

# *History of Compton Chamberlayne*

*Article in Valley News*



## **SECRETS OF SHRINKING VILLAGE UNCOVERED**

*By Jackie Taylor, Press Officer, Dinton Historical Society*

The history of Compton Chamberlayne attracted about 70 members and visitors to Dinton Historical Society's April lecture in Dinton Village Hall.

Newly appointed Chairman Mark Jacobs introduced the speaker, Dr Alex Craven, assistant editor of Victoria County History for Wiltshire.

Several residents of Compton Chamberlayne attended and a warm welcome was extended to them by the chairman.

Dr Craven said not much archaeological evidence of Stone Age settlement had been found in Compton Chamberlayne, which, according to the Domesday Book of 1066, was formerly part of the Glastonbury Abbey Estate. He traced the historical development of Compton as the village passed down from one landowner to another through the ages, illustrating his talk with a series of topographical, geological and land-use maps.

From 1505 onwards, when George Penruddocke bought the estate, his family owned the village until 1930, when the last descendant of the family sold up and the school closed.

Dr Craven explained that the shape of the village had changed markedly between 1776 and 1826 and that Compton House was built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, after which, many of the smaller cottages disappeared.

Extensive work was completed on the big house in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to establish a mezzanine level in the form of a wooden platform. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Capability Brown was called on to landscape the grounds and grand Georgian pleasure gardens with a lake were established.

As a result of his fieldwork in parts of the village, looking at the interior and exteriors of the buildings, Dr Craven had come to the conclusion not much had changed over the years, with many original features still present in the houses he had visited.

A more recent development, Dr Craven said, was that some of the archaeological evidence of settlement could be present at Naishes Farm to the south-east of the village. But, after examination of the evidence, the theory was disproved. The findings were, in fact, the remains of the military camp used by the ANZAC soldiers during the First World War.

As is typical in small villages, a marked decline in the population of Compton Chamberlayne was recorded from 352 in 1852 at its height, to only 92 in 2011.

Mark Jacobs thanked Dr Craven and the evening concluded with refreshments.

*(Valley News – 4 June, 2011)*