



Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society



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Wall near Lichfield the site of many excavations by the Society

Committee - A new Honorary General Secretary - Steve Lewitt

Members will be aware that the position of Honorary General Secretary has been vacant for a period of time. We are pleased to announce that Society Member Steve Lewitt has kindly stepped forward to fulfil the role and he has readily been welcomed on to Committee, initially as a co-optee before anticipated election to post at the next AGM. Steve is fairly recently retired, from a career as a professional in industry. He takes on the role of Hon. General Secretary with ample academic credentials. He has significant interests in history and heritage, and is currently studying for a Ph.D. in the field of industrial, environmental and landscape history, with a focus on the County of Staffordshire. We wish him well as he finds his feet with us.

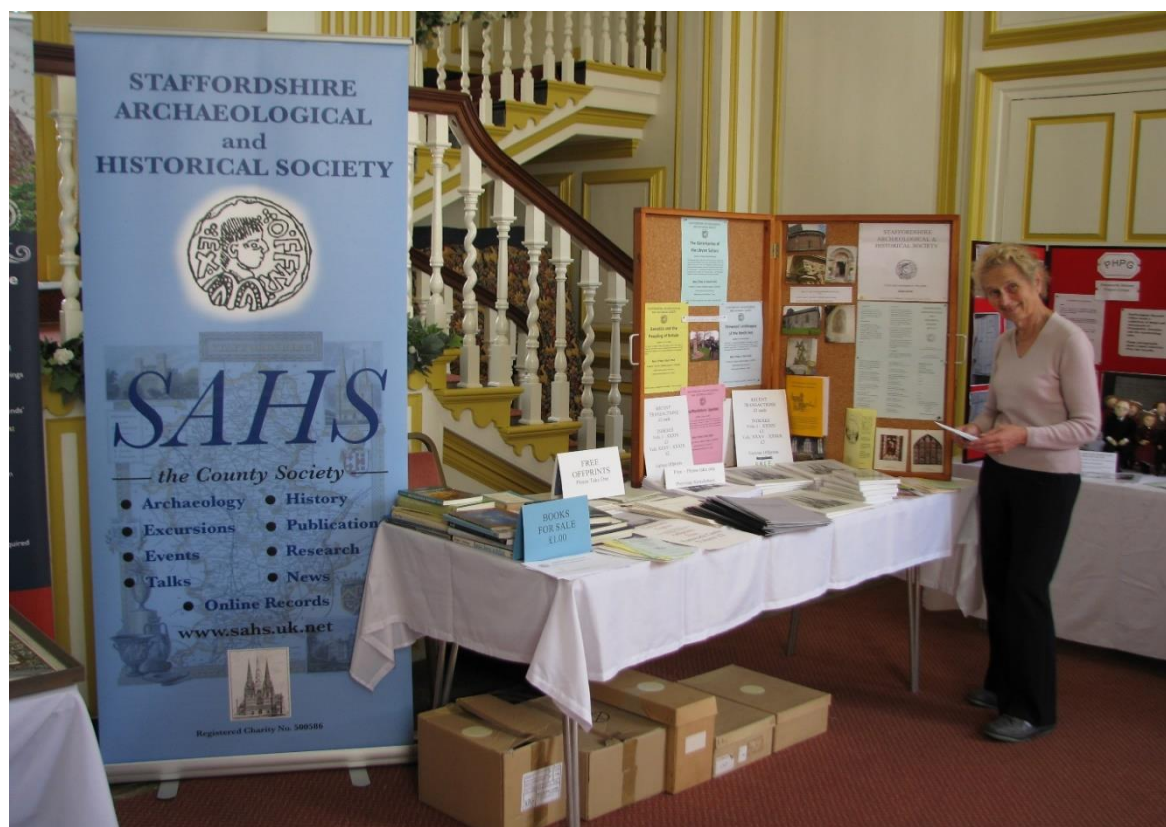
Keith Billington

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Obituary - Former Society and Committee Member Jenny Wilson

Jenny Wilson who was a longstanding Member of the Society died in late December 2018. She was 79. She had been unwell for some time. Jenny served on Committee from around about 1990 until just two or three years ago. She fulfilled the role of Publicity Officer for much of that time.

Jenny, who was a keen walker and rambler, also enjoyed volunteering and was an enthusiastic Member of the National Trust. A passion for gardening led her to offer to tend the gardens of friends and acquaintances and she'd often be at NT properties 'on holiday' but in fact helping out in the landscape and also placing herself in the kitchens at the volunteer accommodation cooking meals for her fellows, which she enjoyed doing.



One of her other passions was as a Friend of Tamworth Castle with which she was very much involved over the years, again as a volunteer. Donations made at her funeral were collected towards purchase of an antique Elizabethan/Tudor period oak court cupboard to be a display piece at the Castle, and in her memory.

As regards ourselves, Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society, Jenny would often step forward to help out at events and gatherings attended by our group, as part of the team manning our tables and displays and helping sell and promote the Society. An image of Jenny in front of one of our stands accompanies this piece, taken at the Middleton Hall History Fair in the summer of 2014. Otherwise, Jenny's travels often took her to Australia for lengthy spells of time, to visit her son and his family.

Her funeral took place on 12th February and amongst the mourners were a number of representatives from SA&HS to pay their respects.

Keith Billington

British Archaeology magazine's June 2019 issue ran a story about the HS2 project and the excavations that have or will take place along the route of the proposed new railway. These include those at Streethay near Lichfield where it is hoped to understand more about a Romano-British settlement just to the north of Ryknield Street. Remains of a number of timber roundhouses and large enclosure ditches have been found together with a pottery kiln and possible evidence for metalworking. Near Handsacre Iron Age occupation has been found, with the remains of a house and a pit alignment thought to have been used as a field boundary. More will emerge from this project, the largest archaeological investigation ever undertaken in the British Isles. See the lecture for 8 November.

The Young Archaeologists' Club - Museum of Cannock Chase (2018 Report)

The Young Archaeologists' Club - Museum of Cannock Chase (YAC-MOCC) was established in August 2014. It is one of a network of such clubs (YACs) across the country, inspiring young people to get involved, and comes under the auspices of the Council for British Archaeology (CBA).

YAC-MOCC has two Leaders who are myself Diane Lear-Hargreaves and Penny Lock, with assistants Robert Hargreaves and Ian Bedworth. There are also two further volunteers being Roger Knowles (Member of SA&HS Committee) and newly appointed Martha Mansfield. Martha has been a Member of YAC-MOCC since it was formed and has also been a regular attendee at various events at the Museum since the age of 10. She has now reached the grand old age of 17 and wished to advance to assistant which she is in the process of achieving. All Leaders and assistants are required to apply to the CBA and their application goes before a panel for consideration and full DBS clearance is necessary.

Myself and Penny are also employees at the Museum and we each hold the position of Museum Educators. My background is that of historical research and Penny is an amateur archaeologist who has worked for Time Team, and is currently in the middle of a project.

Since commencement in 2014 YAC-MOCC has been well attended and the club is currently fully subscribed with a waiting list for prospective new young Members. Each meeting or activity is restricted to 16 (Members) plus one place for one from the waiting list, to give those waiting an opportunity to become involved. With two Leaders the ratio each time is basically 1:8; we like to keep the number to 16 and feel that as the age range is from 8 to 16, it makes things more manageable.

2018 was a busy year for the group. We started the year, as in previous years, by looking back over the 2017 meetings and the achievements during that time. We then set the proposed programme for the next ten months (of 2018).

February 2018 saw the commencement of an on-going project exploring the changing landscape of Hednesford from rural community to coal mining town and then the consequence

of the closure of mines in the Cannock Chase coalfields. This project will be undertaken by juxtaposing historic photographic images with present day interpretations.

In March, the group went on a walk around the town to examine how Hednesford had changed and deciding where to take up to date pictures of past photographed areas. To demonstrate the change that has occurred within the landscape. It is hoped the new photography will be used in an exhibition on Hednesford from past to present.

In April, the group continued the theme, exploring another industrial area with a visit to Blists Hill Victorian town in Shropshire. YAC Members were able to discover what it was like living at the turn of the 20th Century.

In May, the group revisited the area of pre-history. This was to recap on prehistoric skills needed to survive in the Mesolithic period. As these skills were to be exhibited at the Museum's Archaeological Day in July, it was necessary to go over the aspects the group had learned the previous year. Professor Peter Groom of Reaseheath College and Mesolithic Resource Group was invited to come to our meeting to assist with this. During the get-together we visited the Castle Ring site and had a walk and talk conducted by Professor Groom on how Castle Ring was used during the Iron Age period.

In June, the group continued exploring the theme of change over time with a visit to Tamworth's Norman motte and bailey castle. This structure is an excellent way to depict change as it spans the centuries from Medieval to Victorian times, when the castle was acquired by Tamworth Corporation, then on to the present day, all on one site. Originally a Norman fortress to the nowadays museum which it is, owned and run by Tamworth Borough Council. Members were able to explore the location's progression over time through the history of the castle and the people who had resided there.

July was the Museum's Festival of Archaeology - Prehistoric Times. Members organised displays and various demonstrations including spear throwing, natural fibre cordage making, wool spinning, and weaving.

In August, the group embarked on field walking at Baggots Bromley Farm where they learned how to set up an archaeological site, how to collect objects and finds of interest and how to collate them. This is again hopefully an on-going project and area of activity.

A meeting did not occur in September (one of the Leaders and one of the assistants got married !). However, we put forward to CBA two of the older Members for consideration for the Young Archaeologist of the Year Award. One of whom had attended excavations at Nottingham during the summer holidays and was also working towards his Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award using his archaeological studies as one of the components; the other having been with the group since it began and had been attending the Museum since age of 10, having also worked on the Chase Messines Project excavation in 2013.

In October, the group discussed the fieldwork which had been conducted and considered the best practices used when undertaking the activity, including the importance of obtaining necessary permissions to investigate localities of archaeological interest. Some of the Members also presented some of their own research based on the change over time in the areas where they lived. The club also discovered that Martha Mansfield had been chosen for the short-list for the Young Archaeologist of the Year Award.

The November meeting was the last of the year due to time constraints as the Museum prepared for the events and workshops which it holds during December. At the meeting we explored the subject of remembrance and looked at the life of Dorothy Pattison/Sister Dora before considering the military hospital on Cannock Chase during the Great War, and also Brindley Village where one of the colliery companies utilised the old hospital buildings as housing for some of its employees. In 2019 we intend to further explore Brindley Village.

At the end of November Martha was invited to attend CBA in York for the presentation of the Young Archaeologist of the Year Awards Ceremony where she was delighted to receive a Highly Commended certificate (one of just two). YAC-MOCC is extremely proud of her achievement.

That sums up our activity in 2018. As can be seen, YAC-MOCC has a very busy yearly schedule of work and events. We are currently (January) setting out our programme for 2019. Great interesting variety again we expect. If we are able to be at any archaeological digs we will hopefully do so in conjunction with the proposed monthly meetings.

Diane Lear-Hargreaves, YAC-MOCC Leader

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Friends of Letocetum: Wall Roman site walk and talk, Saturday 18 May

This guided walk around Wall takes you beyond the well-known remains of the baths and mansio to the sites of the Roman forts and later civilian settlement, and the late Roman burgus. We will also talk about Wall and its surroundings before the Romans arrived, and the transition from Roman times to the medieval village of Wall and the development of Lichfield.

£5.00 including refreshments. Prior booking is essential:
enquiries@wallromansitefriendsofletocetum or phone 01543 418464.

For more details see

<http://www.wallromansitefriendsofletocetum.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=655913>

Audi! Scisne quantus
numerus barbarorum
satis est ut ipsi facem
accendere possint?

Decies centena milia -
uno facem tenente
debent ceteri convenire
atque conari ignem
invenire!

Seeing that we are going to
Wall let's practice our Latin
with this elderly joke.

On the 14th September 1999, the Princess Royal unveiled the then largest sculpture of a horse in the British Isles. Standing on top of an artificial barrow-like hill overlooking the town of Wednesbury, the eight-legged beast rears up as it leaps forwards into the air, conveying a strong sense of powerful movement. The construction of the work, welded together from sheets of stainless steel, bears witness to the high level of local engineering and metalwork skills that were prevalent in the Black Country. The sculpture represents Sleipnir, the eight-

legged warhorse of the Norse god Odin or Woden, according to Viking mythology. The horse could travel over land, sea and air and the artist, Steve Field, thought that the fabulous beast would exemplify the new dynamism of the area which was being regenerated.



Sleipnir in 2004

A large part of the resurgence included the construction of the Black Country Spine Road and the building of the Midland Metro Line tramway. The development of the latter was awarded to Altram/National Express Metro in a Concession Agreement with Centro, by which £500,000 would be spent on public art. Sleipnir is one of three landmark features on the Midland Metro Line, chosen as an appropriate image for travel and referencing the town of Wednesbury, or Wodensbyri (Woden's fortified enclosure).

The initial plans for Sleipnir envisaged a sculpture 12.3 metres in height and was to include an interior staircase to provide for a viewing platform from the horse's head. However, this was the time when Health and Safety started to become an issue and the design was modified to stand 6.3 metres in height with a 1.2 metre high base. The design also caused controversy when a local vicar was perturbed enough to campaign against the heathen edifice.

It had been nearly twenty years since I had climbed the hill to visit the sculpture, but recently I decided to do so again. What a truly unedifying experience !

The hill is now in the middle of factories and office blocks and the hill itself so overgrown that the poor horse can scarce be seen. A barely discernible track is littered with every imaginable beer and lager can, dumped clothing and even organic unmentionables. The top of the hill is so overgrown it is only possible to view the tail and rear end. If the ascent is disgusting, the summit is frankly revolting and nauseous with drug paraphernalia, cans, bottles and burnt vegetation where fires have been indiscriminately lit. Sad old Sleipnir himself is in fair condition at best, being heavily graffitied and with at least one obvious steel plate missing.



Sleipnir in 2017

I do not think I would be alone in suggesting that this imposing (not to say costly) work of art should be moved to a safer and more prominent site where it would be proudly appreciated by the people of Wednesbury. There is space on Church Hill in the town, in a large park area, or perhaps on the Wednesbury side of the M6 as a gateway work of art similar to the Angel of the North on the A1 near Gateshead. Late in 2018 *Architectural Digest* surveyed twenty-three of the world's most fascinating commissioned public artworks. Sleipnir would make a culturally outstanding twenty-fourth. Maybe it should be donated to another town or city with Viking heritage, perhaps York. What do you think ?

Peter Evans

Staffordshire Record Society

The latest volume from the Society has been published 'Early Modern Stafford and Lichfield' edited by Ann J Kettle. With contributions on the Gregory King census of Lichfield in 1695 with a critical introduction, The Black Book of Stafford with the 1566 town ordinances, the memorandum book of Thomas Worswick of Stafford, mayor in 1622, and population lists for Stafford in 1615, 1622 and 1699. Price £25 for non members plus p&p £5 (UK) or £10 (everywhere else). This is Collections for a History of Staffordshire 4th Series volume XXVI

Orders to Dr M Blake at the WSL. (matthew.blake@btinternet.com)

Society Excursions

Visit to Beaudesert House and Grounds.



Thursday July 11 at 2.30pm.

Beaudesert Park is at present owned by the Beaudesert Trust and run as an outdoor activity centre for youth groups. The property includes the ruins of the mansion house and the remains of an extended garden possibly designed by William Eames. We shall have a guided tour of the grounds with Bob Marsh of the Trust and will see the remains of the house and gardens. Although the Trust has plans to restore the gardens it has no funds to do so and these plans are on hold. Nevertheless this is a chance to see part of Cannock Chase not usually open to the public and the outline of the original gardens are still there with some of the original planting. There are extensive views to the north and east over the Trent Valley. Please wear stout footwear as paths are very uneven in places and wear suitable clothing if the weather is inclement. There will be a charge of £3.00 collected on the day. Please let Richard Totty know if you intend to come richard.totty4@gmail.com. Meet just before 2.30 pm at the car park in the Activity Centre. There are toilets on site but no refreshment facilities.

Later this year we hope to organise a visit to the JCB plant at Rocester – details in September!

Visit to Middleton Hall and Church

Wednesday 12 June 2019 10.30am



Middleton Hall

Middleton Hall is an attractive and interesting historical property just south of Tamworth restored by a charitable trust. After arrival we will have tea and coffee followed by a tour of the Hall and a talk by the Peel Society on the local associations with the Peel family of nearby Drayton Bassett. After this you are free to explore the gardens and the courtyard which houses several small businesses, and to use the coffee shop for lunch. We reconvene at Middleton Church which is a 10 minute drive from the Hall, at 2.30pm for a guided visit by Mike Hodder. (An alternative for lunch would be the pub adjacent to the church 'The Green Man'.) £16 per person.

Please reserve place(s) for the visit to Middleton Hall on 12 June 2019 at £16 per person. Please make cheques out to SAHS and send to Richard Totty Rock Cottage Redhill Rugeley WS15 4LL including a stamped addressed envelope if you require a receipt.

Name.....

Address.....

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E mail.....

FoSSA have organised a visit to Ingestre Orangery which is a Grade II listed building in the Staffordshire village of Ingestre. The Orangery sits in the grounds of Ingestre Hall and is owned by Sandwell Council. The Friends of Ingestre Orangery have a lease from Sandwell Council and are working to restore the Orangery so that its heritage can be shared, used and enjoyed by the community using a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £48,900. Restoration is well underway to the extent that events can be held in the Orangery from this summer onwards. Ingestre Orangery was built in 1838 strongly influenced by James ('Athenian') Stuart's nearby Orangery at Blithfield Hall(c.1770). The afternoon will include a visit to Ingestre church which will be opened specially for us, and there will be break for refreshments. A speaker from the Trust will talk about the challenges of the restoration project and plans for its future, and Dianne Barre will give a short talk about the House, gardens and park which are not open to the public. Includes tea and cake. **2.00pm Wednesday 4 September.**

Tickets £8.00 for members. Please make out cheques to FoSSA and send to Dr Dianne Barre. I King's Walk King's Bromley Burton upon Trent DE13 7JU Please send a sae for a receipt and acknowledgement of booking.

STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LECTURE SEASON 2019-2020

27th September 2019 John Shand

Faith and Fisticuffs: The precarious Beginnings Of The Reformation In Sixteenth Century Staffordshire.

This talk is about how Protestantism was slow to take root in the County, culminating in the persecution of Catholics in the reign of Elizabeth.

John hoped to read History as an undergraduate, but was persuaded at the last minute to read Law. Thereafter he practiced at the Birmingham Bar, spent three years at his College as a Law Fellow, sat as a diocesan Chancellor in Lichfield and Southwell and eventually landed up as Resident Circuit Judge at Stafford. On retirement thirteen years ago John studied for an MA at the Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies at Birmingham University under the supervision of Richard Cust.

11th October 2019 Vicki Score

Ancient Akrotiri Project, Cyprus

Since 2015, teams of School and ULAS staff and students have conducted several seasons of excavation and survey on Roman/early Byzantine remains at Dreamer's Bay, Akrotiri, Cyprus. Comprising warehouse complexes, harbour works, and shoreline stone quarries, these attest an ancient port site inside the modern Royal Air Force base on the Akrotiri peninsula, at the southernmost point of Cyprus.

Vicki is Deputy Director of ULAS, with considerable expertise in directing and managing major archaeological projects. She is experienced in all aspects of site fieldwork and archaeological research, managing multi-disciplinary research teams, compiling Heritage Asset Assessments and Environmental Statements as well as Visual Impact Assessments for wind turbines and solar farms. Vicki has worked in East Midlands archaeology since 1991 and joined ULAS in 1999.

25th October 2019 John Wilcock

The Cannock Chase Camp Railway

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 topic this evening is The Cannock Chase Camp Railway (the "Tackeroo" Railway) which was constructed during the First World War to supply the military camps which were on the Chase for four years. This was for supplies only, since the soldiers had to walk to the camps from Rugeley. The talk will describe the reasons for the choice of routes from Milford and Hednesford, and the logistics for water supply, electricity, roads, sewage works, and construction of the huts. There were also parade grounds, rifle ranges, practice trenches, a post office, a bank, and YMCA huts for relaxation, as well as the ordnance depots and canteens. In the later phases of WW2 part of the Brocton Camp was used as a prisoner of war camp. JRR Tolkien was at the camps for two periods. In 1918 a model of the 1917 Messines Ridge battle was constructed near Brocton Coppice as a demonstration and training aid.

8th November 2019 Robert Early

The HS2 Railway Project

Rob is currently the lead for the Historic Environment section North. He has over 30 years of experience in archaeology and heritage and has a number of publications of his work that range through the prehistoric periods through to Second World War. He leads the heritage team at the design engineering company WSP but formally worked for Oxford Archaeology.

The talk this evening should cover Staffordshire particularly the Streethay and Handsacre sections but the project being a moveable feast other parts of the Midlands route may be included.

22nd November 2019 Roger White

Investigating the Anglo-Saxon Halls at Atcham, Shropshire

Most people familiar with Roger's work will associate him with the late (and arguably post-Roman) site at Wroxeter. However, his PhD was in Anglo-Saxon archaeology and, with a foot in both Roman and Anglo-Saxon camps, this lecture explores the potentially complex relationship between the site at Wroxeter and the cropmark site of presumed Anglo-Saxon date at Froghall, Atcham. First seen, and scheduled, in 1975 the site had not been investigated before 2017 when a small-scale excavation was carried out under the aegis of the University of Birmingham and the National Trust, owners of the site. The results will be presented here, giving some substance to the interpretation in the light of the radiocarbon dating.

Roger has worked at the University of Birmingham for 25 years, first with Birmingham Archaeology on the Wroxeter Hinterland Project, and then within the Ironbridge Institute before moving back to the Department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology. He recently contributed to and co-edited the Roman Research Frameworks for the West Midlands, Clash of Cultures.

6th December 2019 Annual General Meeting

AGM 7.30pm start - Lecture 8.00pm start. Charlotte Ball

Beasts from The (Battle) Field: Animal symbolism in the Staffordshire Hoard

Charlotte has a PhD in early Medieval art and iconography from the University of Leicester. She specialises in Anglo-Saxon animal imagery; in particular the motif of the serpent in both art and

literature. Charlotte is from Staffordshire, and the discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard has greatly inspired her research. She runs her own private education company as well as working as a research assistant, writer and communications professional

Charlotte will take a close-up look at some of her favourite objects from the Staffordshire Hoard and will explore how animal imagery is important to the objects - both in terms of artistic technique and symbolism. Some of these depictions are obvious and others are not, and we will learn about the importance of hidden/double meanings in Anglo-Saxon symbolic culture.

Lectures are held in the Guildhall in the centre of Lichfield and start at 8.00 except where noted. Refreshments are available half an hour before the start of the meeting.

St Mary Centre Lichfield



History Access Point on the first floor of the new Library, Lichfield

The new library in the refurbished Guild of St Mary's Centre in Lichfield Market Square opened in December 2018. On the first floor is a History Access Point which contains microfilmed parish registers, transcripts of parish registers, local history books and other resources for historical research. Here too are terminals giving free access to databases for genealogical research as well as to the on line catalogue of the Archive Service. This is a quiet and comfortable area for your local research needs. Volunteers attend at certain times to give help and advice.

There is also a large screen which provides access to the very large collection of images in the Staffordshire Past Track website, with a very high quality of resolution. The History Access Point is open at all times that the Library is open.

The St Mary centre is the old parish church of St Mary, recently renovated to provide a home for the County Library and also for a performance and exhibition space on the first floor. The design of the interior is imaginative and makes excellent use of the church's original features which can now be seen clearly where in the last internal reconstruction many were masked.

For more information about the Society visit our
website

www.sahs.uk.net

Staffordshire History Day is on May 11 in Stafford. One of the speakers will be Shane Kelleher who will provide a round-up of recent archaeological work, an update on work being carried out in advance of HS2 and Transforming the Trent Valley project focussing on heritage at risk and Second World War pillboxes. For younger readers this is a pillbox.



This newsletter is edited for the Society by Richard Totty richard.totty4@gmail.com

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society.

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