



Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society



NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2016

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Upper Longdon Windmill Restored (Picture by Dr R Totty)

Note: The start of the new season is on Friday, 19th February 2016 at the Guildhall, Lichfield, 8.00pm

See you there. .

SAHS Newsletter, Winter/Spring 2016

Firstly, albeit now a little belatedly, on behalf of the Society's committee may I offer all members our best wishes for 2016, and welcome you to the second half of this season's programme, and indeed to this Newsletter. We hope that you will find things of interest in both!

I have had occasion in past issues of this Newsletter to try and keep members informed of some of the challenges facing the world of archaeology, heritage and the historic environment, and regrettably that need is still present. Attention has recently been drawn to the impact of English local authority cuts on historic environment services, among them 'significant and potentially damaging cuts' (Mike Heyworth, Council for British Archaeology) in Norfolk, Lancashire and Cheshire, and threats in Suffolk. In Norfolk this has included cutting posts in the locally funded Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) reducing by half the team that currently deals with around 15,000 archaeological finds each year. It was a Finds Liaison Officer from the regional PAS team who was an early point of contact when the Staffordshire Hoard was first discovered, and there can no longer be any doubt of the important contribution that the Scheme has made to British archaeology in all periods since its inception. The loss or reduced capacity in such as HER and PAS teams, and in many other areas as well, poses a very real threat to the essential fabric of our heritage and culture across the country, the legacy of which will be handed on to the generations that follow.

Local authorities find themselves in great difficulty as funding is reduced and the arts and heritage sector struggles in an insidious competition for the resources that it needs. In Lancashire the proposals will end the work of the Historic Environment service by 31 March this year and close five museums. Unfortunately, severe as this is, Lancashire is not alone.

Local societies like ours can do little more than monitor and remain alert to such threats in our own patches and make representation where we feel able to do so, highlighting the consequences of decisions taken. However, difficult as things currently are, it is not a picture of unremitting gloom. Projects remain in hand across the country, and once again the role that might be played by local societies is significant. I reported at the AGM on our recent invitation to contribute to archaeological planning associated with the midland stretch of the HS2 project, which might well lead to possible further involvement in later stages of the project. Nor should the importance of Society projects be overlooked. Our associations with excavations at Wall are well known, and the Shenstone Report remains one of the most popular items on our website. Society projects make a real contribution to the local understanding and appreciation of our heritage, and I have no doubt that our next venture, the 'churches project' that is currently taking shape, will maintain this valuable tradition.

Such specific activities aside, let us not overlook an important but perhaps underestimated perspective. That is the very existence of our Society, and other others like it around the country and the region. We are the sum of our memberships. By which I mean that local societies and their members constitute constituencies of interest that cannot be simply ignored, even though some might try. We represent an informed interest in what is after all a fundamental part of Britain's cultural identity and historic legacy. We can offer a legitimate and authoritative voice on its behalf and seek to hold decision-makers to account. Of course, the larger the 'voice', the more compelling its message might be, an observation that adds further significance to the discussions this Society has entered into with our counterparts elsewhere in the region, the 'Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society' and the 'Worcestershire Archaeological Society'. As the major neighbouring county societies, all publishing the main county archaeological journals, we feel that we have many interests in common and that a closer liaison between us would be mutually beneficial. Among the benefits that I hope for from such co-operation will be a coherent and persuasive voice in support of the archaeological and historic heritage of our region. The challenges of our current situation therefore also, sometimes perversely, bring opportunities and emphasise again the important role that organisations like the 'Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society', and more importantly, its members, might play.

John Hunt.

SAHS Honorary President.

Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Lecture Season 2016

All Meetings are held upstairs in the Main Hall at The Guildhall, Bore St., Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6LU at 8.00 pm. All Visitors are welcome; the charge is £3.00. Tea and coffee are available before the Meeting.

19th February 2016

Bryn Gethin

Excavation at St John's Without the Walls

This evening Bryn Gethin from Archaeology Warwickshire has come to talk to the Society and part with the knowledge thus far obtained from the recent excavation at St John's Without the Walls where a number of presumed Medieval skeletons were discovered. It is still early days for the results of the full investigation, so should timings permit, Bryn will talk to the Society about the Roman child burial from Mancetter.

Bryn graduated from the University of Wales and began his career at Stafford Castle in 1990. He joined Archaeology Warwickshire in 1993 excavating a wide range of sites. His particular interests are Roman and Medieval Archaeology along with building recording and finds identification. Bryn also has a lifetime passion for military sites of all periods and has conducted a number of surveys in Britain and mainland Europe.

4th March 2016

Jonathan Goodwin

Tipping Street Stafford Investigation

Jonathan Goodwin is Senior Planning Officer (Archaeology/HER) at City of Stoke on Trent. The recently published volume XLVII of the Society Transactions was the monograph of Tipping Street Investigation and is the theme for the talk this evening.

18th March 2016

Deirdre O'Sullivan

The Knight of St Bees

In 1981 an archaeological excavation at the priory revealed a vault with a lead coffin containing an astonishingly well preserved body - now known as the St Bees Man. He has been identified as Anthony de Lucy, a knight, who died in 1368 in the Teutonic Crusades in Lithuania. Although the body was over six hundred years old, his nails, skin and stomach contents were found to be in near-perfect condition. After his death the vault was enlarged to take the body of his sister, Maud de Lucy, who died in 1398. The effigies which are probably of both Maud and Anthony can be seen in the extensive history display which includes the shroud in which he was wrapped.

Although this is a fairly old excavation from 1981 it has been brought to light and aired again with the programme on Freeview TV Yesterday Channel back in March 2014 and the talk will hopefully bring us up to date.

1st April 2016

David Moore

Lichfield Waterworks Pumping Station and Cholera in the Black Country

For most of us, running a tap to pour clean drinking water is nothing special. We take it for granted. Drinking water and effective sanitation now form part of the

fabric of modern day Britain. However this has not always been the case. By the mid 19th century the industrial revolution was running at its peak, and infrastructure could not keep pace with the rapidly rising population. Large families and poor housing conditions made the situation ripe for a sinister and deadly problem, cholera. Cholera had a massive impact on the Black Country, a centre of the industrial revolution. In Bilston, there were no families who had not been touched. Between August and September 1832, the death toll had reached 742; almost 20% of the population; the burial grounds had to close because they were full.

There was a dire need to improve the water supply of the Black Country, and so Lichfield provided the solution with the establishment of the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company....

15th April 2016

Dr. George Nash

Walney Island Cumbria – A hidden Home Front

Dr George Nash is an Associate Professor at the Instituto Politécnico de Tomar (IPT) in Portugal and Visiting Fellow at the University of Bristol. In the Mação facility of IPT, George is responsible for teaching prehistory, material culture and theory, and supervises within the post-graduate school. George, who completed his doctoral thesis in Norway is also employed part-time for environmental consultants SLR and writes for television and radio, focusing on such diverse subjects as industrial and military archaeology, prehistoric mortuary practices, prehistoric and contemporary art.

During 2014 just off the coast of Cumbria on Walney Island a system of World War 1 trenches was discovered and George's talk will bring the investigation of this well-kept secret to life.

29th April 2016

Michael Guest

Vicars Choral of Lichfield Cathedral

Michael hails originally from Gloucestershire and studied medieval and modern history at The University of Manchester and Queens' College Cambridge. He subsequently pursued a career in secondary education teaching English and focusing on the pastoral curriculum within which he held senior posts in Staffordshire High schools. He developed an early enthusiasm for choral music and trained as a tenor through part time studies at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Birmingham Conservatoire. Since 1977 he has lived in or near Lichfield and is currently senior vicar choral at the Cathedral. Since retirement from full time teaching he has returned to his academic roots and is due to complete postgraduate research at Keele University this autumn, offering a thesis on the history of the choral foundation of Lichfield Cathedral in the eighteenth century.

His talk will focus on the college and corporation of Vicars Choral as a study of eighteenth century musicians living and working within the Close and city during a colourful period in their long history.

Jim Gould's Books

The following volumes from the late Jim Gould's library are available to anyone who is interested in making a study of Roman Britain.

Brittania (the Journal of Roman Studies in Britain) Volumes 1 to 37 (1970-2006)
The Consolidated Index for Volumes 1 to 25 (1970 to 1994)

These are free to a good home but a donation to the Society would be appreciated.
As the boxes are very heavy, Betty and I will be unable to bring them to meetings.
It would be good if the whole run could be kept together

Anyone interested please see me at a meeting or contact me on 01922 624038 and leave a message.

Thank you
Diana Wilkes

A Reminder, Your Annual Membership Subscription Renewal – The PayPal Option

Annual subscriptions were due for renewal @ 1st September 2015. The rates remain unchanged and are:
Individual Membership £20.00, Joint Membership £30.00, Concessionary Membership (Students and Unwaged) £15.00. For anybody joining in this second half please consult me about the rate.

Many of you will be paying by cash or cheque (most have already paid), or indeed for some it is taken care of automatically via bank standing order.

For the future remember that you can pay via the website Home page using the PayPal link. You receive an email from PayPal and the Treasurer also gets the information directly.

Thank you for choosing to be a Member(s) of Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society.

Keith Billington, Hon Treasurer. (treasurer@sahs.uk.net)

LOOKING INTO THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE

For the last two years I have been volunteering at the William Salt Library in Stafford tasked with listing their collection of Sale Catalogues of properties mainly, but not exclusively, in Staffordshire. These can range from terraced houses in Stoke-on-Trent through old rectories and modern country houses to the contents of Alton Towers.

One or two were very early, from the end of the 18th century and a few more from the beginning of the 19th century but the vast majority date from 1850 onwards. In the 1920s there was a great selling off of medium sized country estates, so you get a mansion, a few farms, labourer's cottages, perhaps fishing rights and a piece of woodland. Nearly all have a map or plan of the estate and if your particular property is not in the sale, it is often marked in the surrounding area, with a note of who owned the adjoining land.

One document I listed recently was keen to let the prospective purchaser know how many aristocratic houses were within easy visiting distance, about 8 or 9 I think. From about 1910 you begin to get photographs to

illustrate the properties, black and white of course but perhaps from the 1960s onwards they are in colour with often very enticing interior shots being added from the 1980s.

The real interest of course is in the detail. Both urban and country dwellings are listed with the number of rooms and outside amenities. So many houses, even in towns in the 1930s, have a pig sty and an earth closet and water “is obtained from a well”.

This is even more prevalent in the countryside. Properties described as cottages will have 2 up and 2 down and a scullery or back kitchen. Very few will be on mains water or sewage. Sometimes there is “tying up for 4 cows” and again pig sties.

A larger property would be a small holding, with a few acres of land, a slightly bigger house, a cart hovel and a barn for ten cows, perhaps an orchard and always the garden is mentioned.

Farms range from about 60 acres upwards, still with a comparatively small number of animals, and land is described as meadow, arable or old turf land. Quite often the individual fields are described with their old names as they appear in the Tithe schedules, which makes delightful reading.

In all of these estates, both small and large, the vast majority of the land and property is rented out and details of the tenant’s names are recorded and the rents that they pay. This gives a wealth of information to family historians.

Sometimes just the contents of a property are being sold, most notably those of Shugborough in 1842, Alton Towers in 1854 (as a result of very heavy legal bills following a disputed succession of the earldom) when it took 29 days to dispose of the contents, and again in 1924. The late owner of Fradswell Hall, Sir John Percy Ashworth, had in his cellar in 1976, 300 bottles of port, 33 bottles of Lanson Black Label Champagne and 150 other champagnes, 60 bottles of Mersault and white burgundy, 141 Nuits St. George and 72 bottles of St. Julien claret.

However, Mrs. Bowers of Caverswall Castle could top that: 31 cases of 12 bottles of port, 3 similar cases of sherry, 5 cases of 24 bottles of Burgundy, 3 x 24 of Hock and 11 x 12 cases of small Schweppes Soda Water.

Often a well known property will include a brief history of the house which adds interest. There were a couple of unusual documents where Lordships of the Manor were being sold or, as they are called in Scotland, Superiorities. I particularly enjoyed the description of one in Corstorphine, a suburb of Edinburgh. The history it gave involved the story of James Baillie who was widowed twice and took a mistress, Christian Nimmo, who ran him through with his own sword when he was drunk. She was hanged from the Corstorphine Sycamore Tree at the east end of Dovecot Road in 1679. The tree was given a Preservation Order in 1970 and survives to this day.

This has been a hugely interesting and rewarding project, I just need to finish the sale of the Trentham Estate with its 500 Lots, although I have been told the Library has discovered some more items in another collection which I will probably go and do next year.

The data has been added to the On-line catalogue and documents can be viewed at the William Salt Library in Stafford. Check with them for opening hours.

Betty Fox

Lecture: Mappa Mundi: Hereford's curious map

6 30 pm, Thursday 25 February at the Birmingham Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham.

With a place on the map for the terrestrial paradise, and with Jerusalem in the centre, Hereford Cathedral's Mappa Mundi was once thought to be an example of the naivety of the cartographers of the Middle Ages. Sarah Arrowsmith, education officer at Hereford Cathedral, explores how, far from being proof of scholarly ignorance, the map provides an extraordinary insight into the medieval world view.

This is a joint meeting of the Royal Geographical Society (Midlands region) and the Birmingham Midland Institute. Visitors are very welcome.

More details available from Susan Lupton.

T 01543 416144 E susanmlupton@gmail.com

BOOKS AND LITERACY IN THE AGE OF SAINT CHAD

An Exhibition at Lichfield Cathedral till 10th February 2016

The current major exhibition at the British Museum, *Celts: art and identity*, includes the Saint Chad (or Lichfield) Gospels which are normally on display at Lichfield Cathedral. Whilst the Gospels are at the British Museum, the Cathedral has a small display of pieces from the British Museum relating to books in Anglo-Saxon times.

These seven exquisite items, very small and very beautiful, date from the 8th and 9th centuries. They include book mounts, several made of gold, which were used to ornament the binding of gospel books. These give some ideas as to the original appearance of the Saint Chad Gospels before the binding was replaced. There is the head of an *aestel*, similar to, though much smaller than, the well-known Alfred Jewel which is in the Ashmolean Museum. Something similar would probably have been used by readers of the Saint Chad Gospels. An unusual piece in the exhibition is half of a diptych which would have been used to hold a wax tablet for making notes of, for example, names of people to be prayed for during a church service. Also displayed is a stylus of the type which would have been used for inscribing the wax. An intricate gold ring depicts an angel holding a gospel book. A free leaflet is available at the exhibition, giving details of each exhibit and further information about them.

Books and Literacy in the Age of Saint Chad complements the other treasures on display in the Chapter House: The Gospel Book (when it returns from the British Museum!) and the Lichfield Angel, and also the items from the Staffordshire Hoard, the decoration of which can be compared to the British Museum exhibits. In addition to the items from the British Museum, there is a display in the North Quire Aisle about the making of medieval books.

On Saturday January 30th 2016 from 10a.m. to 3 p.m. the calligrapher Peter Halliday will lead a Study Day on Anglo-Saxon and medieval manuscripts and calligraphy, including a practical workshop. No previous knowledge or experience is needed to attend this workshop, just a willingness to have a go. The cost is £20, and places can be booked with Jason Dyer at the Lichfield Cathedral Chapter office. Further details are available on this page on the Lichfield Cathedral website: <http://www.lichfield-cathedral.org/news/1379-new-workshop-with-peter-halliday>

The British Museum pieces are displayed in the Chapter House which is normally open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Monday to Saturday) and 12 noon to 3 p.m. (Sunday). The North Quire Aisle is open whenever the Cathedral is open. Please note that the Staffordshire Hoard will not be on display from 15th to 25th January 2016 but the Chapter House will remain open as usual. *Books and Literacy in the Age of Saint Chad* closes on 10th February. The Saint Chad Gospels will be on view again at Lichfield Cathedral from 12th February.

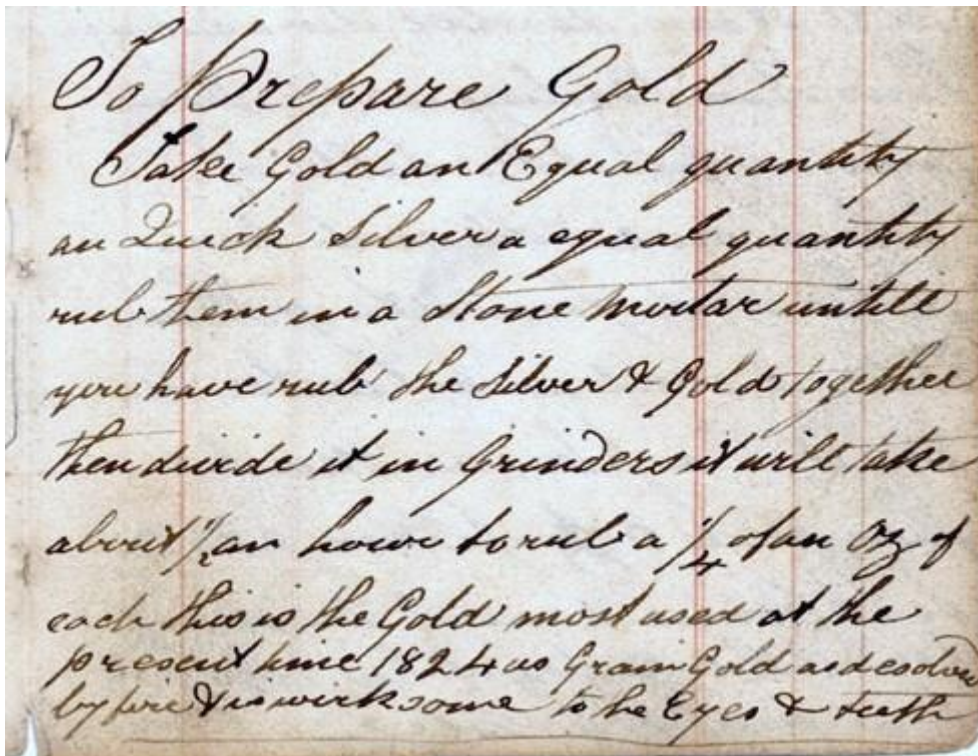
Ishbel Curr

Lichfield Cathedral Exhibitions Officer (Voluntary)

Minton and Company

The Archives of Minton and Company are now preserved in Stoke City Archives and are available for inspection there. This is a huge archive dating from 1793 (when the firm was founded) to the 1960s and was purchased last summer by The Art Fund for over £1.5M and immediately given to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Service. The documents were previously not accessible having spent seven years in the basement of the auctioneers, Bonhams, pending a decision as to their future. This is a magnificent acquisition for Staffordshire.

Archivists at Stoke have now prepared a catalogue, which whilst not yet complete is available on line at www.themintonarchive.org.uk and it is there for you to explore; please do so. There are extensive opportunities for volunteers to help in the cataloguing process by extracting information about employees from the various wages and apprenticeship records and listing the many original drawings for designs (many which were subsequently used on Minton pottery and tiles) amongst many other possible projects. We show here an extract from an early recipe book for pottery glazes.



This is from the 1824 recipe book; we do not think you should try this at home! Or anywhere else for that matter. The 'wirksome' hazards of mercury vapour include eye irritation and a metallic taste in the mouth, amongst others clearly less understood in 1824.

Richard Totty

Upper Longdon Windmill

As the last newsletter went to press the sails arrived for the restored windmill at Upper Longdon and I am happy to report that they have now been installed. (see front page).

This is now a very handsome structure on a prominent hill between Lichfield and Rugeley, and the efforts of the owner of the property are appreciated and welcomed by many in the village. Mind you I have yet to see the sails go around and generate the promised electricity, but no doubt there is work to be done inside the tower to connect sails and generator.

Richard Totty

Beyond Beauty: Transforming the Body in Ancient Egypt
Two Temple Place, London WCR2R 3BD
30 January to 24 April 2016

This major new exhibition allows visitors to experience the ancient Egyptians at their most spectacular and at their most intimate, uncovering a civilisation fascinated by appearance and identity in life and in death.

Rare imagery on exquisite painted coffins, decorated funerary masks, delicate figurines and beautifully carved reliefs emphasise the importance of body image. Jewellery, mirrors, hairpins, scent bottles and makeup provide an insight into surprisingly familiar daily routines and the ever-changing styles of the time. Through artefacts spanning over four millennia, from 3,500 BC to 400 AD, visitors are invited to ask why Egyptians cared so much about transforming the way they looked and how our perceptions are influenced by the objects they left behind.

This exhibition, which opens on 30 January 2016 and closes on 24 April 2016, is created by the Bulldog Trust in partnership with the following museums: Drawn Bagshaw Museum (Kirklees Council), Bexhill Museum, Bolton Museum, Ipswich Museum, Macclesfield Museum, Royal Pavilion and Museums (Brighton and Hove) and Touchstones Rochdale. Many of the artefacts on display come from the same archaeological excavations and are seen together for the first time since their discovery by pioneering Victorian Egyptologists.

Two Temple Place, a magnificent neo-Gothic mansion on London's Victoria Embankment, is one of London's hidden architectural gems. Known for many years as Astor House, it was built for William Waldorf Astor in 1895 and is well worth a visit. It is only open to the public during the annual winter exhibition.

www.twotempleplace.org

Sunken Cities: Egypt's Lost Worlds

The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG
19 May to 27 November 2016

This major exhibition highlights two lost Egyptian cities and their recent discovery by archaeologists beneath the Mediterranean seabed. It will be the museum's first large-scale exhibition of underwater discoveries and will show how the exploration of Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus – submerged at the mouth of the River Nile for over a thousand years – is transforming our understanding of the relationship between ancient Egypt and the Greek world and the great importance of these ancient cities.

300 outstanding objects will be brought together for the exhibition including more than 200 spectacular finds excavated off the coast of Egypt near Alexandria between 1996 and 2012. Important loans from Egyptian museums rarely seen before outside Egypt will be supplemented with objects from various sites across the Delta drawn from the British Museum's collection; most notably from Naukratis, a sister harbour town to Thonis - Heracleion and the first Greek settlement in Egypt.

Likely founded during the 7th century BC, Thonis - Heracleion and Canopus were busy, cosmopolitan cities that once sat on adjacent islands at the edge of the fertile lands of the Egyptian Delta, intersected by canals. By the 8th century AD, the sea had reclaimed the cities and they lay hidden several metres beneath the seabed, their location and condition unclear.

Although well-known from Egyptian decrees and Greek mythology and historians, past attempts to locate them were either fruitless or very partial. Over the last 20 years, world-renowned archaeologist Franck Goddio and his team have excavated spectacular underwater discoveries using the latest technologies.

Thanks to the underwater setting, a vast number of objects of great archaeological significance have been astonishingly well preserved. Pristine monumental statues, fine metalware and gold jewellery will reveal how Greece and Egypt interacted in the late first millennium BC. These artefacts offer a new insight into the quality and unique character of the art of this period and show how the Greek kings and queens who ruled Egypt for 300 years adopted and adapted Egyptian beliefs and rituals to legitimise their reign.

The exhibition opens on 19 May and closes on 27 November 2016.

www.britishmuseum.org

SAHS Church Survey

It is proposed that the Society undertakes a project to survey local churches from a historical and archaeological point of view.

This will be in some ways similar to the Church Recording carried out by NADFAS (National Association of Decorative and Fine Art Societies), but will go very considerably further in an investigation of the fabric of the building, and its history and archaeology within the immediate environment of the community it has served. This will be done by observation recording and interpretation; all non-intrusive.

The subjects to be covered generally follow the Church Heritage Record (CHR) scheme established in April 2015 (see facultyonline@churchofengland.org). Information can also be provided to and from the Staffordshire HER (Historic Environment Record). We could also prepare material of the VCH webpages which allow local groups to contribute.

The following is a list of areas for investigation and recording for each church.

Core details

Name, Diocese, parish, Listed Status, Conservation Area Status, Date, Opening hours, Summary description, website.

Location

Primarily a map of the area plus a description of the site and its significance in the immediate environment; the relationship between the church and other nearby buildings and features. The church in its landscape.

Building

Includes a ground plan of the church, note of dimensions and descriptions under the following sub heads and with drawings / plans / photographs as appropriate

- Archaeology - earliest dates, documentary and structural. Floor levels.
- History - a general history of the building including a timeline showing phases of construction
- Exterior description
- Architects/Artists and others who have contributed to the development of the building
- Building fabric and materials
- Current heating/ventilation
- Exterior features – clock, weathervanes, drainpipes, gargoyles etc.
- Drains/ducts
- Below ground archaeology

Interior

Includes descriptions under the following sub heads and with drawings / plans / photographs as appropriate

Interior description

- General description – full description of visible interior
- Significant architectural features - piscina, squints, rood lofts, stairways, windows
- Internal graves/vaults
- Tower access
- Vestries/kitchens/service rooms

Internal features and fittings

Altars

Bells
Font(s)
Lectern
Organ(s)
Pulpit
Screen(s)
Roof
Stained glass windows
Reredos
Choir stalls / pews
Monuments
Floor tiles
Doors

Portable Furnishings and Artworks

Fabrics
Plate
Paintings / Wall decorations / display boards
Books

Internal and External graffiti

Churchyard

Ecology; description, plan, wildlife, tree preservation orders
Bats
General condition – description of position of memorials, of maintenance of grass /hedges /walls
Burial and War grave information. Is the churchyard open or closed for burials, are there war graves?
Churchyard Structures / Crosses / Lych gate
Archaeology of the churchyard
Surroundings

Registers and other parish documents

A summary of items deposited in archives and retained in the church

Registers
Parish Chest items deposited in Archives
Published and unpublished parish history, both printed, on line and oral

Significance

This section is basically for discussion of the importance of the various features.

Setting
Fabric
Interior
Archives

Further research

Suggestions for further research

We will have to have the agreement of:

The Diocese of Lichfield

The Archdeacon

The Incumbent and Parochial Church Council

Parish History Groups

We propose that we start with the following churches

Alrewas, All Saints

Hamstall Ridware, St Michael and All Angels

Mavesyn Ridware, St Nicholas

Blithfield, St Leonard

Pipe Ridware, St James

Drayton Bassett, St Peter

The most complete CHR record is St Germans in Truro:

<https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/CHR/ChurchDetails.aspx?id=13753>

See also <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/clifton-campville-lordship-and-community> for a recent report on research on a church in Staffordshire.

If you would like to be involved or you have any suggestions, other options or input please email via sahs@sahs.uk.net or see me or Dr Hunt at the next meeting.

Dr R N Totty October 2015

Visit to Alton Towers

In the summer of 2015 a group of 26 members visited Alton Towers; not to enjoy ourselves on the rides but for the purpose of serious historical study of the architectural work of Augustus Welby Pugin, architect of the Earl of Shrewsbury's massive residence. We started well in that all of us travelled on the monorail from the car park



to the entrance but later found that the door to the mansion was locked and no one had the key!

Eventually our guide Michael Fisher managed to gain entrance to part of the building for us and here we are admiring the vast scale of the Earl's private chapel, now a little restored and available for weddings and other celebrations. After the Earl's death the interior was stripped and the contents sold off and the house has never recovered although there is an ongoing and very slow restoration programme. We later managed to penetrate the monumental entrance hall and a charming conservatory but failed to get into the main house. We did though enjoy a rather nice afternoon tea. Alton Towers later apologised

for the poor internal communication which led to the problem and refunded all our fee.

A more successful visit was again guided by Michael Fisher, to the Pugin's church of St Giles, Cheadle also built for the Earl of Shrewsbury and then on to the church of the Holy Angels at Hoar Cross, a later building by GF Bodley – two architectural gems still in routine use as parish churches.

RT.

Staffordshire Archives Workshop September 17 2015

This was a workshop to disseminate the results of the recent public consultation process. It was not well attended, about a dozen people who have been to previous workshops plus about nine Archive Service staff.

The consultation seems to me to have been very widespread in the way it was organised. There were 539 actual responses which seems low given that 450 people attended one of the 11 drop in events, and many local organisations circulated forms to their members. Most of the responses were from the Stafford, Lichfield and Stoke postcodes with particularly few from Tamworth (13), Staffordshire Moorlands (18) and East Staffordshire (23).

In the consultation the form the consultee was presented with had four options;

A the refurbishing of the present site in Stafford to be a new History Centre

B as A but with the inclusion of some Museum Services

C stay as it is with reduced opening hours

D a totally new building on a new site.

All except option C involve the closure of Lichfield.

Option A was far and away the preferred option, with only the participants from Cannock Chase preferring a different option (C). Even the 62 replies from Lichfield preferred option A.

The National Archives recommended A or B, said that C should not be chosen and that D should only be considered if A and B both failed.

A report has been sent to the Project Board recommending option A. Architects will be appointed at the end of this month with a view to making a Stage 1 bid to the HLF in December. After this there will be a development stage then a Stage 2 bid to the HLF and then if the bid is successful delivery of the project.

There is still much to be done in particular in finding ways to have more public involvement with the Archives.

Addendum

The full report of the consultation was published in October 2015.

The report basically approved the outline plans prepared by the appointed architect which can be seen on the Archive Services' website. The bid is due to go to the Heritage Lottery Fund in the first week in February and is for the reconstruction of the Record Office in Stafford to provide a new History Centre which will amalgamate the collections now in Lichfield and in Stafford. The Lichfield Record Office will close to be replaced by an Access Point in Lichfield Library to be manned mostly by volunteers. The result of the bid is expected in May of this year. If the bid is successful, the new facility in Stafford is planned to open in July 2021.

Richard Totty

Au-mazing! Cornwall sold GOLD to Ireland back in the Bronze Age

Irishmen more interested in bling than their unflashy Kernow brethren, says study



The Baldock Hoard. This is a hoard of 26 gold and silver Roman objects including gold jewellery nineteen votive 'leaf' plaques and two silver model arms.

Photo by Dominic Coyne, Young Graduates for Museums and Galleries programme August 2007.
PAS Picture

Paleo-boffins from the University of Southampton have found evidence of an ancient trade route for gold between Ireland and Cornwall in the south-west of Britain. The study suggests people were trading gold between the two islands as long ago as the early Bronze Age, around 2500BC.

In a paper titled *A Non-local Source of Irish Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Gold*, [published](#) in the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, the boffins raised questions about the extraordinary early Bronze Age gold hoards that have been found in Ireland, far more commonly than anywhere else in Europe.

The research, which was conducted in collaboration with the University of Bristol, used a new technique to measure the chemical composition of some of the earliest gold artefacts in Ireland. Findings show the objects were actually made from imported gold from Cornwall, rather than that which might be found in Ireland.

First author Dr Chris Standish acknowledged that "this is an unexpected and particularly interesting result, as it suggests that Bronze Age gold workers in Ireland were making artefacts out of material sourced from

outside of the country, despite the existence of a number of easily-accessible and rich gold deposits found locally."

Using an advanced technique known as laser ablation mass spectrometry, the boffins sampled gold from early Bronze Age artefacts and measured isotopes of lead against the composition of gold deposits found in a variety of other locations.

After analysis, the archaeologists concluded that the gold in the objects they tested – 50 early Bronze Age artefacts in the collections of the National Museum of Ireland – most likely originated from Cornwall, rather than Ireland. While Cornwall is well known to be a source of tin, a common alloy for copper in the creation of bronze, finding gold being exported from the region was surprising.

"Perhaps what is most interesting is that during this time, compared to Ireland, there appears to be much less gold circulating in Cornwall and southern Britain. This implies gold was leaving the region because those who found it felt it was of more value to trade it in for other 'desirable' goods, rather than keep it," Dr Standish suggested.

A University of Southampton press release [noted](#) that, while gold is today intrinsically linked with economic wealth, it may not always have had this value.

"In some societies, gold was seen to embody supernatural or magical powers, playing a major role in belief systems rather than economic ones. The value and significance placed on gold may have varied from region to region."

8 Jun 2015, [Alexander J Martin](#), The Register

Editor's Note: This is light hearted example of how the non-professional press can treat serious archaeological results!

The Hospital of St John Lichfield



Tradition assigns the foundation of St. John's Hospital, Lichfield, to 'Bishop Roger'. If this tradition is correct the founder must have been Bishop Roger de Clinton (1129-48), for the hospital was certainly in existence before the time of Bishop Roger Weseham (1245-56). A grant of 1208 refers to the hospital as 'the House of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit and St. John the Baptist.' This double dedication is not found subsequently, and the house was usually known, from its situation outside Culstubble Gate, as the Hospital of St. John the Baptist without the Bars of Lichfield. In the 13th century the hospital community, apart from the poor who were maintained there, evidently consisted of a prior, brethren, sisters, and lay brethren living under a religious rule and a number of chaplains and servants. St John's Hospital is the very prominent brick building near the City Station, with eight massive chimneys on the front along St John Street, constructed in 1495 when brick building in Staffordshire was in its infancy and used mainly for prestigious projects. Next to this is the rather older and more delicate chapel.

St John's is one of many historic almshouses to be found in cities, towns and villages around Britain and is one of Lichfield's major charities providing sheltered accommodation in the city centre. Nationally almshouses provide sheltered accommodation for more than 35,000 people. Nowadays St John's seeks to draw on its rich inheritance from the past and continue to move forward into the future providing modern flats designed for independent living for older people with neighborly support and care. Recently St John's has begun the building of a range of self contained flats at the rear of the hospital garden, that is at the end of the site well away from the 1495 range and chapel on St John Street. During the excavation of the foundations fifty well-preserved skeletons were discovered buried carefully in separate plots as in a cemetery.



Archaeologists uncover one of the skeletons in Lichfield

It is assumed that the skeletons are of medieval pilgrims who came to the shrine of St Chad in Lichfield but died without receiving the miracle healing they hoped for.



The site showing the excavation of several skeletons clearly carefully buried in separate plots

Stuart Palmer, of Archaeology Warwickshire, which obtained a licence from the Justice Ministry for an emergency exhumation of the remains, has been quoted as saying that although uncovering medieval human remains was relatively common, finds associated with known pilgrimage sites were far more unusual. "St John's in medieval Lichfield provided overnight accommodation for pilgrims for several hundred years and many of the pilgrims visiting came to be healed and some may well have died, which carries the possibility that this burial ground was for these unfortunate pilgrims."

"Although medieval burial sites are not uncommon in the UK, those associated with known sites of pilgrimage are not so common and this work presents a rare opportunity to study such a particular assemblage. "Mr Palmer said the remains were being taken to the group's offices Montague Road, Warwick. Once there, the bones will be cleaned, aged and sexed and examined for signs of injury, disease, dietary deficiency and other pathologies.



Cleaning skulls in Warwick

We look forward to further exciting revelations about these pilgrims which will come from detailed and painstaking work on the skeletons using the latest scientific techniques.

RT

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