Mike started with a medieval boot camp with explanations of terms used. 'Medieval' meant the period from 900 to 1400 AD when the king owned all the land and lords were given certain 'manors' or 'demesnes' to rule and manage. Tenants did all the work on the lord's behalf according to custom. The main sources referred to were the 1060 charter of King Edward the Confessor, the 1086 Domesday Book, the 1315 Extent, and the 1840 tithe map. Mike had established that only 800 acres of the 11,000 available were cultivated, producing 14 cartloads of wheat a year for the abbot at Westminster. We puzzled over the question of how many pigs and sheep there were, how much woodland there was and what control the lord exercised over fishing, catching rabbits and whether deer played a part in the economy. Eventually climate change, the Little Ice Age, bad harvests and famine brought about the end of the manorial system and the Black Death caused so many to die there was a shortage of labour to work the fields and the peasants started migrating to the growing towns for an easier life.

Thank you, Mike for a stimulating and beautifully illustrated presentation. You showed us how exciting historical detective work can be and demonstrated what a wealth of information can be mined from maps. The next project for the Society would be to look at Wheathampstead's manorial court records. There's a fine sequence going back to the twelfth century! Any volunteers? Who is good at medieval Latin?

N.B. Victor White's book '*Wheathampstead Manor: Account Roll, 1405-1406'* is available in Wheathampstead Library and recommended further reading. Victor has translated the accounts for the manor at various times during the reign of Henry IV.