

STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Check your local knowledge! Where is this? Photo by J Hunt.

NEWSLETTER

January 2008

Registered Charity No. 500586

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AND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Charity No. 500586

JANUARY 2008
www.sahs.uk.net

NEWSLETTER
email:sahs@sahs.uk.net

Committee Members for 2007-2008

At the AGM on the 12th Oct 2007 the following Officers and Committee Members were Proposed and Elected.

Officers	Dr. John Hunt	President	01543 423549
	Dr. John Cole	Vice President	
	Mrs F E Fox	Vice President	
	James Debney	General Secretary	0121 3503497
	Keith Billington	Treasurer	01543 278989
	Dr. Nigel Tringham	Transactions' Editor	01785 242820
Secretaries	Betty Fox	Membership	01922 452230
	Jenny Wilson	Publicity	01827 67619
	Brian Bull	Meetings	01543 264278
	Paul Norris*	Newsletter	01543 472400
Members	Diane Wilkes, Norman Nicol, Peter Evans, Alan Moore		
Co-opted	Simon Walton, Roland Watson, Steven Dean, Bronwen Ross		
*Note:	Paul Norris "Volunteered" at a later meeting!		

Editorial

I hope that you find this Newsletter interesting to read. The worst part of the job is to get Officers and Members to give a little time to write something two or three times a year for this Newsletter. It would be nice if Members would write about something that they have experienced in the last year or so or about your area of special knowledge that might be of interest to our members. Please get writing! Just a few lines will do. Drop me an email at pm.norris@virgin.net or see me at a Meeting. Also talk to Brian Bull about it. If we can get enough short items, there may even be enough to have a Members Evening!

The Lecture Programme for 2008

The Lectures take place at St Mary's Centre, Market Street, Lichfield. The Doors are opened at 7.30pm and the Meetings start promptly at 8.00pm. Refreshments are available before the Lecture.

The Lecture Programme for the rest of the session is as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 8 th February 2008 | Dr Henry Chapman who will talk about "Where Rivers Meet"
His project is the Neolithic and Bronze Age phases of the landscape. |
| 22 nd February 2008 | Professor Malcolm Wanklyn who will talk about "Bridgenorth and the river trade 1600-1760". |
| 7 th March 2008 | Shelagh Lewis who will talk about "The Berth at Baschurch", an enigmatic hillfort and its context in the Iron Age of Shropshire. |
| 14 th March 2008 | Dr. Pam Sambrook who will talk about "Servants in Staffordshire in the 19 th Century". |
| 4 th April 2008 | A Speaker from the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Trust whom will speak on "The History of the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal and the work of the Trust". |

Brian Bull

Subscriptions

There are still some outstanding subscriptions. If the heading is "highlighted" I am afraid this applies to you! Please send £16.50 for single membership, £23 for family membership, £11 for student or unwaged to Mrs. F.E. Fox, 6, Lawson Close, Aldridge, Walsall, WS9 0RX or pay at a Lecture Meeting.

Membership

We have 2 new single members and 1 family members so far this year. This brings our paid membership to 116.

At present 15 memberships have not been renewed.

The Society is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mr. & Mrs. M. Gair of Kings Bromley,
Mr. Mark Kincey, Birmingham Archaeology,
Ms. Ruth French of Lichfield.

Committee Meeting Report

Your Committee has met three times since the last Newsletter. The most recent Meeting for which the Minutes are available took place on 13th November 2007, John Hunt in the Chair and five Members. There were six Apologies. Under Matters Arising some of the items raised were: John Hunt recorded the gratitude of the society to Norman Nicoll for organizing the recent fiftieth anniversary dinner, saying it had been a splendid occasion. Betty Fox reported that Wall villagers had been asked by English Heritage to 'man' the

museum part-time (see below). Keith Billington noted that sixteen people had attended the fiftieth anniversary dinner for the society. Paul Norris has volunteered to edit the newsletter; James Debney will print as previously.

A meeting had been held to consider the forthcoming interim report for the Shenstone project. Keith Billington reported on the Financial position of the Society. There was a report from James about digitising the Proceedings (see below). There was a discussion about the storage of the Society's Equipment and about future visits. Four items were raised under AOB and the meeting closed at 915pm.

If any Member would like further information please contact the General Secretary at a Meeting or contact him by phone or email (preferred).

Future Visits

Peter Evans is in the process of organising the following visit for later in the year.

The Salt Museum in Northwich, Cheshire is the only Museum in the British Isles dedicated to salt, its extraction and purification. This has resulted in a product that today is almost universally available and relatively cheap. It has been said that the availability of salt to preserve food was the foundation of civilisation. It eliminated the dependence on seasonal availability of food and allowed it to travel over long distances. Because of its relative difficulty in obtaining it, salt was also a highly valued trade item. Indeed the mineral followed the pull of economics along the Salt Roads, some of which were established as early as the Bronze Age. Well into the Twentieth Century salt was one of the most important minerals to the national economy.

It is hoped to organise a day trip to Northwich later this year, to explore this fascinating product in its native area. The Iron Age Cornovii were known to trade their salt from the area. The origin of the 'wich' towns in Cheshire can be traced to Roman times. As well as a preservative and condiment, salt has been used in the production of Cheshire Cheese and for Tanning. Ever since Sir Humphrey Davy first separated salt into its constituent parts of Sodium and Chlorine in 1807 it has been the basis of many industries now principally along the Mersey. Today it is still used in many industries like food and also on the roads.

Details of the day will be sent to all members when an Itinerary has been agreed and finalised with Tom Hughes at the Museum.

Can you Help?

Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Trust

Members will see from the programme that we are to have a talk on this topic on April 4th this year. We have been approached by the Trust for some help in researching historical facts about various features, some of them "lost" to all intents and purposes, that would have been seen alongside the canal in its heyday.

The intent is to publish a Walker's Guide that follows the restoration route. Obviously it will be many years before boats can use the restored canal but there is every reason to

prepare the route for walkers. If any one is interested in helping the Trust in this way they might like to contact Mike Battisson — email mikebattisson@hotmail.com

Further information will no doubt be forthcoming on the evening of the talk.

ITV Central

ITV Central Region has contacted us. They are looking for people with old cine film taken any time between the 1920s and 1970s who would be prepared to lend it and possibly be interviewed about the contents. It can be either professional or amateur but the subject matter should be suitable for a programme entitled "The way we were". If you would like to take part please contact Rowena Lyon on 0844 881 4176.

The Roman Site at Wall

Members may know that there is no curator on site at present but English Heritage and the National Trust are organising a series of meetings in the Village Hall at Wall to see what can be done about this sad state of affairs. The first meetings are on Tuesday January 22nd at 2pm and 7pm and are in the form of "Drop-in" sessions where you can get an application form and find out about the stewardship idea in general. On Wednesday February 6th at 7pm there will be a talk IN THE MUSEUM on the history and archaeology of the site. This is not for the general public but for those wishing to volunteer. On Tuesday, February 19th at 7pm there will be an induction session covering various aspects of the work needed to provide a service on the site.

Publications

The new edition of The Birmingham Historian has arrived and will be available for members to borrow from January 18th 2008.

A brochure has arrived offering an historical and archaeological tour of Megalithic Ireland — it will be on the table at the next meeting.

Members will be interested to hear that the Transactions are now being digitised in order to reduce the vast number in storage - all forty-one volumes. General Secretary James Debney has this monumental task. It will obviously take some time doing it "in house" but early indications are that it is a viable project. The intention is to make the Transactions easily accessible in our new world of digital transmission. One way is via the Internet, and another is on CD.

The process is very interesting. Each volume is scanned using a standard flatbed scanner, and then each page is 'read' by an Optical Character Recognition programme. This reads each scanned image and turns it into text - no mean feat, amazing really. Pictures, diagrams and tables are identified and saved as separate elements on the page.

The requirements for both media are slightly different. For the Internet file size is paramount - we've all spent ages when we could be doing something useful waiting for a bloated file to download. For CD however a photocopy style approach is possible since a CD has large capacity. Both media must carry accurate versions of the volumes.

James Debney says that technology has come to his aid in this. The chosen format is PDF - Portable Document Format, the Internet standard for document transmission. A document accessed via the Internet can be seen by anybody wanting it anywhere in the world and printed exactly as it appeared on the sender's desk.

He says there are several slightly different versions of PDF. One is 'text+graphics'; this uses the internal fonts in a PDF file (the 'native fonts') to re-construct the document on the viewer's computer. It's not a photocopy. Such a file is small and download is therefore rapid. A second form is PDF/A - supported (indeed required) by archivists according to international agreement for archiving. A PDF/A file appears to be a photocopy or facsimile of the original.

PDF/A is being used for the CD version of the archive, while 'text+graphics' will be used for the Internet - both versions are searchable. You do this by typing your search enquiry into a menu given to you by Adobe Reader and hey presto! more or less immediately, it tells you where in the document there are the references.

There is no intention to make the Transactions freely available, he says. To quote credit card advertising, "Membership has its privileges". But we need to establish an archive of our Transactions for the digital future, and maybe decide how and under what circumstances the no longer current volumes may be accessed. "One thing's for sure", he says, "to do this put us at the forefront of what a county society can do. I expect people will be knocking on our door".

Note: a specimen volume (volume XXX1X) is available on the website to members. Feedback would be appreciated.

Classes and Meetings

Keele University have sent a leaflet regarding their series of 10 weekly meetings (it started on January 9th) on Wednesdays from 2pm — 4pm in Lichfield Cathedral Visitors' Study Centre. The subject is the History of Archaeology and the Tutor is Stephen Leach. Standard fee £43, Concessions £25 & £15. Leaflets available at meetings.

Birmingham University School of Historical Studies have organised a series of day schools starting on Saturday 26th January. For details look at the website at www.history.bham.ac.uk/dayschools. Application forms are available from Betty Fox at our Lectures

The principal Day School for our members is in partnership with the CBA West Midlands, on Saturday 2 February from 10.00-17.00hrs at the Library Theatre, Birmingham Central Library. The Ordinary Fee is £20.00, CBA Members may deduct £5.00 (nearly pays your sub!) and includes refreshments and lunch!

For this Day School you apply to Sandra Illot at the University of Birmingham, Selly Oak Campus, Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LL, Telephone 0121 414 3347 or email s.e.illott@bham.ac.uk. There are still some places available.

The friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives (FoSSA) have arranged two meetings about the Shrewsbury Papers and Ingestre Hall on 13th March and 3rd April 2008. Details available from Betty Fox.

Documentary Researches

Looking for early references to Shenstone has disclosed a number of fascinating vignettes of the life and times of people in medieval Staffordshire.

The Pleas of the Crown at Tamworth ... to enquire into illicit assemblies, homicides, depredations, burnings and other damages, and to hear and determine the same on the Monday before the feast of St. Gregory the Pope 19 E II, March 1326.

The Jury of Tamworth stated on oath that Roger de Swynnerton, the son of Roger de Swynnerton had feloniously killed William le Wolf, the King's Forester at Hopwas, about the Feast of St. Peter and Paul, 18 E II, and that Thomas de Haulton (Haughton) Knight, had sent him to commit the said felony, and that Geoffrey de Bolunhull on the Wednesday before the Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist, 18 E II had feloniously killed Geoffrey de Bollenhull [?] his brother at Bollenhull, and that William the son of Geoffrey del Hulle on the Monday after the Feast of the Assumption 12 E II had feloniously killed Nicholas de Picheford at Tamworth. The Sheriff was therefore ordered to arrest them. Several murderers were acquitted by the jury. If people did not turn up at Court they were outlawed.

Altogether this Court dealt with 10 murders, 1 extortion, 4 beatings and 4 lots of armed gangs terrorising the countryside including a siege of the Church at Church Eaton.

William le Valeis of Lichefield is a common malefactor and beater of men in the vill and market of Lichefield and had beaten Isolda, wife of William le Blount of Lichefield and many others at various times.

Roger son of Roger de Swynnerton stated that the King had pardoned him for *all()* homicides *committed* before Christmas Day 18 E II on condition that he served him in the Duchy of Aquitaine and he produced the King's Letters Patent to that effect and other letters. which were inspected by the Justices and it appeared the felony had been committed after the Christmas Day named in the King's Writ so that the King's letters of pardon would not avail him.

But the said Roger claimed that the said William, for whose death he was arraigned, was not alive at the date of Christmas mentioned in the King's letters. He appealed to a jury on this point, and the 12 jurors, Philip de Somerville, Hugh de Meynil, Ralph de Grendon, Vivian de Chetewynde, William de Wolseleye, Thomas de Rolleston, William de Boweles, Hugh de Aston, Richard de Delves, John de Okovere, William de Piletenhale and Robert Flemyng, jurors, stated on their oath that the said William Wolf was not alive at the date of the Feast of Christmas named, but died about the Feast of St. Peter ad Vincula before the Christmas Day. The said Roger son of Roger was therefore acquitted by the King's Grace.

Thomas de Haulton was therefore also acquitted.

Historical Collections for Staffordshire, Volume X Part 1, p. 67

Betty Fox

Shenstone Project Update.

The Shenstone Project has had to overcome, or adapt to a number of difficulties over the last couple of years, not least the challenge of gaining access to farmland for field walking, and the co-ordination of the field walking group itself. Although this particular group has been temporarily suspended, the others have forged ahead to the point that we are now ready to try and present an interim report on their work, in advance of our main publication plans for 2009.

Having set ourselves a publication deadline of Summer 2008 for the interim report, we are now in the process of assembling the text and other material that the groups have brought together. It is, of course, testimony to the commitment and determination of these groups, that we are able to do so. With contributions from the teams working on the documentary and cartographic evidence, the recorded archaeology, pictorial sources, standing buildings and settlement patterns, it is intended that the interim publication will present an overview and a number of case studies that will describe and explore these themes in the parish.

This report will also highlight the work still outstanding at the time of writing, and help set the framework for the final reports, which are intended to include a 'popular' publication, an academic report, and a presentation on the Society's website.

Building on the work undertaken by others before us, we are confident that the publication will be of interest to both specialist interests and a wider readership. All Society members will receive a free copy of the Interim Report.

John Hunt