



*Staffordshire  
Archaeological  
and Historical Society*



## NEWSLETTER September 2018

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**Bradgate Park June 2018 Dr Richard Thomas**

**of the University of Leicester showing members his current excavation in Dog Kennel Meadow on a sunny June evening at Bradgate.**

# Lecture Season 2018-2019

**28th September 2018**

**Richard Bifield**

**1709-2009: Celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Birth of the Industrial Revolution at Coalbrookdale**

1709 refers to the date when Abraham Darby first perfected the technique of smelting iron using coke from coal as opposed to charcoal the traditional fuel. From the innovation stemmed a whole series of technological firsts that made Coalbrookdale the world's most important iron making district by the end of the 18th century. Richard qualified as a Town Planner working at Lincoln, Newcastle upon Tyne, Reading and finally before retiring to the Wrekin as Conservation Officer.

**12 October 2018**

**Nigel Page**

**Recent Investigations at Baginton Warwickshire**

Nigel is a Senior Archaeological Officer at Archaeology Warwickshire and since joining AW in 2017 has worked on some incredible projects including a small Early Bronze Age hengiform monument that had five later Bronze Age burials in the ditch in Newbold on Stour. But, if that wasn't enough for his first year he then moved onto this site at Baginton, which was not only one of the largest area excavations we have done, but it also turned out to be an incredibly important site.

A total of c.7ha was excavated, the majority on the high valley slopes on the south bank of the River Sowe. The earliest evidence encountered was a series of possible Neolithic pits containing flint artefacts located on a northerly promontory over the Sowe valley. The truncated remains of a possible Bronze Age ring ditch was recorded on the shoulder of the valley along with a possible burnt mound of assumed 2nd millennium BC date close to a former spring. A Roman cremation cemetery extended over the western part of the site. Many burials were urned and some were accompanied by grave goods including additional vessels and personal items. They can with some certainty be associated with the Lunt Roman Fort which is c.500m to the west. A series of field boundaries to the east of the cemetery may also have been of similar date.

Anglo-Saxon activity on the site included a series of sunken featured buildings, pits and a small cemetery. No human remains survived but some burials included grave goods; one grave in particular was rich in artefacts and included the remains of a hanging bowl. Metalwork from the site required immediate conservation and a range of important organic remains was also discovered in the process.

**26 October 2018**

**Malcolm Dick**

**Slavery, Anti-Slavery and the Black Presence in the West Midlands 1700 to 1838'**

The West Midlands became increasingly connected with a global economy after 1700. One dimension involved the export of manufactured products to Africa and the West Indies as part of the transatlantic slave trade - and one result was the arrival of black individuals in the area. By the late-eighteenth century, however, local people were also actively participating in the abolitionist movement. This presentation will explore and evaluate these aspects of the region's history with particular reference to Staffordshire evidence.

Malcolm is Lecturer in Regional and Local History at Birmingham University. He is also Editor in Chief of the "History West Midlands Project".

**9 November 2018**

**Shane Kelleher**

**From the 'Most Extraordinary District in the World' to a 'Very Poor Bit of the Fag End of It':  
Archaeology at the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and other tales from a career in ruins.**

This talk will be an introduction to Staffordshire's new County Archaeologist and will focus largely on his time at the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site where he was responsible for advising on the care, conservation and interpretation of some of the most important industrial monuments in the world. He inspired new generations of archaeologists by setting up and running the Ironbridge Young Archaeologists' Club, and through his running of Ironbridge Archaeology, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's commercial archaeology unit, managed and undertook projects at high profile sites such as the Iron Bridge, Bedlam Furnaces, Middleport Pottery, and the Jackfield Stabilisation Project. The talk will also look at Shane's time as the Industrial Heritage Support Officer for England, touch on his time at Birmingham Archaeology, including his work on the Staffordshire Schools Project, Betley Model Farm, and Beaudesert Hall, and provide an introduction to his new role which will include an overview of the Chase Through Time and Transforming the Trent Valley projects.

**23 November 2018**

**David Freke**

**Mind the Gap: 2500 years of high level activity at Warmington, South Warwickshire**

The talk describes the ten years of community investigation of a south Warwickshire prehistoric and Roman site in its landscape context. The "gaps" in the title are topographical, chronological, artefactual and interpretational, and they are as intriguing as the material revealed at the site, which includes 2 Roman coin hoards, a Neolithic burial, a massive iron age earthwork and much more.

David has 50 years of experience of archaeological investigations, principally in England and the Isle of Man. He lives on a smallholding in South Warwickshire, which includes a DMV and 70 sheep.

**7 December 2018      Annual General Meeting**

**AGM 7.30pm start - Lecture 8.00pm start**

**Walsall, Town of a Hundred Trades**

**Mike Glasson**

A celebration of the remarkable diversity of trades which have been practised in Walsall over the past 800 years- everything from handbags and saddles for the Queen to wheelbarrows, whips, and washing machines. Lloyd George thought that Walsall had more trades than any other town of similar size in the country, and he was probably right! The talk will explore some of these trades in detail, and examine the themes of ingenuity, excellence, adaptability and diversity which have characterised the local manufacturing tradition.

Mike was curator of the Walsall Leather Museum for 30 years and Head of Walsall Museums Service until his recent retirement. He lives in Walsall.

**22 February 2019**

**Henry Chapman**

**Bog Bodies and Sacrifice**

Henry is a prehistorian specialising primarily in the archaeology of wetlands. Most recently, his research has focused on the topic of Iron Age bog bodies – human remains preserved within peatlands. Here, the debate centres on whether these remains represent the victims of murder, human sacrifice or criminal execution. Henry's research has approached this debate by investigating the landscape archaeology of these events and the exploration of the suffering that the individuals experienced in

their final moments. This will be the focus of his lecture. Henry has worked for the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, the University of Hull and Channel 4's Time Team. He is currently Professor of Archaeology at the University of Birmingham and is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

**8 March 2019**

**Tim Skelton**

### **Lutyens and the Great War**

**This Lecture will be a 7.30pm start**

Tim is a retired chartered surveyor and, twenty years ago, started researching the various memorials that were designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in connection with the dead of World War One, which included his extensive work for the then Imperial War Graves Commission - it was part of his work that had never before been investigated in detail. It led, in turn to the opportunity to write a book "Lutyens And The Great War" with Gerald Gliddon (published 2008). The illustrated talk will look at all of the aspects of this work and will include some of the stories behind the commissioning of individual memorials which is, in itself, a revealing portrait of community life in the years after the end of the War.

**22 March 2019**

**Chris Callow**

### **What happened in Medieval Iceland? Using sagas and other sources to assess political change.**

Iceland was colonised from scratch in the Viking Age and eventually emerges as a fairly conventional-looking western European society by the fifteenth century, although always remaining a relatively poor community of pastoral farmers. The sources for its medieval history are, however, anything but conventional. Sagas form a large and interesting corpus of information which we have to make use of for the period of Iceland's history before 1300, providing significant challenges to historians for various reasons. Chris will offer his view on how we can assess the power of Iceland's 'chieftains' in the period before Icelandic leaders formally submitted to the Norwegian king in the 1260s, considering the sagas but in the light of other forms of evidence such as archaeology and more conventional documents. Chris has been Lecturer in Medieval History at University of Birmingham since 2005 and his research interests lie in the Middle Ages with particular specialisms in Iceland and the Vikings.

**5 April 2019**

**Jane Hearn**

### **Britain's Post War Prefabs - Building the Post-War World**

The Prefab Museum tells a story that resonates today and paints a picture of social, domestic, and working class life in Britain from 1946 to the present day. These prefabricated homes were designed to last 10-15 years when they were erected between 1946-1948 but thousands have survived, lived in and loved by their residents. Jane Hearn, codirector of the museum, will talk about the history and development of the post-war prefab, the architecture and designs, and the communities that lived - and still live - in them.

Jane is co-director of the Prefab Museum and a community development worker. Her interest in post-war prefabs dates back to 1990 when she first visited the Excalibur Estate of 187 prefabs, the last large group in London.

**26 April 2019**

**Jenny Gilbert**

## The Hodson Shop Collection

Walsall Museum's Hodson Shop Collection contains over 5,000 items of mass produced clothing shop stock. Following its discovery in 1983, it began a journey from piles of dirty old clothing to a renowned museum collection. This journey has not been straightforward, with the collection's status fluctuating over the years. This talk introduces the collection, describes its history, raises important questions about the place of everyday clothing in museums and considers the risks facing collections in small local history museums.

Jenny Gilbert is a lecturer in Design Cultures at De Montfort University, Leicester. She completed her PhD at University of Wolverhampton in 2016. The research built a detailed biographical case study of the museum life of Walsall Museum's Hodson Shop Collection. Jenny's research focuses upon every day, and arguably mundane, experiences of dress, fashion and retail.

**10th May 2019**

## Della Hooke

## Water and the Environment in the Anglo-Saxon World

**This Lecture will be a 7.30pm start**

**Lectures are held in the Guildhall Bore Street Lichfield and unless otherwise noted start at 8.00pm**

**Refreshments are available half an hour before the start of the meeting**

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**Advocacy news: Wall Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.**

Lichfield District Council has produced a draft document on Wall Conservation Area, on which it invited comments prior to its adoption by the Council. This is a strategic planning document, therefore the Society responded to the consultation in accordance with its advocacy guidelines as set out in the January *Newsletter*. The Society has, of course, particularly close links with Wall because it conducted archaeological excavations at various Roman sites there, over many years.

We welcomed production of the document in general but we were concerned about some details of it. We felt that addressing these points would strengthen the document and therefore the protection that conservation area designation seeks to achieve.

In particular, we felt that the relationship between the conservation area and the area designated as a scheduled monument (most of the village and its surroundings) needed to be more clearly explained. Because of the extent of the scheduled monument at Wall we strongly recommend that the document should contain information about scheduling. We suggested that both of the maps in the document should show the extent of the scheduled monument because it is slightly different from that of the Conservation Area.

The document proposes changes to the boundary of the Conservation Area which consist of exclusions resulting in a more logical boundary, and extensions. We strongly recommended that it should be made clear that the proposed boundary changes to the Conservation Area do not affect the extent of the scheduled monument and that those areas of the scheduled monument which it is proposed to remove from the Conservation Area (north and east of The Butts, west of The Butts and south of Watling Street to the north of the A5 Wall Bypass) will remain subject to scheduled monument controls in addition to planning requirements. We also recommended that the document should state that there are other archaeological remains outside the area of the

scheduled monument and that archaeological works are likely to be required as a condition of planning permission.

We commented on proposals for an Article 4 Direction (which removes some permitted development rights) and recommended a blanket Article 4 Direction on all residential properties fronting onto a highway. Even though there have been changes to many properties such a Direction will provide an opportunity to control future alterations to enhance the conservation area and will be a fair application of the power to all residential owners.

The document proposed adding some buildings to the local list, to recognise their significance. We suggested that the Museum building on Watling Street should be added to this list because of its long-standing association with the Roman remains. We also recommended that the boundary wall of Castle Croft on Watling Street should also be added to the local list because it is constructed of reused Roman masonry.

The draft document is at <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Council/Planning/Conservation-and-listed-buildings/Downloads/Conservation-areas/Wall-Draft-Conservation-Area-Appraisal-Management-Plan.pdf>

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## **From Weeford to Westport: a bit of Staffordshire in Ireland (and a lot of archaeology as well!)**

On our recent visit to Ireland, Sue and I went to Castle Coole near Enniskillen in County Fermanagh, which was built in 1789-97 as the home of the Earl of Belmore and is now owned by the National Trust. It was designed by the Staffordshire architect James Wyatt (1746-1813), who was born at Blackbrook Farm in Weeford (which still stands, on the A38). Wyatt was an extremely successful and prolific architect who worked throughout the country: locally he designed Little Aston Hall and Weeford church, and he was involved with Alton Towers and the restoration of Lichfield Cathedral. In Ireland he also designed the layout of the town of Westport on the west coast in County Mayo. The quantity and extent of Wyatt's work meant that it was impossible for him to actually visit the sites of all his projects. On his only visit to Ireland he didn't travel to the far west, so he never saw Castle Coole or Westport





### *Castle Coole Co Fermanagh*

Of course, Castle Coole was just one of many places we visited on our trip. The well-preserved archaeological remains of various periods of Ireland's past (in both the Republic and Northern Ireland) include distinctive types of prehistoric and early medieval monuments (Ireland was never part of the Roman Empire but there is increasing evidence of trade with Roman Britain) and other more familiar sites bearing witness to the island's often difficult relationship with England, and later Great Britain, since the twelfth century. Although we'd visited several times before we still found places we hadn't previously seen, and we revisited some old favourites.

Neolithic court cairns, named after the "court" lined with large stones at the end of, or within, a stone mound, are found mainly in the north of the country, such as that at Annaghmare (Co Armagh) and are similar to some chambered tombs in south-west Scotland. The passage graves of the Boyne Valley (Co Meath) including the famous Newgrange are well known for their megalithic architecture and their art. The controlled visitor arrangements deterred us from revisiting Newgrange but we went again to Dowth (Co Meath) with its decorated kerbstones and revisited the more remote Carrowkeel (Co Sligo) where many passage tombs, picked out by their stone cairns, are dotted over several hilltops.



### *Carrowkeel Co Sligo*

At Beaghmore (Co Tyrone) an extensive and complex group of Bronze Age stone circles and alignments was later engulfed by bog, and Ireland's peat also conceals timber trackways like those found, for example, in the Somerset Levels. Part of an excavated Iron Age trackway is displayed *in situ* at Corlea (Co Longford). Hillforts, which tend to be of Iron Age date in Britain, were constructed in the Bronze Age in Ireland, but during the equivalent of the British late Iron Age hilltops at Tara (Co Meath) and Navan Fort (Co Armagh) were surrounded by banks with internal ditches suggesting a ceremonial rather than defensive function. Along with Rathcroghan (Co

Roscommon) and Dun Ailinne (Co Kildare) they are identified as Royal sites in later literature such as the *Tain*. They include older monuments such as a Neolithic Passage grave at Tara and Bronze Age structures at Navan. A massive circular timber building which was constructed within the enclosure at Navan in the first century AD was subsequently burnt and covered by a large mound. Other structures were built at a later date at some of these sites. At Rathcroghan we boldly ventured into a souterrain (an early medieval underground passage and chamber used for storage or refuge) which unusually incorporates a natural cave.

Some of the many early medieval “ringforts” (most of which were farmsteads) were built within earlier enclosures, such as that at Clogher (Co Tyrone) where metalworking took place and pottery imported from the Mediterranean in the fifth and sixth centuries was used. It was the seat of a tribal group and a mound there may have been used in the inauguration of kings. Tullaghogue (Co Tyrone) was the inauguration site of the O’Neills, the most powerful kings of medieval Ulster, and a stone inauguration seat or throne (the equivalent of the Scottish Stone of Scone) here was destroyed in the seventeenth century. Early Irish monasteries followed a Celtic tradition and consisted of churches, graveyards, workshops and other buildings in circular or oval enclosures, as at Nendrum (Co Down) and Moyne (Co Mayo). Some of them included high crosses carved with biblical and secular scenes such as Monasterboice (Co Louth), and conical-roofed round towers such as Devenish (Co Fermanagh) which housed bells but also served as places of refuge and storage for valuables in times of trouble. Curious carved figures formed part of the church at White Island (Co Fermanagh). The first Irish monastery to be built on the continental claustral plan was Mellifont (Co Louth) and many more including the Cistercian houses at Inch Abbey and Grey Abbey (both Co Down) were built following the Norman incursions of the twelfth century, which also saw the construction of motte and bailey castles such as Dromore (Co Down). Stone castles and walled towns such as Trim (Co Meath) were built by English lords. Trim survives but the walled town at Rindown (Co Roscommon) was deserted after just over a century of occupation, resulting in the excellent preservation of its town wall which cuts off a peninsula and now encloses only the ruined church and castle. Rindown Castle, built in the early thirteenth century, has a hall keep; Roscommon Castle was built later in the thirteenth century and has a similar plan to that of Harlech Castle in Wales. Tower houses like those in Scotland were built throughout Ireland in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, such as Rockfleet Castle (Co Mayo). In the seventeenth-century “Plantations”, new settlers from Britain, many of them Scottish, built fortified houses, sometimes on the sites of early tower houses, such as Parkes Castle (Co Leitrim). They are often built in a Scottish style with projecting corner turrets (bartizans) and are accompanied by walled enclosures or bawns, such as Tully Castle (Co Fermanagh). Recent archaeological research has included the study of rural settlements that were occupied up to, and in some cases beyond, the nineteenth-century Famine, such as the deserted village at Slievemore on Achill Island (Co Mayo), which with its well-preserved houses is rather like the more recently deserted St Kilda, and is surrounded by ridges (“lazy beds”) showing the former extent of cultivation. Excavations at nearby Keem Bay are investigating some pre-Famine houses which now survive only as earthworks because they were deliberately dismantled to reuse their stones. From more recent times, the wall topped by barbed wire, searchlights and security cameras around the now disused police station compound at Downpatrick (Co Down) is a grim reminder of the twentieth century Troubles.

Ireland is well worth visiting! The most recent and most comprehensive archaeological guide to the whole island is *Ireland: An Oxford Archaeological Guide to Sites from Earliest Times to AD 1600*, by Andy Halpin and Conor Newman (Oxford University Press 2006, reprinted 2008). Other sites are included in *A Guide to the Historic Monuments of Northern Ireland in State Care* (Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 2009) and of course there are many websites, including that of the National Trust for their Northern Ireland properties.

**Mike Hodder**



### **Renewing Your Membership Sub – electronically through PayPal**

Annual Membership Subscriptions became due on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018. The rates have once again not changed and are: Individual Membership £20.00, Joint Membership £30.00, Concessionary Membership (Students and Unwaged) £15.00.

Many will be paying by cash or cheque, or for some it is taken care of automatically by bank standing order. Please email or speak to the Hon Treasurer if you would like to set up a standing order.

Alternatively you can renew subscription electronically. Log on to the Society's website [www.sahs.uk.net](http://www.sahs.uk.net) and from the home page follow the links to pay us using PayPal (you don't need to have a PayPal account). Select the type of Membership and with your bank card details to hand make the appropriate payment.

It is easy for us to keep our subscription records up to date as PayPal always email a full details of payer, etc. advice to the Honorary Treasurer immediately on the payment transaction occurring. The payer receives email confirmations, one from PayPal and one from ourselves. A secure and certain way of paying us.

Another means of keeping up to date. If you have any query please contact the Hon Treasurer at [kjboutthere@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kjboutthere@yahoo.co.uk)

Many thanks.

Keith Billington

[illegible]

## The Summer of 66

Exploits by England in the World Cup inevitably bring to mind the summer 1966 when England last won the trophy. I watched the final (or at least the second half) on a scratchy black and white television in the bar of a boarding school at Chilton Cantelo in Somerset.

I was working on the excavation of Cadbury Castle an extensive hill fort at nearby South Cadbury. This was the first professional excavation I had worked at; the previous ones were all amateur led, but this one was led by Leslie Alcock of University College Cardiff. The site was expected to reveal evidence of dark age occupation and had long been associated with King Arthur as a possible site for Camelot. In addition it was known that there had been an Anglo-Saxon mint there or at least that Anglo-Saxon coins bearing the name Cadbury existed.

Cadbury is a multivallate fort on a prominent hill top and had not been previously much excavated. The site covered 18 acres and stood 250ft above the Somerset plain to the west with splendid views. The ramparts were wooded but the interior quite bare. Alcock played heavily on the Camelot connection in the hope of attracting media interest which it did; TV crews arrived to film us excavating deep trenches, as well as many members of the public. This was the first season and was in the nature of a preliminary exploration of the site; just three trenches were dug, one through the largest surviving bank and ditch section, another at the highest point of the interior and the third at the centre and it was at this one that I worked.

Alcock's main assistants were his graduate students but there were many volunteers; we all stayed in the boarding school which was a step up from the previous year when I had slept on the ground under canvas for a month. We were there for I think three weeks; enough for my trench to go down eight to ten feet, most of which was hard digging with little that was delicate. Health and Safety was rudimentary – Alcock's book has a photograph of a young lady kneeling at the bottom of a ten foot deep trench with no protection at all, We found very little; the most exciting was a small gilt bronze capital letter A which was immediately seized on as evidence that this was indeed Arthur's palace that we were excavating. I learned much including how to draw plans and sections of trenches and also the essential skill of how to grub up soil to make faint and indistinct marks more visible on a photograph. It was a hot summer; I do not remember being rained off at all although there was little shelter especially in the centre of the fort. Our evenings were spent in the bar at the school; it must have been a cramming for older teenagers trying again for A levels. One evening we all decamped to visit Maiden Castle; we had thought that Cadbury was big but we rapidly changed our mind when we arrived at Maiden Castle which dwarfed Cadbury.



*Cadbury Castle, South Cadbury, Somerset*

You can read more about Cadbury Castle in Alcock's 1972 book 'By South Cadbury is that Camelot' which records this and the following four seasons he was there. Alas I was not there as I could not find the time in the final years of my Ph.D. The book looks like a coffee table volume but is an excellent account of the project and well illustrated. Full academic reports had to wait a further 20 years before one authored by Alcock appeared and the second a decade later authored by others. He came to regret the Camelot association which tended to follow him around and distracted attention from the main results of his work. Looking back the results from a very expensive enterprise are disappointing; little of real value was found and none of the questions that Alcock hoped to answer were resolved. Visiting earlier this summer Cadbury Castle has returned to the slumbers that we so rudely disturbed. If you happen to be in this corner of Somerset it is still an interesting and atmospheric place to visit.

**Richard Totty**



The History of Parliament Trust have received HLF funding for a project this autumn to mark the 75th anniversary of the death of Josiah C. Wedgwood, in and around Newcastle-under-Lyme, the parliamentary constituency he served for nearly forty years. The project will celebrate Wedgwood's passionate campaigning life and his fight for liberal democracy in a world threatened by totalitarianism. 'Commemorating Josiah C. Wedgwood' will tour an exhibition on Wedgwood's life and campaigns against fascism around Staffordshire.

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**I wound the heart and please the eye. Tell me what I am, by and by.**

(from A Book of Merrie Riddles published 1631)

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## **Visit to Sandfields Pumping Station Lichfield**

We have organised a visit to the Sandfields Pumping Station in Lichfield at 1.00pm on Thursday November 1 2018. Members should register their intention of taking part by leaving their names on the list at the reception desk at our Friday evening meetings or e mailing [richard.totty4@gmail.com](mailto:richard.totty4@gmail.com). There will be a charge of £3 per person to be collected on the day. The building contains one of the finest examples of a 'Cornish Style' beam engine built by Jonah and George Davies of Tipton, and therefore was an integral to the industrial development of the area. The building has no lighting so we will need to visit in the daylight hence the middle of the day starting time.

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**Book Review : Stoke-on-Trent in 50 Buildings, Mervyn Edwards, Amberley, 2018, 96p, £14-99. ISBN 978-1-4456-7781-1**

Mervyn Edwards records that there are fewer than 200 listed buildings in Stoke-on-Trent. The limited number of listed buildings is an immediate indication of the constraints under which he has been making his selection of fifty buildings for us to celebrate.

His selection basically reflects the character and energy of this historic industrial city which we tend to label as 'The Potteries'. The fact that only two of the examples pre-date the industrial era is an indication in itself of the paucity of possible earlier evidence.

Anyone making such a selection will be a hostage to fortune and to critics who will be bound to complain about the omission of their specifically favourite building.

Mervyn Edwards has provided a good selection, ranging from the Bethesda Chapel at Hanley [1819], remembered for its role in the BBC *Restoration* programme, to Tunstall Town Hall [1885] and the Middleport Pottery [1889], and he certainly does not exclude examples which have been of concern to architectural and local historians, such as the former St John the Evangelist Church at Hanley which has recently been revived as an antiques centre. His range is from the timber-framed Ford Green Hall [1624] to the Vodafone Contact Centre at Etruria Valley [2009] and with every entry has provided a good explanation of the historical development and modern role of each building.

However much I have valued this book and its selection, from my specialist research background I must argue that my choice for the exemplar public house or inn would not have been the Golden Cup at Hanley [1912]. My nomination would have to be The Leopard at Burslem, known historically as 'The Savoy of the Midlands', at which inn in 1765 Josiah Wedgwood is known to have met James Brindley to discuss the planning of the Trent and Mersey Canal.

**Trevor James**



# Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society

## Tour of Worcester Cathedral

Wednesday 24 October 2018 at 11.30am



11.00 - 11.30 meet in Cathedral coffee shop

11.30 - 13.00 guided tour of the ground level of the Cathedral with Christopher Guy the Cathedral Archaeologist

13.00 - 14.00 break for lunch or further exploration of the Cathedral

2.00 - 3.00 tour of the Cathedral library with David Morrison the Librarian

This tour has been timed so that those travelling by train can catch the 09.50 from Birmingham New Street to Worcester Foregate Street arriving at 10.30 There are car parks near the Cathedral and as well as the Cathedral coffee shop there are other places for refreshments nearby.

Please reserve ..... Places on the tour of Worcester Cathedral on Wednesday 24 October 2018 @ £13.00

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Send to Richard Totty Rock Cottage Redhill Rugeley WS15 4LL [richard.totty4@gmail.com](mailto:richard.totty4@gmail.com) 01543 491830



## Megalithic Yards, Ley Lines and Woolworths

In 2010, a 'researcher' Tom Brooks having analysed 1500 prehistoric monuments, found them all to be on a grid of isosceles triangles, each pointing to the next site. This ancient 'sat nav' he believed allowed our ancestors to travel with pinpoint accuracy. Mr Brooks had discovered that there were keen mathematicians and civil engineers here in Britain 5000 years ago.

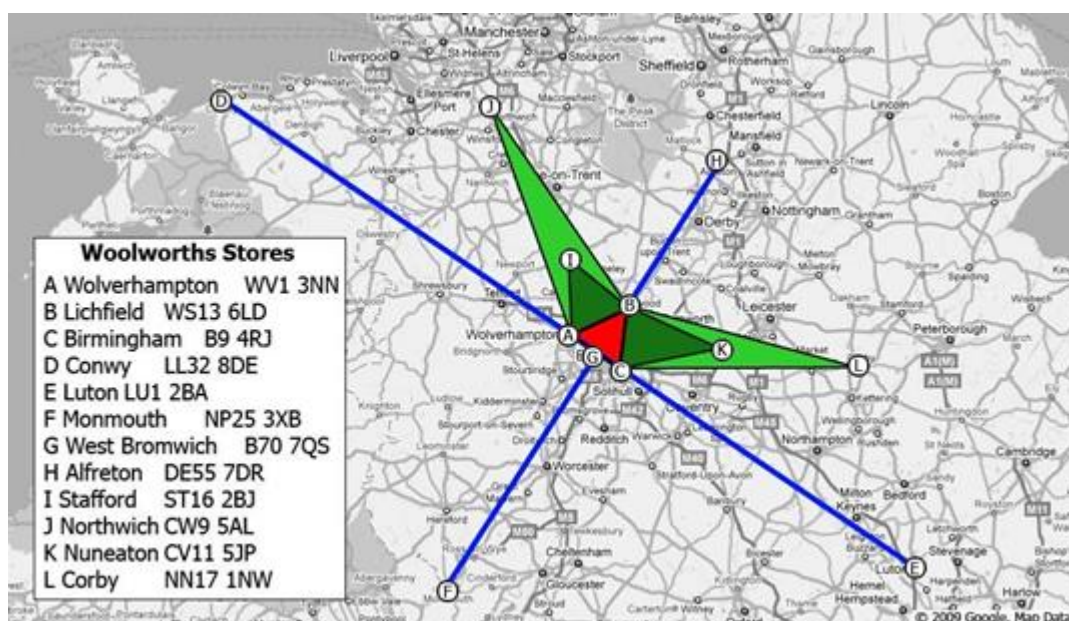
This is echoed in the provoking research undertaken by Sam Whitehouse in his entertaining serial machinations on Knaves Castle, in the previous three Newsletters. He has asked SAHS members to consider his 'novel and controversial theories'. I am happy to add my thoughts.

Mr Whitehouse relies heavily on the work of Alexander Thom and Alfred Watkins.

Thom, in his 'Megalithic Sites of Britain' (1967) proposed a 'unit' of 2.72 feet (829 mm) as a 'megalithic yard'. It has failed to convince mainstream archaeologists, with Aubrey Burl in his 'Rings of Stone: The Prehistoric Stones Circles of Britain and Ireland' (1979) referring to the megalithic yard as 'a chimera, a grotesque statistical misconception'. Douglas Heggie after careful analysis also cast serious doubt on Thom's suggestion, stating that there was 'little justification that a highly accurate unit was in use' ('Megalithic Science: Ancient Mathematics and Astronomy in North-West Europe', 1981).

Clive Ruggles, no stranger to SAHS, states that the evidence presented by Thom could easily be explained by pacing, the 'unit' reflecting an average length of pace ('Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland', 1999).

Thom's book fitted neatly alongside Gerald Hawkins's 'Stonehenge Decoded' (1965) which presented the monument as an ancient observatory and John Mitchell's 'The View over Atlantis' (1967) which resurrected the largely forgotten ley lines. These books unleashed the dowsers, crystal dangles and hippies to claim our ancient monuments and sites as mystical centres



Alfred Watkins presented his ley line theory in the 'Old Straight Track' (1925), where apparent alignments of landmarks, religious sites and manmade structures were not accidental, but

were straight navigable paths with spiritual significance. His work met with early scepticism, from archaeologists, with O G S Crawford refusing to accept advertisements for the book in the journal 'Antiquity'.

Matthew Parker, of the School of Mathematical Sciences, University of London, applied the theory to find out what life was like in 2008 and how people in those days set about buying cheap CDs, kitchen appliances and pick and mix sweets. He plotted Woolworths stores and the results were spectacular. They revealed a precise geometric placement of Woolworth sites. Three stores (Wolverhampton, Lichfield and Birmingham) formed an exact equilateral triangle. When the base of the triangle was extended, it formed a 173.8 mile line linking the Conwy store to the Luton store. All four stores were aligned over the 173.8 miles with an accuracy of 0.05%.

I do not wish to malign Thom or Watkins, for they did not introduce all the modern hocus pocus. Both made observations and formed natural hypotheses to explain them. However, the evidence has been looked at by others, who have not found them compelling.

Knaves Castle is a destroyed possible earthwork. Does the fact that it lies equidistant between the Staffordshire Hoard site and the former Rising Sun public house on a 3 point ley line prove anything? A random distribution of a sufficient number of points on a plane will inevitably create alignments of chance. Link up those of your choice and you can create your own pseudoarchaeological map and theories.

A final word from the late Jim Gould who visited Knaves Castle in August 1971, during the extensive widening of the A5: 'The road cut through a natural hillock ... and (that) there was no sign of a barrow, ditch or original land surface' (Gould J T, 1971, SBL 5497).

## **Peter Evans**

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## **The Charles Close Society for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps**

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The Charles Close Society are reviving the Midland Group informal meetings here at the Village Hall, in the Roman town of Letocetum - aka Wall near Lichfield.

The next three meetings will take place at 19:30 on Wednesday, 12 September 2018, 9 January 2019 and 8 May 2019. Parishioners and visitors interested in maps are welcome, please arrive promptly. Admission is free but a small charge may be made for tea/coffee.

More information from Lez Watson via his website contact form at [www.watsonlv.net](http://www.watsonlv.net).

*The first meeting will feature, Bill Henwood, who will be giving an illustrated talk on 'The Contoured Map of the Thames Basin' (1870).*

**STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY APPLICATION  
FOR MEMBERSHIP 2018-19 NEW MEMBERS**

Membership fees: Individual £20, Joint £30, Student/Unemployed £15

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Address.....  
.....Postcode .....

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Phone.....

I/we enclose £..... for my/our subscription for the year 2018-19 for Individual / Joint /  
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Signed .....Date .....

Please send to Ms S Lupton, 71 Birchwood Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14 9UN Note:  
Direct Payments can be made using PayPal™ option on the Web site.

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I would like the Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society (SAHS) to treat as Gift Aid  
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# Brindley Village

## A LEGACY OF THE GREAT WAR

A new exhibition telling the story of a lost village  
and the families that lived there.



18th August – 12th October 2018

Museum of Cannock Chase

Valley Road, Hednesford  
Staffordshire, W/S12 1TD  
01543 877666

Open every day, 11am to 5pm  
(last entry 4.30pm)

[www.museumofcannockchase.org](http://www.museumofcannockchase.org)

FREE CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS  
with artist Karen Wicks

For children aged 8 yrs and above where they  
will have the opportunity to try basic printing  
techniques.

Sat 18 August and Sat 1st September  
11am, 12.30 pm & 2.00pm

The sessions are one hour long.  
Places are limited. Call the museum to book.



Funding raised by  
The National Lottery



## The 2018 John Levitt Lecture at Keele

The 2018 lecture will be given by **Dr Clare Downham** of Liverpool University on 27 October 2018 on the subject '**Aethleflaed, lady of the Mercians**,' at 2.00p.m. in the Westminster Theatre, Chancellor's building, Keele University. Free entry.

Dr. Clare Downham studied medieval history at St Andrews University and Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at Cambridge University before becoming a research scholar at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and Lecturer in Celtic and History at Aberdeen University. She moved to Liverpool University in 2010 where she is now Senior Lecturer in Irish Studies. The author of many articles and papers focusing on Viking Age history and contact across the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages, her acclaimed book 'Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ivarr to AD 1014' was published in 2007. Her most recent book, 'Medieval Ireland AD 400-1500', came out last year.

For further details contact Dr Andrew Sargent at Keele, [a.sargent1@keele.ac.uk](mailto:a.sargent1@keele.ac.uk)

This newsletter is edited for the Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society by  
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The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Society.

**Visit our website at [www.sahs.uk.net](http://www.sahs.uk.net)**

The editor welcomes contributions, notices of meetings, book reviews, comments and other snippets of historical and archaeological news from members. The next newsletter will be in January 2019. Copy by December 15 2018 please.

Answer to riddle : 'Beauty'