



*Staffordshire
Archaeological
and Historical Society*



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Statue of St Cuthbert at Lindisfarne Priory, May 2016

Bronze by Fenwick J J Lawson, 2000.

See Lecture for 21st April 2017!

Archaeology and the Queen's Speech

Although this might at first sight appear an unlikely combination, in recent years' archaeology has figured directly and indirectly in announcements of forthcoming government policy, and in the Queen's Speech on May 18th there were actually two statements of interest.

The first was the announcement that the Government will introduce the revised Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill in the current session of Parliament, ratifying a convention signed over sixty years ago and whose delay has attracted much criticism. However, in the background briefing to the speech, the Bill has been promised. Its main benefits would be: 'To make a strong statement about the UK's commitment to protecting cultural property in times of armed conflict. [And] To enshrine in legislation the procedures related to cultural protection that the Armed Forces already follow.'

This agreement under International Humanitarian Law concerns the protection of cultural property during armed conflict, prompted initially by the massive destruction of cultural property during the Second World War, but a phenomenon repeated all too often subsequently. Of course, there are limitations to what such legislation can achieve, but the commitment of our country to the principles underpinning it is all-important. The practical arrangements will include the introduction of the Blue Shield as an emblem to signify cultural property protected under the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols; and the introduction of a new offence of dealing in cultural property 'that has been illegally exported from occupied territory', with a provision 'for such property to be seized and returned to the occupied territory.'

However, a less positive reaction was elicited from archaeologists regarding the implications of measure to 'support the economic recovery, and to create jobs and more apprenticeships' as 'legislation will be introduced to ensure Britain has the infrastructure that businesses need to grow.' This concerns a Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill to 'reform planning and give local communities more power and control to shape their own area so that we build more houses and give everyone who works hard the chance to buy their own home.'

The key fears for archaeologists here relate to the slackening of planning requirements that are supposed to accompany these proposals. It is feared that developers will no longer be required to carry out archaeological and wildlife surveys before starting housing projects, and effectively might imply the end of a system of heritage protection and commercial archaeology that has been in successful operation for over 25 years. The scale of concern has prompted, within a matter of days, an online petition to the Government to '*Stop Destruction Of British Archaeology. Neighbourhood and Infrastructure Bill*' had been signed by thousands; it seems likely that in the six months the petition has to run (until 19 November) it will reach the 10,000 signatories required for a government response.

The Results of Backyard Archaeology

On another, rather more positive matter, the results of public engagement in archaeology have recently been reported from a long-running project in eastern England co-ordinated by Carenza Lewis. She has been looking at what archaeology can offer regarding the demographic impact of the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century, using tens of thousands of datable pottery sherds newly recovered from nearly 2000 known archaeological contexts within historic rural settlements across six counties in eastern England. The premise is that as the disease swept East Anglia, the consumption of goods like pottery fell as the numbers of consumers fell in number. As pottery fragments can be quite closely dated from changes in style, counting sherds in excavations might offer an indicator of rising and falling populations.

This work has drawn on the work of members of the public who dug small pits in their back gardens,

accessing areas not normally reached by excavations prompted by construction and development – but at the heart of the story of village and rural town history. The results are impressive. In Cambridgeshire, for example, they excavated 427 pits. Those with pottery pre-dating the Black Death: 177; those with later pottery: 100. This 44% decline, however, is outdone by Hertfordshire and Norfolk, where the drop recorded was over 60%.

To quote Lewis, 'We can now say with some confidence that the pottery-using population across a sixth of England was around 45% lower in the centuries after the Black Death than before. Furthermore, we can identify exactly where in the settlement landscape this contraction was most and least severely felt, at scales ranging from plot to region. This research shows that there is an almost unlimited reservoir of new evidence capable of revealing change in settlement and demography still surviving beneath today's villages, hamlets and small towns.'

The demographic trends align generally with what we already know from the documentary sources, but the archaeology adds further 'substance' to this picture, but is at its most revealing when the implications for individual communities, as settlements, are explored – and these insights are the result not of 'professional archaeology', but of community archaeology at its most productive. Long may it continue!

I would like to acknowledge the items in **Salon Issue 364** that have contributed to the writing of these items.

John Hunt.

SAHS Honorary President.

Medieval Graffiti

Last year we reported on surveys of the surviving medieval graffiti in the churches of Norfolk and Suffolk. At the time we were unaware of any systematic attempt to do the same for the medieval churches of Staffordshire.

However, the February/March 2016 edition of 'City Life in Lichfield' carries an article by Joss Musgrove Knibb recording surviving graffiti in churches around Lichfield. These include compass drawn circles in the cathedral (to the right of the entrance to the chapter house) and at Tatenhill, a representation of the devil at St James Longdon and an archer at St Chad Lichfield. Other graffiti have been recorded locally – on the staffspasttrack.org.uk website there are good photographs of two at All Saints Alrewas. The first of these is a Mass Dial used for showing the times that Masses were celebrated and the other is a representation of two running deer. There are other examples of Mass Dials at Norbury.

Have any of you been searching your local parish church for graffiti? If so, please tell us what you have found.

Richard Totty

Why you should read the Transactions: No. 2 of an occasional series

Transactions Vol XLVIII contains five articles on subjects ranging from a Roman villa to 19th century pottery kilns

Michael Fradley's article, "Field survey at the Romano-British villa site at Hales", reminds us that although only a few villas have so far been found in Staffordshire, they certainly merit further study (and the ongoing excavations at the villa at Acton Trussell demonstrate the complexity of these sites). The villa building at Hales was excavated in the 1920s and 1970s revealing a "winged corridor" type of villa with a bath-house that succeeded Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement on the same site and was occupied until the end of the fourth century. Recent field survey located a terraced area and other earthworks which may indicate the location of more buildings around the excavated part of the site. The author goes on to suggest, from place names and other documentary sources, the possibility of post-Roman occupation of the site and continuity of the territory around it as a recognisable land unit.

Place names are the subject of David Horwitz's article "Ogley Hay revisited: further reflections on a swine of a name", one of two articles in this volume that reflect research on part of the county that was previously rather neglected but in which interest has been stimulated by the discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard. This article follows the author's previous article in Transactions Vol XLVI in which he suggested that the now-disappeared "Knaves Castle" might have been a Roman watchtower, and suggested that the place name Ogley derived from a person named Ocgā. In this article, as the title suggests, he derives "og" from hog and therefore relates it to pig-rearing and a swineherd. He draws attention to the documentary evidence for pigs being kept on some scale in the area, from references in Anglo-Saxon land charter boundaries, Domesday Book and other medieval sources.

The other Hoard-related article, Della Hooke's "The forest landscapes of the Staffordshire Hoard region: II, the later landscape" also follows an earlier article, in this case in Transactions Vol XLV. Here the author discusses the medieval landscape and management of Ogley Hay as part of Cannock Forest and its subsequent use as common grazing land. Agricultural improvement by enclosure in the nineteenth century and accompanying industrial development resulted in changes in road patterns. The field in which the Hoard was found fortuitously escaped industrial development, road diversions and even significant cultivation before its exposure by ploughing in 2008.

Bob Meeson's article, "The origins and early development of St Editha's church, Tamworth" brings together the results of excavation of the crypt and a detailed study of the building which he presented in a lecture to the Society last year. Through comparison with other churches, he suggests that the Anglo-Saxon church consisted of porticus (plural: side chapels on each side of a central space which later became the crossing) and a line of porticus along the south side of the church. A suggested gallery chapel at the west end may have held relics, including those of St Editha. The destruction of the west end of the church and the gallery by fire in 1345 may have been followed by remodelling the crypt under the south aisle to house a shrine for St Editha's relics.

The final article is by Les Capon and Jonathan Goodwin, "Excavations at three Hanley (Stoke-on-Trent) pottery factories: Broad Street/ Mason's Ironstone works, Kensington Pottery, and St James' Street Pottery", three adjacent nineteenth-century works that continued production into the twentieth century. The authors discuss the excavated remains of kilns and workshops alongside documentary evidence and historic maps to explain organisation and workflow. As might be expected, most of the finds are waste pottery and kiln furniture, but the pottery results from earlier operations on the site as well as the period in which the excavated kilns were used. The pottery ranges in date from the late seventeenth century to the mid twentieth century and includes pieces of eighteenth-century porcelain from the short-lived production of this ware in Stoke.

Mike Hodder

SAHS Guided Historical Visit to Anglo-Saxon Repton.

Sunday July 17th, 2016 2.00pm

We meet at the Lych gate and then walk through the school grounds to the west of the core village as our guide talks about the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon bits of Repton's history as discovered when the school science block was built (Science Priory!) and points out that we are on a sandstone bluff overlooking one of the channels of the Trent. Then it's back into the church to talk through Repton's Anglo-Saxon times – monastery and Royal Centre, origins of the church, royal internments, St Wystans, Viking attack, Domesday, Earl of Chester's motte and bailey castle, founding of the medieval priory through to dissolution and demolition. Then it's down into the crypt and lastly outside, under the arch and under the old Priory Guest House, through the Cloister Garth and round by the east end of the Priory Church to see the remains. About an hour and a half.

This tour will be of interest to those of you who enjoy early Anglo-Saxon history and subsequent developments in Mercia. Repton was where Christianity was introduced to the Midlands in the seventh century and the crypt of the church was built a century later as a Mausoleum for the Mercian Royal Family.

The church of St. Wystan is north of the village on the Willington Rd, close to Repton School. Meet at the church Lychgate or if wet in the church a little before 2.00pm.

There will be a charge of £2.00 to be collected on the day but as places are limited there is a need to book in advance by giving your name to me, Richard Totty on 01543 491830 or by email to Richard.totty4@gmail.com.

Church Survey

In the last newsletter we described a proposed project for the Society in the form of an Archaeological and Historical Survey of some selected local churches and invited any members interested in taking part to register this interest with a Committee member.

The number of members expressing an interest has been very small and the Committee has decided that there are insufficient numbers to form an effective working group for such a project. Therefore, the project will not take place at the present time; if there is sufficient interest it is possible that it will be revisited at some time in the future.

Richard Totty

STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LECTURE SEASON 2016-2017 Preliminary Information.

As you can see this is just the preliminary version of the new programme for the coming season of lectures. I am still waiting for confirmation on some which are listed as TBC. Others are missing Biographies and details of the lecture content. By the time September comes around all of these will be fixed!

Brian Bull

23rd September 2016

Andy Boucher

**Recent Excavations and Investigations at Hereford
Cathedral and the Cathedral Close**

7th October 2016

Professor Gary Sheffield

The Morale of the British Army in the First World War'?

Gary Sheffield is Professor of War Studies at Wolverhampton University previously at Birmingham University and his talk this evening is a different take on World War 1 in that it is looking at the evidence relating to the morale in the British Army and the 'Lions led by Donkeys' line that has been used a few times over the years.

21st October 2016

TBC

4th November 2016

Dr John Hunt

Faith and Society in medieval France:

Looking at churches in the High Saintonge

The Saintonge in south-western France, most readily defined by the medieval diocese of Saintes, is a region renowned for the survival of hundreds of Romanesque churches, many richly decorated with sculpture. With particular reference to the *Haute-Saintonge*, we will consider the character of these buildings and what they convey about the life, culture and mentalité of local society, especially in the eleventh and twelfth century.

18th November 2016

Dr John Wilcock

Staffordshire Salt Industry

John Wilcock is Emeritus Honorary Fellow at Staffordshire University, previously Reader in Computing. During the 1960's and 1970's he was an early pioneer in applying computers to Archaeology. John has a very wide range of interests and the talk this evening will cover the British Salt Industry with the emphasis on Staffordshire.

2nd December 2016

The Annual General Meeting followed by

Kevin S Colls

New Place Stratford Upon Avon

Kevin is a professional archaeologist working for the Centre of Archaeology at Staffordshire University as the lead Archaeological Project Manager. He has directed and published archaeological projects throughout the United Kingdom and Europe and hold over 15 years' experience in professional development-led archaeology. Specialist subjects include field archaeological field techniques, urban archaeology and forensic archaeology with a project portfolio that includes major archaeological excavations in many of the UK's urban centres including London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol, archaeological survey and remote sensing on Scottish Islands, and rural archaeological surveys in central Greece.

The talk this evening will cover the high profile excavation work at New Place Stratford Upon Avon, this being the final residence of William Shakespeare. Also being covered is the work undertaken with Shakespeare's grave at Holy Trinity Stratford.

17th February 2017

TBC

24th February 2017

Dr Roger White

Romans

17th March 2017

Sarah Arrowsmith

Mappa Mundi

31st March 2017

TBC

21st April 2017

Deidre O'Sullivan

Lindisfarne

5th May 2017

Jon Goodwin

Excavations at Three Hanley (Stoke on Trent) Pottery Factories

Jonathan Goodwin is Senior Planning Officer (Archaeology/HER) at City of Stoke on Trent. The recently published volume XLVIII of the Society Transactions included the report of the extensive investigation and is the background for the talk this evening.

Annual General Meeting 2016

The [2016 CBA West Midlands AGM and Summer Field Day](#) will be held on Saturday 16 July 2016 as part of the [Festival of Archaeology 2016](#) being held between 16 and 31 July.

The AGM and Summer Day School will be held in conjunction with the Atherstone Civic Society at the Scout Hall, Mill Lane Mill Lane, Mancetter, near Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1NP.

CBA West Midlands AGM 2016 and Summer Field Day



A mortarium and details of a potters stamp (SENNIUS), made at Mancetter-Hartshill and found at Wroxeter. Photographs taken by Roger White, finds at Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery.

CBA West Midlands AGM and Summer Field Day

Saturday 16 July, 2016, 9.30am - 4.00pm

The Scout Hall, Mill Lane Mill Lane, Mancetter, near Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1NP

This free event is being held in conjunction with the Atherstone Civic Society.

Excavations at Mancetter and Hartshill between 1960 and 1984 revealed more than 50 Roman pottery kilns and associated features. In addition, several excavations have investigated a Roman fort under Mancetter village and a late Roman "burgus" fortification on Watling Street.

Provisional Programme

9.30-10.00

CBA West Midlands AGM (members only)

10.00-16.00

(open to everyone): Roman Mancetter: Part of the Festival of Archaeology 2016

- Short talks by various archaeologists about excavations on the Roman fort and the Roman pottery industry;
- Short guided walks, led by the Atherstone Civic Society and CBA West Midlands, including the sites of the Roman forts and pottery kilns and the remains of the late Roman "burgus";
- A display of finds from the site;
- Activities for children.

Refreshments will be available but please bring your own lunch.

More details will be available nearer to the event

The St Chad Gospels in Lichfield Cathedral

We would like to draw to your attention to the website <https://lichfield.ou.edu/> which is devoted to the scholarly study of items from the Library in Lichfield Cathedral. This is the project of Bill Endres of the University of Kentucky.



St Luke

Essentially it involved taking high resolution digital images of the Lichfield Gospels using two forms of spectral imaging, here referred to as Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) and Multispectral Imaging. The first involves the examination of each page using lighting at a low angle to the page (oblique lighting) which reveals indentations and impressions on the page not visible in normal lighting conditions. The second involves the use of light of different wavelengths from the ultraviolet to the infrared and is used to reveal writings not apparent in visible lighting – often faded or erased writings and also to reveal differences in the inks used (as in the case of Shakespeare's will described in another article in this newsletter). The methods are not new (I first used them in the 1970s) but what is new is the ability to take large numbers of high quality colour images of items relatively quickly and to use digital processing to overlay the images. (I was using wet chemistry to develop and print single images which is very slow). Even though rapid in comparison to what I was doing the current technique can still be time consuming and difficult requiring a high level of skill and dedication to give good results as described here.

The website is extensive and as well as describing the techniques used contains a multitude of images of the pages of the Lichfield Gospels. These Gospels were made about 730AD and show a blend of Celtic and Anglo Saxon influences. They are one of the treasures of Lichfield Cathedral Library.

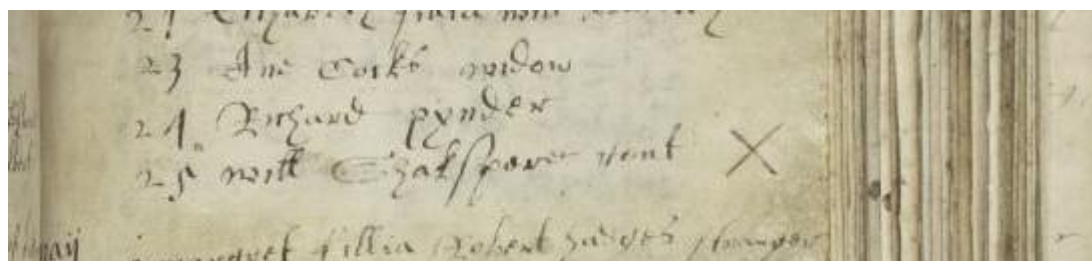
One highlight of the work is the capturing of images of dry-point glosses on the pages of the Gospels. These glosses were etched on to the page using a stylus but no ink and were meant to go unnoticed. They are notoriously difficult to see let alone capture in an image. The website includes sixteen high resolution RTI renderings of these glosses. For example, on page 226 which is part of the Gospel of St Luke there are three dry point writings which are personal Anglo Saxon female names – Berhtfled, Elfled and Wulfild. It has been suggested from the calligraphy of these words that they are ninth century and therefore were added after the main text was written.

This is an impressive project; it is still underway and the web site is still being added to and there appears to be more interpretation to come. It's a fascinating example of what modern scientific techniques can do to add to our knowledge of historical documents.

Richard Totty May 2016

William Shakespeare; The 400th anniversary of his death.

William Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616 and this year is therefore the 400th anniversary of his death. Inevitably this has renewed interest in his personal life of which very little is known. There have been numerous articles in the press as well as on line and we draw attention to three of these in case you have not seen the originals. (Actually we don't know when he died; the register of Holy Trinity Stratford has an entry for a burial dated 25 April 1616 'Will Shakspeare gent' and the assumption is that he died a couple of days earlier.

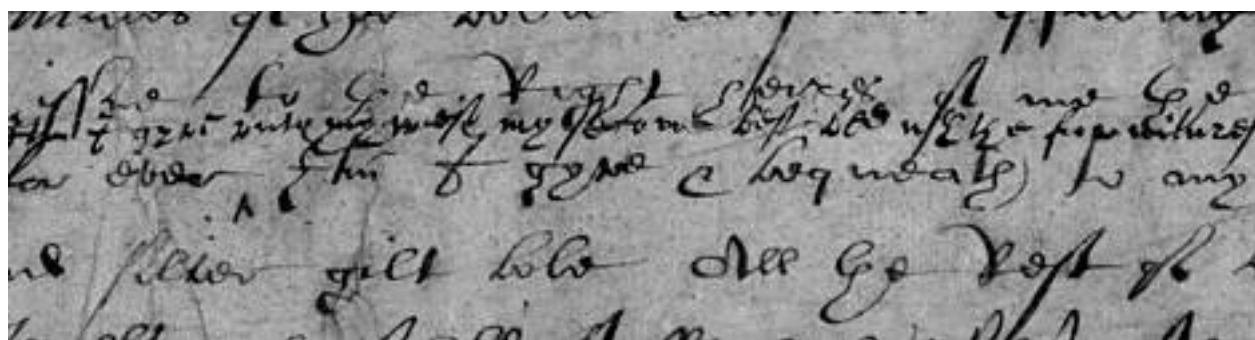


The first is the investigation of what is thought to be his tomb in the church of Holy Trinity Stratford. The grave bears no name but there is a monument nearby which does. In March of this year a team from Staffordshire University used ground penetrating radar (GPR) to view the area below the gravestone, this being the first archaeological investigation of the tomb. The team found that the body under the stone had been buried without a coffin at a relatively shallow depth of three feet, dispelling rumours that there was a family vault there. But the most surprising aspect is that there is a disturbance in the area where the skull should be. The leading archaeologist appears convinced that the skull has been removed, confirming another rumour that first surfaced in 1879 that it had been removed in the eighteenth century. But the vicar of Holy Trinity is not so certain and remains unconvinced that there is sufficient evidence to say that the skull is not there. But if it really is not there then where is it? So mystery still remains concerning Shakespeare's burial. Not least is this actually the right grave? There doesn't seem to be much evidence that it is although it has for some considerable time assumed to be so. In any case we look forward to reading fuller reports of the GPR application which in the way of archaeologists will undoubtedly appear in the fullness of time.

The diary of Captain Keeling of the *Red Dragon* records the performance of Hamlet on board in

September 1607 whilst on a voyage to Java to an audience including African merchants and Portuguese interpreters. This if correct would be the first performance of one of Shakespeare's plays overseas, and soon after the first performance in London in, it is thought, 1603. This fragment of a diary was discovered in the nineteenth century and suspicions that it is a forgery have never quite been dispelled. It is on display in the British Library until September so there is still time for you to go and see it and judge for yourself.

An exhibition in Somerset House in The Strand includes William Shakespeare's will. This has been subject to a great deal of careful scientific examination very recently with interesting results. Firstly, over a four-month period to September 2015 conservators at the National Archives removed a heavy paper backing and some repairs made with silk returning the will to something resembling its original condition although it must have been left in a rather fragile state. It was then subject to multispectral imaging at the British Library using ultraviolet and infrared as well as visible light. None of these techniques are new but what is new is their application to such an important and interesting document. The results of this process are intriguing and offer some new insights into how and when the will was produced and what Shakespeare had in mind when writing it. Infrared examination of the will shows that the date was changed from January to March and some details added such as the famous bequest of his second best bed to his wife which was clearly an afterthought.



The line leaving to his wife 'my second best bed' has been added to the original text; she didn't get the silver gilt bole.

You can read about this at blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk under 'Shakespeare's will; a new interpretation' by Dr Amanda Bevan. Her interpretation is novel and fascinating but you will need to read it yourself and look at the excellent images of the will to see if you can agree with her observations, which are in parts quite controversial and see if you can accept that these are logical deductions from the scientific analysis of the paper, ink and writing of the will.

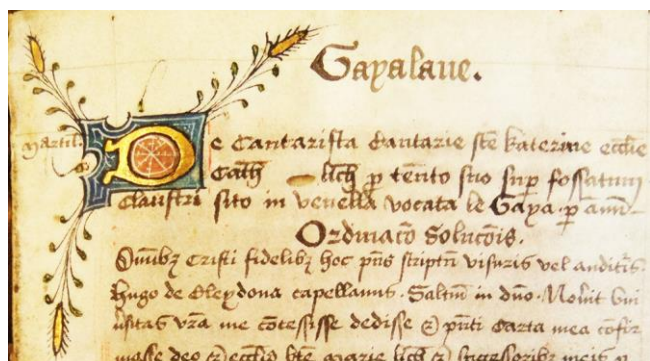
I'm not aware of any connection between Shakespeare and Staffordshire; does anyone know of one?

Richard Totty April 2016

The Vicars Choral of Lichfield Cathedral

During his recent interesting and entertaining talk to the Society on the later history of the Vicars Choral Michael Guest said that by 1800 a substantial proportion of the properties in Lichfield were owned by this group. The Vicars Choral had been accumulating properties for several hundred years by then. In Lichfield Record Office is a small volume known as a Terrier which lists the properties that they owned around 1535 in the City and surrounding areas and it is an impressive list; all properties having been donated by generous citizens.

The interesting thing about this volume though is that it is a palimpsest, that is a book made up from leaves of previously used parchment. The leaves in this book which are of very fine parchment have holes on the outer edges from a previous binding and many of the leaves bear traces of writings, drawings and colours from previous entries which have been washed away. Some pages have areas blacked out with ink. The new entries which relate to



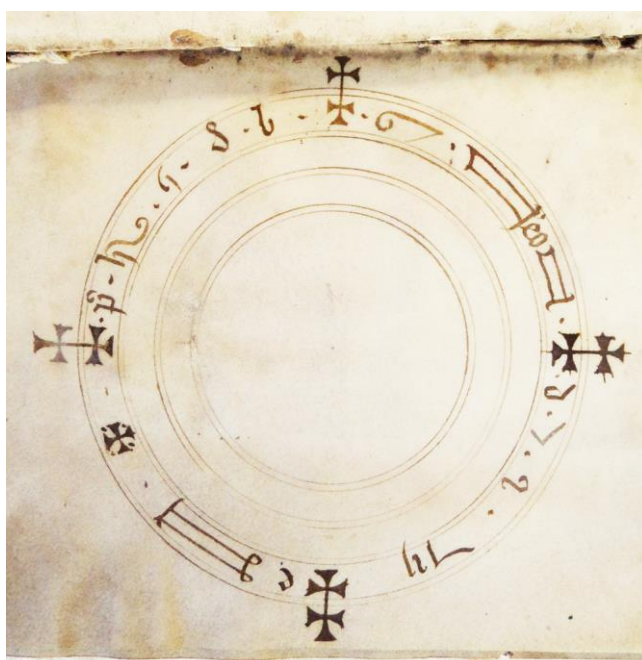
the VCs properties are written clearly in a fine early 16C script in Latin. They are valuable to historians in that as well as properties they describe locations and give the names of tenants. The first page has the lovely illuminated capital shown here.

either obsolete or irrelevant but the parchment leaves were too valuable to discard and were eminently suitable for recycling. The entire book would merit study using the modern scientific techniques described in other notes in this newsletter in order to get a better understanding of what the original text was. There are though two leaves with illustrations that have been left *in situ*. The first is a delicate coloured drawing of a king and a semi naked young lady rising from a wooden box. Very nicely drawn but what is the subject and why was it left untouched? It does represent one of the earliest artworks on parchment to be preserved in Lichfield. The other leaf bears a circle with astrological (?) signs. I'm not sure what this means either – does anyone know?

Richard Totty May 2016



The traces of the original entries are difficult to decipher but it is thought that they may be from a work or medicine or astrology from the previous century. Whatever it was the text must have been considered



Bamburgh Castle Excavations

You may remember there was an announcement at our lecture on April 15th that we'd had an Invitation to take part in this year's excavations at Bamburgh Castle. As we were heading that way in the next week as part of our Spring Break, we took the opportunity to go to Bamburgh to see what it looked like. It was a journey we'd been meaning to take to visit Northumberland again, since a very brief one over fifty years ago to see about a new job (I didn't take it!).

We were staying in Longhoughton in a very nice B&B, the weather was fine so we made a morning trip to the Farne Islands to see the birds and seals and hear all about Grace Darling, the lighthouse keeper's daughter. In the afternoon we drove up the coast to Bamburgh.. The main road is several miles inland so you approach Bamburgh village from inland. Since it is fairly hilly you can only first see the Castle from about a mile away as a big long red wall on top of a small steep sided hill with some turrets showing above it. As you get closer you realise the hill is very steep!

The current castle is mainly the construction of Lord Armstrong of Cragston (another place to visit) who bought it off his distant relative in 1894 for £60,000. His intention was to create a great country house to provide a convalescent home for retired gentlemen! No mention of their wives at that time. When he died in 1903 his nephew became the 2nd Lord Armstrong and decided to make it the main family residence as it is still today.



Bamburgh Castle from the south

The rocky outcrop of volcanic dolerite, known as whinstone from the sound when it is struck, has been a defended site since pre-history. The base of the castle wall stands some 45m (150ft) above sea level with steep sides. The local Votadini tribe are believed to have occupied the site from before 800BC; the Romans used it for a beacon as part of the defence against Vikings raiders. Recorded history starts around 547 AD when Ida was recorded as 'Ida Rex Benicia' as the area was called by the Anglo-Saxons. The Vikings destroyed the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria in 867 when King Egbert I became King of England such as it was. His line carried on till Æthelstan of England came to the throne in about 933. Bamburgh was held at this time by ealdorman and high-reeves. The history goes on through the Normans to the present day. The principal events earlier were around the children of Aethelfrith, Oswald and Oswi who were sent to Iona to be educated and were there baptised by the monks.

By then Bamburgh was a stone building with a fortified wall and an entrance hewn through the rock. The wall enclosed an 'area of two or three fields'. In 634 Oswald returned to Bamburgh and became King of Northumbria. He was a wise and generous man and sent to Iona for a Bishop to help him convert his people to Christianity. The Abbot of Iona sent him Aidan and Oswald gave him the rocky island which became

Lindisfarne. The Monastery he founded became a centre of learning, art and Christianity for the whole of Europe. St Chad was one of the many who studied under Abbot Aidan. The monastery lasted until it was sacked by the Vikings in 793. Bamburgh itself was destroyed by the Vikings in 993 and lay in ruins until the Normans arrived.

The Armstrong's had always been interested in the past history of their home. They realised that because of the relation to Lindisfarne they had a very important Anglo-Saxon site. The first excavations took place in 1950 and 1961 by Dr Brian Hope-Taylor outside the curtain wall on the seaward side, known as the West Ward which is now grassed over and is part of the entry to the castle. He found some important pattern welded swords, styka coins and much information about the use of the site and its buildings. The small gold plaque with a zoomorphic animal embossed on it, which has been adopted as the castle's motif, was found in a later excavation in 1971. However, he never published his report. His papers and some of his collection only became available to be studied on his death in 2001.

The Bamburgh Research Project was founded in 1996 by local professional archaeologists who lived and worked in the northeast. They were allowed to excavate by Lady Armstrong. The Project Director Graeme Young had had a lifelong fascination with the castle and its history. Since that time they have carried on what Hope-Taylor had started and have made many world class discoveries. You can find more information about their excavations at their website www.bamburghresearchproject.co.uk. Since 2010 they have been run a blog giving extensive details of what they had been doing.

One aim was to re-discover an ancient burial ground that had once been exposed during storms and which was believed to dwell in the sand dunes around Bamburgh Castle. Thankfully the location was noted on the 1890 ordnance survey map marked as the 'Old Danish Burying Ground'. So in 1998 they started doing a series of test pits in the area and rapidly discovered human bones. In the end after nine years work they had discovered over 100 skeletons. They are still analysing the bones! Unfortunately, the Durham University study is still not finished but extracts have been quoted in several places!

One of our aims was to see the site that has been worked on by so many volunteers. As was mentioned in the beginning they have been running Summer Camps for them since 2000. When we visited all we could see was two large areas, one mostly covered in blue plastic!

As you can see they are now quite deep below the surface. The right hand picture shows Trench 1 at the excavation at the north end. The area was found to have had a Saxon timber hall built on it. A later stone built hall was found on top of this one! They are believed to be the Gate Wardens Hall since it is immediately above the cleft that leads down to St Oswald's Gate. This is thought to have been the original entrance to the



Castle. Excavations have found signs of severe burning which are possibly the remains an assault on the gate. Bede mentions an attack by Penda, King of Mercia on the site in the 7th Century! The 'spike' at the back is the only remaining part of the medieval curtain wall which extended all the way round the seaward side.

Since 2009 the Project has extended inland to include a wetland site called Bradford Kaims where they have been making discoveries reaching back into the Neolithic. They have found much human activity reaching back to over 6000 BP with a series of burnt mounds and wooden platforms preserved in the peat. They have possible evidence of the use of seacoal from the mounds so taking the earliest date for its use back by 4000 years from the Roman time!

We had a sunny but cold day but by Summer the temperature will have improved. Many of the volunteers are happy to camp locally and on-site and return every year. They don't all have to dig, cleaning and recording finds is an important part of the process. As you can find in the extensive Blog, students come from many overseas Universities as well.

We were only able to stay in the area for four days but we can easily imagine that they have a good time! Northumbrian hospitality was very easy to find and good value, especially the fish and chips! We shall have to return!

Jean and Paul Norris May 2016

Newsletter Editor's Footnote

I have been editing our Newsletter since 'volunteering' to do the job since December 2007. So this forthcoming AGM will have seen me doing the job for nine years. During this time, I have been ably supported by many members of the Committee (in alphabetical order), Keith Billington, Brian Bull, Betty Fox, Peter Evans, Mike Hodder, John Hunt, Susan Lupton, Richard Totty, Nigel Tringham and Diane Wilkes. They have all been cajoled, pressed, chased even, to write something or point out something in a small paragraph that is of general interest to our Members. I would like to record my sincere thanks for all their efforts.

What has been missing however is input from the general membership. In spite of many appeals over the years nobody has come forward from the general membership with even a short item for inclusion. Your membership of the SAHS really comes with an unstated obligation to give something back to reward those who have spent time and energy in providing the entertainment and information for you on twelve Friday evenings in the year!

As most of you will know I was also persuaded to take over the running of the Societies Website in April 2014! Since our General Secretary left rather rapidly the transition was a bit of scramble but with some trepidation I found that it was not so difficult as I expected. As much of the information on the website comes from having the newsletters included for download, Lecture programme to load in and Transaction to be included, there is a sort of a link between the two jobs.

As I have been saying at the last few meetings this year I intend to retire from the post at the December 2016 AGM. By then I shall have reached my 85th Birthday! I hope to have many more years of active life but it's time that somebody else 'volunteers' to take over the Newsletter Editors position! Training available by helping to produce the September and January Newsletters! We have had interest but so far no firm commitment.

The Committee has decided that the job of running the website (our window to the outside world) will be partially taken over by a professional company to enable us to raise our profile and attract new members. I reckon that the access to our Transactions alone is worth the membership fee. We will still require somebody to update the material on the website a few times a year.

History is important and cannot be left to professionals alone. What is under our feet tells us more about the past than we might have ever guessed. Having these skilled people coming to talk to us in the Guildhall on Fridays to tell us what they have found keeps them on their toes!

Regards

Paul Norris