

# STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Can you recognise this house? Answer on page 14.

## NEWSLETTER

**September 2008**

Registered Charity No. 500586

STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
AND  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 500586

September 2008  
[www.sahs.uk.net](http://www.sahs.uk.net)

NEWSLETTER  
email: [sahs@sahs.uk.net](mailto:sahs@sahs.uk.net)

## Editorial

Welcome to the September 2008 Newsletter and the start of a new season of Lectures. Your Committee has been working very hard on your behalf and I think you will agree, when you study the list of the lectures, that they have put together a very interesting set of lectures for you.

The first Meeting of the session has the Annual General Meeting as the first Item so it has to start a little earlier. The formal documents required follows on the next pages. Please be sure to bring this Newsletter with you to the AGM so that you have the information with you. We then have the Lecture Program for 2008/09, information from our Hon. Sec, the Membership Secretary, more information about the digitisation of past Transactions, some information about former members and a very interesting visit report.

As before, I would like to reiterate that this is **your** Newsletter, as well as a communication from the Committee. Any written contributions from Members about things and activities they have been involved in or have special on knowledge about is very welcome. Please email me at [pm.norris@gvirgin.net](mailto:pm.norris@gvirgin.net) or contact me or any Committee Member at a Meeting.

If you have a knowledge of a subject that you think would be of interest to our Members, I'm sure that Brian Bull would be only too pleased to hear from you! Equally if you know somebody who you would like to suggest to Brian, who would be a good lecturer on a relevant area, please talk to him.

At the back you will find the Membership Application and Gift Aid Forms. If you are a UK Tax Payer and have not filled in a Gift Aid, please do so this time. It doesn't cost you anything but is value to the Society in keeping your Subscriptions down!

Paul Norris, Newsletter Editor.

## NOTICE OF THE 49th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 2008

**NOTICE is hereby given** that the Annual General Meeting of this Society will take place at 7.30pm on Friday 10th October, 2008, at St. Mary's Heritage Centre, Market Square, Lichfield.

Any member of the Society who wishes to make a committee nomination should first seek the agreement of the nominee and notify the Honorary General Secretary in writing by, or before Friday 3rd October, 2008. The name of the member who is prepared to second the nomination should also be supplied. The names of the members of the existing Committee who are prepared to continue to serve are set out on the reverse of this notification.

### AGENDA

Apologies

- 1 Minutes of the previous AGM
- 2 Matters arising from the Minutes
- 3 Honorary Treasurer's Report
- 4 Honorary Editor's Report
- 5 Other Special Reports
- 6 President's Report
- 7 Election of Committee
- 8 Any Other Business

Copies of the Minutes from the last AGM with the Proposed Committee 2008 - 2009 attached.

A copy of the Audited Accounts 2007 - 2008 will be made available at the forthcoming AGM.

James Debney,  
Honorary General Secretary,  
29 Boldmere Drive,  
Boldmere,  
Sutton Coldfield,  
West Midlands,  
B73 5ES.

21 August 2008

**PROPOSED COMMITTEE 2008 - 2009**

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>President</b>                      | Dr J Hunt   |
| <b>Vice President</b>                 | Mrs F E Fox   |
| <b>Honorary General Secretary</b>     | Mr J Debney   |
| <b>Honorary Treasurer</b>             | Mr K Billington   |
| <b>Honorary Transactions' Editor</b>  | Dr N Tringham   |
| <b>Honorary Membership Secretary</b>  | Mrs F E Fox   |
| <b>Honorary Newsletter Editor</b>     | vacant  |
| <b>Honorary Meetings Secretary</b>    | Mr B Bull   |
| <b>Other Members of the Committee</b> | Mr P Evans<br>Mr A Moore<br>Mr N Nicoll<br>Mr S Walton<br>Mrs D Wilkes<br>Ms J Wilson       |
| <b>Co-opted Members</b>               | Up to three co-opted members will be determined by the Committee on the Membership's behalf |

The Committee expresses its gratitude to Mr. Paul Norris for fulfilling the role of Newsletter Editor at this time. (Editors Note: He is willing to carry on!)

[Type text]

## Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society

[www.sahs.uk.net](http://www.sahs.uk.net)

email: [sahsf@sahs.uk.net](mailto:sahsf@sahs.uk.net)

### 48<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting October 12<sup>th</sup> 2007

**The 48<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Society** was held at St. Mary's Heritage Centre, Lichfield, on Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007 at 7.30pm. The president, Dr. John Hunt, introduced the meeting. He was accompanied by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Keith Billington and, in the absence of the General Secretary, Mrs. Betty Fox, who took the minutes.

**Apologies:** Mrs. Diana Wilkes, Mrs. B. Towlson, Mr. J. Debney, Dr. R. Totty, Mr. B. Bull.

**Minutes of the Previous AGM:** On a show of hands the minutes were accepted as a true record.

**Matters arising:** None

**Hon. Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Keith Billington reported that the Society's Financial Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2007 had been completed and then independently audited but that unfortunately, despite the intention announced at last year's AGM, it had in fact proved impracticable, as ever, to include copies of them in, or with, the recent September Newsletter to Members. The tight time cycle, after 31 August and up to Newsletter print deadline, had precluded being able to achieve inclusion. However, sufficient copies for all attending this AGM had been distributed across the seating, for examination during this presentation.

The Accounts for the year made fairly typical reading, year on year, in many ways and in so doing, fully reflected the finances of the Society.

The Treasurer wished to point to items of note as follows:-

Subscriptions received had risen to £1911.50, reflecting imposition of the revised rates.

Institutions had subscribed £743.25, net of Agency commissions where appropriate, for copies of Transactions Volume XLI.

The Gift Aid scheme had yielded £372.31 and now approximately two thirds of the Membership was signed up to this, for which the Society is grateful.

National Savings Bank Investment Account interest for the year ended 31 December 2006 had been £477.05 (rate currently 4.65% paid gross).

In terms of expenditure:-

Transactions Volume XLI had cost £2121.14 to publish and post.

The Lecture programme, hall hire and lecturers had cost £697.55.

The 2 annual Newsletters had cost £413.49

We spent £359.80, all-in, on the Civic Evening in March, with ticket sales just slightly more at £365.00

Total income for the year amounted to £4239.72 whereas total expenditure was £5217.05.

Work had continued on the Shenstone Parish Survey Project (by and large grant funded) and we have continued to spend money in this regard, the working fund for which, as a consequence has decreased by £714.31.

The General Purpose Fund in hand has decreased by £263.02.

The Society's total financial reserves now stood at £16,324.62, mostly held in the NSB Investment Account.

This concluded the Treasurer's remarks and questions from the floor were then sought. In the absence of any, the Treasurer then asked the Members to adopt the Accounts as prepared and audited. This was proposed by Mr. J. Salloway and seconded by Mr. N. Nicoll and carried by a show of hands.

**Hon. Editor's Report:** Dr. Nigel Tringham said he had a good collection of papers for Volume XLII but it would be shorter than the previous volume, being some 50 — 55 pages. The following had all been read, reviewed and revised:

K. Cramp & P. Braun (*In spite of having Nigel's notes I have failed to be sure of the spelling of some of the names*) Excavations on the A5 Weeford to Fazeley road improvement scheme.

J. Gould Letocetum: the defences.

M. Duncan A medieval hospital graveyard? Excavations at Stoke City General Hospital, 2001.

M. Kinsey Beyond the Pale: Re-interpretation of Tutbury Park Pale

M. Fradley A Templar chapel site at Onneley.

M. Kingman Civic improvement and the use of brick: a case study of Tamworth, 1572 — 1760.

He also had an offer of a paper on Ingestre church by Bob Meeson but it was not likely to be ready in time for going to press just before Christmas which is what he hoped to do. Another paper on the enclosure of Needwood was in the same position. An article on the possibility of a Norman castle in the Broad Eye area of Stafford was in preparation, but again might be too long in coming.

It was therefore hoped that the volume might be published in the New Year. The intention was to use the same Bristol printers as last time as their rates were very competitive. It was noted that they also print for the Society of Antiquaries.

**Membership Report:** Last year we gained 1 Family membership and 7 single memberships, including ones from Sweden and Australia. 2 single and 2 family memberships were not renewed. The total at the end of the season, counting families as 2 people was 131, somewhat down on last year.

Recording of Attendance figures rather fell by the wayside and was in any case skewed by the cancellation of the meeting for February 9<sup>th</sup>, due to snow. Visitor numbers were also well down on last year's admittedly extraordinary total, being approximately 30.

**President's Report:** John Hunt expressed his thanks to the Committee for all their hard work during the year. He put out a special plea for someone to take on the mantle of Newsletter Editor, saying that they did not have to be on the Committee as long as they had a computer.

He commented on the fact that we were entering the third year of the Shenstone Project and that the Buildings and Maps & Documents Groups were making very good progress but that we were still experiencing great difficulty in getting the Field Walking Group going, due both to the disinclination of farmers to let us on their land and the absence of a co-ordinator now that Steve Campbell-Kelly had moved to Wales. He complimented Steve on the considerable ground work that he had put in.

John reported that we were working towards putting out an interim report and that the final version would be the subject of a volume of Transactions.

John commented on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner of the Society that was held some three weeks previously. He felt that as a Society we could count ourselves fairly successful. Although we were latecomers to the field compared to some other county societies we had achieved a great deal with our succession of digs at Wall, our ongoing publication of Transactions and our new project.

The Staffordshire Archaeological Forum was touched upon. This is now a biannual event owing to the difficulty of finding fresh speakers and topics on a yearly basis.

Finally, he commended Members for their continuing support of the Society and asked for their suggestions for future programmes and a Newsletter Editor.

**Election of Committee and Officers:** Dr. Hunt handed over the Chair temporarily to Keith Billington, who called for nominations for President. This was fortuitously from Mr. P. Norris and seconded by Mrs. B. Webb. Carried *nem. con.*

James Debney was proposed as Hon. General Secretary by John Hunt and seconded by Mrs. Beardshall. Carried *nem.con.*

Keith Billington was proposed as Hon. Treasurer by the President and seconded by Ms. Jenny Wilson. Carried *nem.con.*

The Hon Editor, Dr. Nigel Tringham was re-elected, having been proposed by John Hunt and seconded by Mr. G. Molyneux. Carried *nem.con.*

The President then proposed the re-election of other Committee members *en bloc*, with a recommendation that Mr. Roland Watson, hitherto a co-opted member, be invited to fill the vacancy indicated. He also announced the co-option of Mr. Steve Dean, County Archaeologist, Mrs. Bronwen Ross and the continuance of Mr. Simon Walton if his commitments permitted. This again was accepted with a show of hands.

**Any other business:** There being none, the meeting closed at 8.05pm and after a break of a few minutes, the President welcomed the first speaker of the season, Dianne Barre.

Mrs. F.E. Fox  
Acting Minutes Secretary  
October 2007

# **LECTURE SEASON 2008 - 2009**

**10<sup>th</sup> October 2008                      John Hunt              Sculpture in Anglo-Saxon Period**

**Please note that this Meeting will be preceded by the A.G.M. at 7.30PM.**

We had arranged John Shaw, a Lichfieldian and the author of several books, to talk to the Society about "The Old Pubs of Lichfield". Sadly his health has had a set back and he will most probably be in hospital when he due to present his lecture. Thus he has reluctantly had to cancel.

**24<sup>th</sup> October 2008                      Peter Clarke                      Staffordshire Historic Churches Trust**

The lecture this evening will be about the history of the Trust and exactly what it does to help the churches including examples of the assistance to date and the work involved raising the necessary funds.

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2008                      Annette Jones                      Norway Stave Churches**

Based at university of Nottingham Annette Jones current research topic is "Runology". Her research has previously encompassed Norway Stave Churches and Runic Inscriptions particularly within the Stave Churches.

The lecture tonight is about the Norway Stave Churches and their significance.

**28<sup>th</sup> November 2008      Thea Randall              The Sutherland Papers: Saved for Staffordshire.**

Thea Randall will lecture tonight about the access project that followed the acquisition of the Sutherland Papers. Thea will also talk about the significance of and what is in the collection. Conservation of the collection will also be covered briefly.

**12<sup>th</sup> December 2008                      Mike Nevell                      The Salt Industry in the Iron Age**

Dr Mike Nevell is Director of the University of Manchester Archaeology Unit within the School of Arts, Histories and Culture. His lecture this evening will encompass the Salt Industry in the Iron Age and what we know of the industry in the UK. He will focus on the work of the past 10 years in the North West Midlands that throw light on this industry and what happened when the Romans arrived in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

**23<sup>rd</sup> January 2009                      Stuart Rose                      Laxton - the last "Open Field" Village**

Laxton, Nottinghamshire - England's last and still operational "Open Field" village will be portrayed in word and picture by Stuart Rose, the current Bailiff of the Manor Court.

**6<sup>th</sup> February 2009                      Lloyd Laing                      The Picts**

Lloyd Laing is Associate Professor in the School of Humanities at University of Nottingham and is currently researching/excavating Ballachly, an early Christian period monastery at Dunbeath Caithness. His expertise lies in "The Dark Age".

His lecture tonight will cover The Picts, generally quickly moving on to the art of The Picts and their mysterious symbols.

**20<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

**Kirsty Nicholl                      Shells, Shelters and Stop Lines:  
The Archaeology of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Conflict in Britain**

Kirsty is a manager for Birmingham Archaeology and Associate Member of the Centre for First World War Studies. Her interest in military archaeology developed during her undergraduate years at Birmingham studying the Roman Army in the Provinces. She subsequently went on to develop a taste for later periods. She currently specialises in Industrial Archaeology and modern military remains relating to the Great War and World War II. Her research interests lie in life on the Home Front, military supply networks and the memorialisation of both wars. She is involved in the excavation and reconstruction of trenches on the Western Front and is never happier than when she is in a concrete bunker!

**6<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Tim Darvill**

**Stonehenge: It's Only Rock and Roll**

The Civic Evening, St Michaels Church. Ticket arrangements are to be announced later.

Timothy Darvill is Professor of Archaeology in the School of Conservation Sciences at Bournemouth University. The author of over a dozen books, he has served as Chairman of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and was a Member of the Council of the National Trust. Current research interests focus on archaeological resource management and the Neolithic Age of Northwest Europe. In April 2008 he directed an excavation at Stonehenge and it is this recent work that forms the basis of the lecture this evening.

**20<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Andy Merrills**

**The Pump don't work 'cause the Vandals took  
the handle**

Dr Andy Merrills is Research Fellow in Ancient History at Leicester University. Broadly the lecture discusses the origins of the notion of 'Vandalism'—why is it that this particular barbarian group were saddled with this nickname. He notes first that the Vandals who occupied Carthage during the fifth and sixth centuries AD were certainly a violent group, but not excessively so by the standards of the time. Indeed, to commentators of the period, they were chiefly known for their cowardice! Andy will go on to argue that the Vandals' bad reputation was a creation of the European Enlightenment, and specifically a product of the French Revolution. The majority of the lecture will be devoted to a discussion of the various ways in which the group was represented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: in histories and chronicles of the time, but also in a variety of unusual plays, novels and operas.

**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009**

**Delia Hooke    Anglo-Saxon Landscapes of the West Midlands**

PLEASE NOTE THIS LECTURE WILL COMMENCE AT 7.30PM

Based at Birmingham University, Dr Delia Hooke has written several books on the Anglo-Saxons. This is the basis of the subject matter for her lecture tonight and how the Anglo-Saxons fit in the landscape of the West Midlands.

## Online Transactions?

James Debney reports that the transactions have been digitised. All forty-two volumes — yes, including the latest! — are available on disk to members. The cost is a very modest £20. To non-members the charge is £50.

The disk contains the two versions of the transactions which he spoke about earlier in the year. PDF 'text plus pictures' reconstructs each volume much in the way a web browser presents a website, building the volume with onboard computer fonts and embedded graphics. It is not the actual volume which you see but a very close representation.

The PDF/A files are a different type of representation. The 'A' stands for archive — here referring to the international standard for electronic document archiving (ISO Standard 19005-1:2005). Each page appears as a photocopy which in a sense it is, but it is more: both types of PDF are fully searchable. It is a curious thing to see what appears to be a photocopy on a computer monitor with the results of a search displayed on the facsimile page as selected text. To use the transactions' disk you will need Adobe Reader installed on your computer and you will also need a DVD drive — almost universal these days. Volume searches are from a menu item in the 'Reader' toolbar.

The story's not as happy with making the transactions available online. The volumes are in fact already on the website but you can't see them. Our hesitance derives from the belief expressed elsewhere that to make them available constitutes a re-publication, and that would have all sorts of consequences for copyright and other matters.

At the moment we await events, and we'll see how things develop. If we are allowed to we will make the transactions available this way, if only to provide a service for our membership and to service back copies to paying third parties.

The transactions' disk will be premiered at the AGM on Friday October 10th. Get your money ready, it's a bargain! It's pretty too.

## Obituaries

Just after our last lecture season closed, Geoff Fox passed away in New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton.

Geoff was born in Leeds, Yorkshire, and a true Yorkshire man. He moved down to the Midlands where he was adopted by the local people. He had a wonderful sense of humour. He worked as a heating engineer and travelled extensively in connection with his work.

In his leisure time, Geoff had many interests including sport. He enjoyed tennis and sailing, becoming commodore of the local sailing club. As a Yorkshire man he had a passion for cricket, a love which he never lost.

During his long retirement, Geoff became involved with restoration work at Middleton Hall, Tamworth. Here he was able to use his considerable skills with his hands and his skill working with wood was well used.

Geoff was a loyal society supporter, always welcoming members & visitors at the door.

He will be missed. Geoff had a long and full life, the focal point of which was his wife Betty, of more than fifty years, and his family.

The Society extend to them their thoughts and sympathy  
Diana M Wilkes

It is sad to record the death of Mrs. Joan Davies, the Newsletter Editor for Bkmingham & District Local History Association. She had worked tirelessly to bring together the activities of upwards of 30 Societies from Birmingham and the West Midlands as well as including book reviews in the quarterly publication. It will be difficult to find a replacement.

Members may remember Mrs. June Jackson who left us two or three years ago to reside in Wilmslow; we are deeply sorry to have to record her death also, in August of this year, after a brief period of serious illness.

### From the Membership Secretary

#### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions remain the same as last year: Member £16.50; Family Member £23.00; Student and Unwaged (not in receipt of a retirement pension) £11.

A form is provided at the back of the Newsletter. Payments may be made at meetings or to Mrs. F.E. Fox, 6, Lawson Close, Aldridge, Walsall, WS9 ORX. Please note I shall not be at the meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

A form for Gift Aid is also included. NB it is only necessary to fill this in once.

#### **HARD TIMES FOR THE EARL OF LICHFIELD**

The Staffordshire Advertiser for August 1842 comments on the necessity for the Earl of Lichfield to vacate Shugborough Hall and the subsequent sale of the furrushings, pictures, statuary, etc. *"The Earl of Uchfield is a decidedly popular nobleman: and that he should be compelled to retire (we trust only for a season) from the princely abode of his ancestors, is regarded as a public calamity. It must be a consolation to the noble Earl and his family, in their present seclusion, to know they possess the deep sympathy of all ranks, classes and parties in their own county. As is justly observed by The Times, "The Earl of Lichfield, with all his faults, will ever live in the kind estimation of the people of Staffordshire."*

The reporter gives a brief history of the property and there appears in following editions of the paper descriptions of the crowds attending, "including most of the *elite* of the neighbourhood, whose example in this particular has been followed by very large numbers of their less distinguished neighbours and a very large portion of the London *virtuoso*. The swell mob have been in attendance throughout the sale, but fortunately were too soon detected to allow of their committing any extensive depredations".

The following is a selection of items for sale and prices realised. The sale appears to have lasted for 14 days and commenced with the contents of the Library. The rarest item being The Book of Common Prayer, Edward VI, black letter [possibly meaning Gothic script] very clean, but slightly wormed, otherwise quite perfect, in Russia [the binding] imprinted at London in Flete street, by Edward Whitechurche, the fourth day of May 1549. This led to much competition and was ultimately knocked down to Mr. Straker for £13 2s. 6d. (If any member can enlighten me as to the technical points of these descriptions I should be grateful). 2 volumes of Stebbing Shaw's History of Staffordshire went for £7 10s. The Ordnance Surveys of England and Wales in 11 purple leather cases went for £31 10s.; Domesday book, £2. 12s. 6d; 2 copies of William Dugdale's Warwickshire, £6 6s. & £14 14s; Erdeswick's Staffordshire, £1 10s. 6d. The whole sum realised was about £1500.

The sale of wines took place on the fourth day. The Duke of Bedford's agent was a large purchaser. Prices were high for champagne, madeira, port and sherry, 10,000 bottles in all.

The furniture, originally of a most magnificent and costly character, is now in a great degree faded, but still there remains some splendid specimens of most beautiful workmanship. A lofty 7 ft. four-poster bed with blue flowered silk damask hangings, supposed to have cost 60 guineas went for £15; a suite of yellow ground Oriental silk curtains for three windows went to Lord Waterpark (who seems to have bought quite a lot) for £11 lis.; the billiard table, 14 guineas; a plate chimney glass, 114 inches by 62, in a neat bedded frame, and another to match, £84; Lord Lichfield's gout chair, £15 15s.

It is reckoned that there were not less than 1,000 persons present for the sale of the statuary. Busts of Homer, Shakespeare, Francis Duke of Bedford and Charles James Fox all commanded good prices. A marble statue of Bacchus made £157 10s. A group of Castor and Pollux by Nollekins, said to have cost £1000 went for £320 5s.

The sale of paintings also attracted large crowds. Quite a number of marine paintings by Vandevelde were sold, altogether there were 120 lots. The final five days of the sale covered the rest of the furniture, china and porcelain, etc.

Further investigation is needed to find out where the family lodged in the meantime and how soon they got back to their mansion and also how they managed to furnish it all again. One day, when I have nothing else to do, I might look into it.

Betty Fox

### **The Staffordshire Advertiser November 27,1841**

It is reported that the Government will order a return to be made forthwith of all foreigners, males and females, in England; for it is said that shoals of doubtful characters have found their way into this country lately. (From The Morning Post)

In the same paper is advertised "A splendid Ball at the Guildhall for the benefit of Polish refugees".

Also a note that the French Police are using Daguerreotypes to photograph criminals.  
*Plus ga change, plus c'est la meme chose.*

### **DOMESDAY BOOK**

The Domesday Book is available free online for the first time after it was turned into a database that can be read on the internet. Look at [www.esds.ac.uk/fmindingata](http://www.esds.ac.uk/fmindingata) The database can produce results displayed as maps, tables or texts translated from the original Latin.

### **From our Transactions Editor**

Nigel Tringham reports that he has just had a new and exciting contribution for the Transactions on the recent excavations at Rocester from Birmingham University. This will mean that the publication of the forthcoming Transactions will be delayed until the New Year.

# Field Trip to Northwich

Saturday 10 May 2008

The Salt Museum in Northwich, Cheshire is the only museum in the United Kingdom dedicated to Salt. The museum is located in the old Workhouse, a Grade II listed building situated on the A533 to the south of the Town Centre. The Society Members were met at 10.00am by a hugely enthusiastic Phil Robinson, who proved himself to be an entertaining and knowledgeable guide for the day.

After coffee, Phil gave an introductory talk in the small theatre on the history of the Workhouse. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 standardised the system of Poor Relief throughout Britain. Under this new law all relief to the able-bodied in their own homes was forbidden and all who wished to receive aid had to live in the Workhouses. This Act led to the building of 554 Union Workhouses in England and Wales, erected roughly 20 miles from each other. Initially conditions were harsh. Entry to the Workhouse aimed to 'stimulate' workers to seek employment rather than charity. The Northwich Union Workhouse was opened in 1837, designed by the architect George Latham. Civic pride demanded an attractive facade, with the building being deliberately set some distance from the town centre so that the sight of the inmates would not discommode or prove offensive to the citizens'. There was accommodation for 300 inmates who were strictly segregated into seven classes according to sex and age. Husbands, wives and children were separated as soon as they entered the workhouse. They would be punished if they even tried to talk to one another!

In 1948, the Workhouse became the Weaver Hall Old People's Home, though its past reputation did not make it a popular choice for elderly Northwich residents. Several of the old Workhouse buildings were demolished throughout the 1950's until the building closed as an Old People's Home in 1964. After being empty for over a decade the Salt Museum moved into Weavers Hall in 1981.

A short film on Salt introduced us to the town's main claim to fame. Rock Salt was laid down some 220 million years ago, during the Triassic geological period. At this time the Cheshire region was covered by part of a large inland sea in conditions similar to those around the modern Persian Gulf. As the water evaporated deep deposits of Rock Salt were formed.

A Tour of the Museum's galleries illustrated that salt had been mined in the area since pre-historic times. A settlement called Condote was built during Romano-British times. This was due to the strategic river crossing of the River Weaver close to its confluence with the River Dane as well as the presence of the brine springs. Lead salt pans were used to extract the salt from the brine. These salt pans and first century salt kilns have been excavated around the Roman Fort. The Roman word 'salarium', meaning money allowed to Roman soldiers for the purchase of salt, hence their pay, linked employment, salt and soldiers, giving the basis for the modern word 'salary'. It is theorised that the word 'soldier' comes from the Latin 'sal dare' meaning to give salt.

The salt beds beneath Northwich were 'rediscovered' in the 1670's by employees of the local Smith-Barry family. Initially the salt was won by pillar and stall mining. This created large underground caverns, some of which were used as Concert Halls. However, during the nineteenth century, it became uneconomical to mine salt this way. Instead, hot water was pumped through the mines, which dissolved the salt. The resultant brine solution was pumped out and the salt extracted from the brine. This technique, known as wild brine pumping seriously

weakened the geology. Mines collapsed leading to serious land subsidence, which affected much of the town and its surrounding landscape. For example in 1880, a collapse formed a huge crater which became Witton Flash, into which the River Weaver flowed filling the enormous depression. These 'flashes' are a feature of the Cheshire countryside where salt was mined, but more seriously, many buildings in Northwich itself also collapsed. Many remaining old Northwich houses are pine timber framed, these being better able to withstand the movement of the ground. Others, more modern, are built on a base of steel girders which can be jacked up to level the house with each change in the underlying ground!

Galleries in the Museum also include the many uses of salt and the growth of the Victorian chemical industry when John Brunner and Ludwig Mond began manufacturing soda ash, using salt as a main raw material. In 1926 Brunner Mond amalgamated with three other companies to form Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) which for many years was one of Europe's leading chemical companies in both production and research.

In the afternoon, members were guided around Northwich itself to see the affects of subsidence and the means taken to protect the buildings at first hand. Phil further pointed out that what at first appeared to be a row of terraced homes, were in fact individually built with small gaps between each building. If one building subsided, its neighbour stood a better chance of avoiding related structural damage. The Town Centre was however extremely busy and noisy as thousands of motorcyclists were descending on Northwich for a large rally on the Sunday with Giacomo Agostini and Phil Redman among the celebrities. Despite this, after further coffee, there was still time to visit Neumanns Flash to the north of the town, which has been largely filled in with industrial ash and converted into a Wild Life Reserve.

All in all an extremely full and exhausting day, but one in which much was learnt from most hospitable and irrepressible guide. Next year Mike Nevill will give the Society a talk on the Pre-Historic/Romano British salt industry. Salt always has and always will be a most important commodity.

Peter Evans.

## **Puzzle Picture**

The picture on the Front cover is of Lichfield Grammar School, built about 1680. Picture by courtesy of Michael Kingman for which many thanks.

## **Publications Received**

The University of Birmingham Day Schools leaflet will be available at the first meeting. If you do not want to wait until then, ring 0121 414 3347. Topics include history, archaeology, art, literature and gardens and cover periods from 1100 to the present day.

Keel University have issued the 2008/09 Directory of Day and Evening Courses for Adults. Ring 01782 733436 or visit [www.keele.ac.uk/courses/cpe](http://www.keele.ac.uk/courses/cpe) to get more details.

Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society

[www.sahs.uk.net](http://www.sahs.uk.net)

Registered Charity No. 500586

email: [sahs@sahs.uk.net](mailto:sahs@sahs.uk.net)

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## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP 2008/2009

You may find it helpful to fill in this form in advance and present it (or a copy) to the Membership Secretary at the AGM. Alternately post it with your cheque, made payable to SAHS, to Mrs F E Fox, 6 Lawson Close, Aldridge, Walsall. WS9 0RX.

Subscriptions run from 1<sup>st</sup> September each year.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

..... POST CODE.....

EMAIL.....

TELEPHONE NUMBER.....

I/We enclose £..... for the year 2008/9.

|                                  |                   |        |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| <b><u>Subscription Rates</u></b> | Single Membership | £16.00 |
|                                  | Family Membership | £23.00 |
|                                  | Student/Unwaged*  | £11.00 |

\* This category does not include those in receipt of retirement pensions.

Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society

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## GIFT AID DECLARATION

**To: The Staffordshire Archaeological Society.**

Choosing to Gift Aid the subscription or donations you make to the SAHS will allow the Society, which enjoys Charitable Status, to reclaim from H.M. Customs and Revenue the basic rate of Income Tax paid on the amount of those subscriptions or donations without any cost to the Member.

To do this you must be a UK Income Tax/Capital Gains Tax payer and have paid an amount at least equal to the Tax the Society reclaims in the Tax Year concerned.

### **DECLARATION:**

I would like the Staffordshire History and Archaeological Society (SAHS) to treat as Gift Aid,



(Please tick the Box)

all subscriptions and donations I have made on or since 6 April 2000, and all subscriptions and donations I make from the date of this Declaration.

SIGNATURE..... Date .....

Please cut out or copy the complete Declaration from this Newsletter and return either by post or by hand to:

The Hon Treasurer, SAHS  
Mr. K. Billington, 32 Birchwood Rd., Parkside, Lichfield. Staffs. WS14 9UW

If you wish to know whether the Treasurer already holds a valid Declaration for you, please contact him at the above address or at a Lecture Meeting.