left his home country for France, and without hard feelings: he was generous to the Abbey when he became Pope.

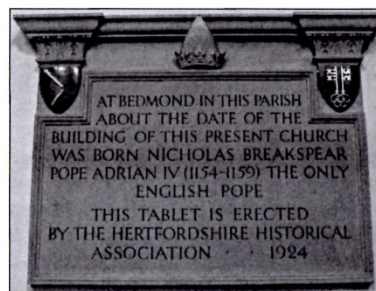
It is evidenced that in 1137 Nicholas was Prior of the Augustinian Canons in Avignon and that the monks were not happy with him. He reprimanded them for being slack and they felt he was too strict.

From Avignon, Nicholas travelled to Rome where his obvious aptitude became clear: important people, including the Pope, put him forward for promotion. Dr Bergquist used the term "fast-tracked" for his meteoric rise through the ranks. He was appointed Cardinal Bishop of Albano in 1145 where he excelled.

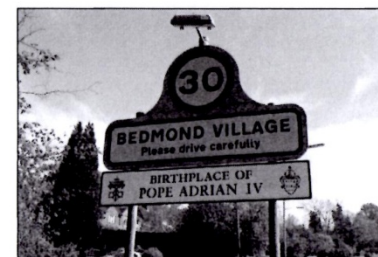
At that time, Christianity was relatively new in Scandinavia, and needed organising. The Pope probably also wanted to encourage a better income stream from the north – "Peter's Pence". He decided that the disciplined and efficient Nicholas was the man to organise the Norwegian and Swedish church. He promoted Nicholas to Papal Legate, which gave him papal power and he travelled north. His visit came as bit of a surprise – one of the Norwegian kings wasn't there to welcome him, as he was away on a

Viking plundering expedition. But Nicholas convened a successful meeting in Norway, to create a new archbishopric for Norway. The Pope had sent him to Scandinavia armed with two palliums (a pallium was a highly significant woollen vestment that a Pope alone would confer on an archbishop). One of these was given to the new archbishop of Norway. Nicholas was smart, and also realised that, for a population steeped in traditional Scandinavian practices, some church discipline would have to be adapted to suit circumstances. Nicholas went on to Sweden, where he held the first recorded major assembly in Swedish history, but it was not altogether a success. The Swedes and Goths were so belligerent that Nicholas had to pass an edict prohibiting any weapons in church, and they couldn't agree on a new archbishop. Almost immediately after Nicholas' return to Rome in 1154, the old Pope died. Nicholas was made Pope by acclamation, rather than election – he was the last person to be acclaimed in this way. Dr Bergquist suggested he was in the right place at the right time, returning from a triumphal tour of Scandinavia, a fresh face on the scene who had missed all the backstabbing.

We heard how Nicholas had four years as Pope and died in 1159. He had to wrest control of the City of Rome from what Dr



Plaque in St Lawrence Church. Photo: Gwendolyn Ball



Road sign, 2017, recognising Bedmond as the birthplace of Nicholas Breakspear. Photo: Joy Mann

Bergquist called an "ultra-democratic population".

His reign was not an easy one. He had to contend with great rivalry between the position of Pope and Holy Roman Emperor. There was a tense lead-up to his coronation of Barbarossa as Holy Roman Emperor. When they first met, Barbarossa refused to hold the stirrup for the mounted Pope. Deadlock. They patched things up enough for the coronation to go ahead, but deep tensions continued.

Pope Adrian found that his task as Pope was multifaceted and onerous. He was head of the church and supreme court, often finding against personages of importance. He is often thought to have given Henry II legal cover for the invasion of Ireland, in his Papal Bull *Laudabiliter*, but we don't have this document in its original form, and he may not have given the English kings as much freedom as they later claimed. He also wrote a famous reply to the Archbishop of Salzburg, defending the rights of serfs or slaves to be married, even if their lords and masters hadn't given permission.

Pope Adrian died in 1159 and is buried in St Peters. He never returned to this country, but he did shower St Albans with privileges. In the book, "The English Pope" (1154-59)** there is a sketchy line-drawing of him. We

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Ponds, Springs and Streams

by Trevor Baker

When we moved to Abbots Langley in 1988 I was given a list of projects. The first and most urgent task was to extend the house in order to accommodate our growing family, but in parallel with that was a plan to landscape the garden.

We wanted a pond, so I dug a large hole next to the patio and in doing so I broke into thick clay riddled with large flints. These flints were so numerous that I was able to use them as material for a brick and flint retaining wall half way down the garden in order to create a terrace on the sloping ground. During the excavation for the footings of my wall I uncovered a bed of chalk.

The bottom of our garden was a little wild, and we discovered that in the winter a spring would appear half way down the hill, oozing out of the chalk. Further down the garden were the remnants of a stream in what is now a dry valley between the properties in Abbots Road and Kindersley Way. Water has never flowed during my tenure, but one of my neighbours was born in the house she lived in and recalled playing in the boggy stream during her childhood.

On 29th October 2012 I attended one of the History Society's talks at the Manor House delivered by the geologist and historian John Catt. His illustrated talk was entitled "Springs, Wells and Why We Are Here." It was a revelation. I learned that the upper cretaceous chalk in my garden comprised the skeletons of organisms such as corals, brachiopods and echinoderms that were laid down in a prehistoric greenhouse world at a depth of between 200 and 600 metres. The flints that now form my retaining wall originated from burrows that were excavated

in the chalk by sea creatures that scurried about and made their homes in the sea bed. These abandoned burrows then filled with silica from decaying plants and organisms which over the millennia hardened into stone. As the sea retreated, rivers and glaciers deposited sediment which became compressed into clay. Over more millennia the upper layers of chalk dissolved and left behind the flints that became enveloped by the overlying clay.

When I look at the tithe map and accompanying tithe award schedule for Abbots Langley I see the names of springs, ponds and wells, some of which are familiar, but no longer show evidence of any water. Names like Mainspring; Pond Field; Little Spring; Upper Spring; Lower Spring; Cats Dell Spring; Well Farm Lane; Long Spring; Well Meadow; Little Water Field. This is just a sample; there are dozens more. The term spring should be treated with caution as the word can mean a small wood or copse. However, most of the field references on the tithe map are more likely to refer to water rather than timber, particularly the field named Spring Wood.

You may be familiar with the Holy Well at Breakspear Farm (there is an article about this in Journal 33) and you may have been fortunate to visit the well on the History Society's summer outing a few years ago. This spring is hidden away in a small copse on private ground and feeds a tiny stream that quickly disappears into the surrounding fields.

You can search the History Society's photo archive for ponds. There are some magnificent images of the Bedmond Pond



Langley House and pond, c1910. Photo: Parish Archive, David Spain Collection

behind the White Hart in 1908; the Langley House pond between 1905 and 1920 which has been filled with soil and incorporated into the gardens for Breakspear Court on the corner of The Crescent and The High Street; and finally, the Kitters Green ponds straddling the roadway leading to the Royal Oak as photographed in 1910.

There were many large pockets of water lying on or under the chalk and clay subsoil around the villages of Bedmond and Abbots Langley. The farming communities depended upon these ponds and shallow wells to serve their homes and their livestock. As John Catt explained in his talk, the easy access to this resource is the reason we are here. But it could so easily have been the reason for our decimation. Between 1878 and 1883 Abbots Langley had the highest child mortality in the Watford Sanitary District from typhoid and diphtheria. New drains were laid along the main thoroughfares serving many of the houses but the deaths continued. Polluted wells were thought to be the cause.

In 1886 an agreement was reached to sink an artesian well at Hunton Bridge and to pump water up the hill to a water tower in Love Lane opposite Cecil Lodge. This great engineering project saved the community. Today, the water tank has been replaced by a reservoir and water continues to be supplied

from the pumping station by the canal in Hunton Bridge. The water is sourced from the deep chalk aquifer of the London Basin and not the shallow upper layer that feeds the spring at the bottom of my garden.

The ponds, springs and streams that once served Abbots Langley have largely disappeared. Only the names survive, and a trickle of water here and there. ■

Trevor Baker

Pope Adrian

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have no actual pictures of him although later artists did oblige. BUT we do have a pen-portrait from an English bishop who stayed with him, and shows us a tough character, ruthless but affable and friendly – a man isolated in his position. And we thank Dr Bergquist for clarifying this story for us. ■

Joy Mann

Joy is very grateful to Dr Bergquist for casting his expert eye over this article and editing appropriately.

* The Revd Dr Anders Bergquist was a former curate at St Lawrence Church, Abbots Langley and is currently vicar at St John's Wood Church, London.

** "Adrian IV The English Pope (1154–1159)" by Brenda Bolton and Anne J Duggan (ISBN 0754607089).

<p>Lettuces and Letters</p> <p>Memories of the origins of the first Hillside Greengrocer's Shop and Post Office in the 1950s.</p> <p>Written and edited by Arleene Nettles Riley</p> <p>Abbots Langley Local History Society</p>	<p>Lettuces and Letters</p> <p>Memories of the origins of the first Hillside Greengrocer's Shop and Post Office in the 1950s.</p> <p>Published Dec. 2013. £3 at society events. See www.allhs.org.uk</p>
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