



STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER September 2020

Web: www.sahs.uk.net

Issue No 135

email: sahs@sahs.uk.net

Hon. President: Dr John Hunt B.A., Ph.D., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., P.G.C.E. tel: 01543 423549

Hon. General Secretary: Steve Lewitt B.A. (Oxon.), M.A., P.G.C.E., P.G.C.R.M., F.C.I.P.D., F.R.S.A.

Hon. Treasurer: Keith Billington A.C.I.B. tel: 01543 278989



The Church of St. Matthew, Walsall

Contents include 'Geoffrey de Mala Terra and Goffredo Malaterra' by A J and E A Yates page 3
 'A Lightning Strike at St Matthew's Church, Walsall' by Diana M Wilkes page 3
 'Archaeology for Pevsner' by Mike Hodder page 10

Autumn Lectures in Lichfield Guildhall Postponed – page 2

A Message from Dr John Hunt, Honorary President

As for most societies and organisations, the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions necessary to 'live with it' has meant that it has now been nearly six months since SAHS was last able to organise an event for our membership. We have all been disappointed not to hear the excellent cast of speakers lined up for us, or to be able to participate in our usual programme of field visits. We have however been able to publish our *Transactions* as normal, and to continue with the publication of our *Newsletters*, in addition to which numerous online 'extras' have hopefully mitigated some of the disappointment felt at the disruption to our activities.

Unfortunately, I have to inform you that this disruption is set to continue. Your committee had been hopeful when the restrictions were first imposed that the autumn would bring some easing of the situation and sufficient certainty to be able to organise our autumn programme of lectures as normal. Given that matters will not have returned to what we have previously taken as 'normal' by the autumn, we are faced with two possible options. The first is to make a decision on the viability of each lecture on a month by month basis; or alternatively, to take the decision now to postpone the entire autumn programme until the New Year. Having carefully considered the current situation, the real uncertainties that face us, and having undertaken a detailed Risk Assessment around a possible autumn programme, and the responsibilities that SAHS would have to accept, the committee have come to the decision that postponement of the programme is our only realistic option.

Therefore, although we will need to review the situation again after Christmas, our intention is to recommence our lecture programme on Friday February 19th 2021, which meeting will also serve as the Society's AGM, now postponed from Friday December 4th 2020. We are hopeful that all of those speakers who we had hoped to hear during the course of this year, but have now missed, will be able to join us at future dates in the not too distant future. We deeply regret having to make this decision but we have to be mindful of our responsibilities to both our membership and those invited to speak to us, and indeed to the wider community. Furthermore, I felt it important that we generate some level of certainty for our membership as to what our position is.

Both the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer of the Society have written messages to the membership relating to this decision, and therefore I will not trespass too far into what they have to say. However, I would like to close with two points. Firstly, we have also thought carefully about your membership subscriptions in a period of an enforced reduction in activity. The lecture programme, although important, is only a part of what the Society incurs expenditure on, and so we have concluded that it would be injudicious to offer a reduced membership subscription for this year. However, we do feel able to positively commit to holding the present subscription rates for the next two years at least (until September 2022) as an acknowledgement and thank-you to our members for supporting the Society through these difficult months.

Secondly, many of you will know that the last few months have seen a boom in the use of online digital communications, such as Skype and Zoom. The latter in particular has been used to hold meetings and give lectures and tutorials, and many individuals have used it to keep in touch with family and friends. The question has been posed as to whether SAHS might also make use of this technology, not so much as a means of delivering our main lecture programme, but perhaps for occasional supplementary activities, such as additional talks or lectures. Your committee would very much like to know if there is an appetite for this among our members, sufficient to justify further investigation on our part. Please let us know your views via our website or by email.

Once again, our apologies for taking this course of action, but we felt that we had no choice. Please keep safe and I and my committee colleagues look forward to seeing you again at our meetings as soon as possible.

A LIGHTNING STRIKE AT St. MATTHEW'S CHURCH WALSALL

Bellringers can tell many good stories about their ringing exploits particularly after a good night in the local pub but this one happens to be true.

On June 29 1815, as a group of eight ringers were ringing Bob Majors for a wedding, a ball of lightning entered the belfry into the ringing chamber. There was an explosion. Mr James Hodgkins who was ringing the seventh bell was knocked down. The ball of lightning made its way through the east wall of the ringing chamber into the church and disappeared. It caused no more damage. The bells were swinging. Mr Hodgkins lay on the floor. When the ringers recovered from their fright and returned to the tower, Mr Hodgkins was recovering from his shock. He appeared to suffer no ill effects from his experience and his name appears on several of the peal boards in the tower.

Information taken from 'Walsall Bells and Bellringers' by Henry Green. This book can be found at Walsall Local History Centre, Central Library, Walsall.

Henry Green was a noted Walsall ringer with whom I rang on several occasions in the late 1960s/early 1970s. He was one of the old school of ringers who appeared in the belfry on practice night wearing a three piece suit. He was known locally as 'Mr Limestone' as he was an authority on the limestone mines in Walsall, particularly on those surrounding Church Hill on which St. Matthew's Church stands. He is reputed to have been the last man to enter a limestone mine at the foot of Church Hill, via a manhole cover in the centre of the road. I find it difficult to imagine him booted and suited for this event.

Diana M Wilkes

GEOFFREY DE MALA TERRA AND GOFFREDO MALATERRA – A QUESTION OF MEDIEVAL IDENTITIES IN BURTON AND SICILY ANDREW J. YATES and EDWIN A. YATES

The present paper discusses the identity of Geoffrey de Mala Terra, the Benedictine abbot of Burton in east Staffordshire,¹ and Goffredo Malaterra, the Benedictine author of the history of the Normans in Sicily and Southern Italy entitled *De Rebus Gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae Comitis et Roberti Guiscardi Ducis fratris eius*.² It examines the contemporary environments and prosopographies of both men, and investigates a timeline that could potentially link them. The forename is given as either 'Geoffrey' or 'Goffredo', being the English and Italian translations of the same Latin name *Galfridus* (as it appears in written documents); moreover, there is no standard spelling of the surname, which is found as 'de Mala Terra' or Mala Terra (sometimes with and sometimes without 'de').

The first issue to be encountered, therefore, is the nature of the name itself. As we have very little evidence of its origin, the discussion must take on a more general nature, at least

initially. The first, and simplest possibility, is that the name originates from the Piedmontese province of Malaterra in the Asti region in modern Italy. The second possibility is that the name is a Latinisation of an English place name, 'Mauland':³ but there is no evidence for this name having been used in any contemporary documents, and more probably 'Mauland' could be an Anglicisation of the Latin 'Malaterra'. The third possibility is that the name does not refer to a place, but is some kind of nickname. Indeed, the antiquary William Dugdale, writing in the 17th century, refers to the expulsion of Mauland (or Mala Terra):

The century following Domesday saw both gains and losses, and two abbots were expelled

during this period for dissipating the lands and goods of the abbey — Abbot Geoffrey Mau-

land (*Malaterra*) in 1094 and Abbot Robert in 1159.⁴

So, the appellation 'Mala Terra' could conceivably have been adopted in relation to his loss of monastic lands. It is worth recalling, however, that the records on which these views rely are often not themselves contemporary. Indeed, the Burton abbey annals (*Annales Monasterii Burtonensis*) were written in the 14th century, and have been considered to contain 'some definite errors',⁵ despite being a major source of information concerning later events in medieval Europe.

* * *

The Benedictines – followers of the Order of St Benedict – were the largest monastic group in England in the 11th century with numerous communities throughout the country. The Benedictine code is characterised by its autonomy, each abbey being in absolute control over its dealings and organisation. It was also devoted to a sense of community, encompassing work, contemplation, and study, as encapsulated in its *orarium* (in effect, a daily timetable of activities), and is perhaps well-expressed in the motto '*Ora et Labora*' (pray and work). As a consequence of this balanced approach and the autonomy it offered, the Benedictine code gained popularity and by the 9th century had become the dominant code throughout most of western Europe.

Most likely founded in the 990s,⁶ the Burton abbey was clearly already well-established when the Mercian nobleman Wulfric Spot made his 'will', sometime before 1004, which is the generally accepted date for the royal confirmation. Its site had an earlier religious significance, as a chapel is conventionally understood to have been established by St Modwen on an island called 'Andresey' in the river Trent next to the abbey, but probably destroyed in the 870s by the Danish invasion of the area. The most northerly religious house in England at the time of the Norman Conquest, Burton abbey seems to have been dedicated originally to St Benedict and All Saints, but by 1086, a year into Geoffrey de Mala Terra's abbacy, it was recorded in Domesday Book as the abbey of St Mary.⁷ Burton was 'by far the most important of the Staffordshire religious houses',⁸ and according to Dugdale, William I apparently visited the shrine of St Modwen,⁹ to whom, together with St Mary, the house was dedicated – although Robert Bartlett has pointed out that this supposed visit rests on a mistranslation.¹⁰ Nevertheless, financial problems were apparently common, with Abbot Leofric (1051–1066) having despoiled a shrine to buy food for the needy during a famine.¹¹ It is probable that the abbey's fortunes 'fluctuated drastically', and that 'its responsibility for upkeep of the road and bridge over the Trent undoubtedly contributed to its financial problems.'¹²

England in 1085, the year of Geoffrey de Mala Terra's appointment to the abbacy of Burton, was, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a country in the midst of great suffering and calamity:

Such a malady fell upon men that nearly every other person was in the sorriest plight and down with fever: it was so malignant that many died from the disease. Thereafter, in consequence of the great storms... there came a great famine over all England, so that many hundreds died miserable deaths because of it.¹³

The Conquest had a profound effect upon secular and ecclesiastical life in 11th-century Staffordshire. Throughout the north of England, the 12th-century monastic chronicler Orderic Vitalis (who was half-English) reported that 'more than a hundred thousand souls' had perished during William's campaign of 1069–70,¹⁴ whilst the 19th-century historian R.W. Eyton concluded 'that the county was depopulated as a result.'¹⁵ In contrast, Jeavons warns that 'the prevailing idea that Staffordshire was seriously depopulated by William's expedition of 1069 should be treated with caution.'¹⁶ Unequivocally, however, the Conquest did have a direct effect upon the personnel of the ecclesiastical establishment, as 'foreign clergy replaced the Englishman in bishoprics, abbeys and cathedral chapters.'¹⁷ It is likely therefore that Abbot Geoffrey's origins lay outside England. It was certainly the case that by 1070 the reforms had become apparent: the year was 'shaping up to be an *annus horribilis* for the English Church.'¹⁸

Much has been written concerning the policy of William the Conqueror in relation to the church in England, with particular emphasis on the imposition of military service on its bishoprics and abbeys. This military service needed to be forthcoming, otherwise a tax was levied in lieu of it – called 'scutage'. This tax was indeed something previously unknown and has become a controversial historiographical discussion. Marc Morris covers this area with a discussion of sources including the chroniclers Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris, and concludes that 'most historians accept that the Conqueror did make new military demands of the English Church' during and following the 1070s.¹⁹ Add to this a series of domestic rebellions firstly in 1086²⁰ and then against William II in 1087²¹ – both famine years – and then once more in 1095,²² as well as incursions by the Welsh and Scots, and a picture of instability emerges. The impact of this on the prosperity and landholdings of Burton abbey could have been considerable, as might the requirement of the Crown for ecclesiastical houses to pay scutage or to relinquish a part of their endowments:

'The monks of Burton appear to have chosen the latter alternative, for none of the tenants of this monastery after the Conquest held their lands by military service. In this they probably acted wisely, for monastic bodies derived little or no benefit from lands in which military tenants were enfeoffed.'²³

The dissipation of monastic establishments was effectively, then, a consequence of the policy of the Crown and the nature of feudal society, rather than of an individual abbot's inability to manage their estates. The reforms of the 1070s and the famine years of the 1080s and 1090s cannot have made their management any easier.

* * *

Geoffrey de Mala Terra's appointment and subsequent expulsion from the abbacy of Burton is one of the few well-documented facts of his biography, as given in the Burton Annals. The

entry for 1085 reads ‘Obiit Levericus abbas. Successit Galfridus Mala Terra.’²⁴ ‘Levericus’ was Abbot Leofric who, according to different accounts, preceded either Brihtric II, or as here, directly Mala Terra. So, Mala Terra’s abbacy at Burton began in 1085, prior to which he had been a monk at Winchester.²⁵ The annals then skip nine years until 1094, when we are told ‘Galfridus Mala Terra expulsus est de abbacia’.²⁶ No other detail is recorded in the annals, but the ‘Burton Cartulary’, a collection of documents relating to the abbey’s land rights and holdings, contains a reconstructed writ claiming that Geoffrey was removed from office for marrying his sister to Nicholas, sheriff of Staffordshire, to whom he gave ‘the Manor of Cotes’, the modern Derbyshire village of Coton in the Elms.²⁷ Dugdale maintains that the deposition was for ‘wastefulness and mismanagement in the concerns of the monastery.’²⁸

The Burton Annals concern the years 1004–1263 and contain entries ranging from the parochial to the supernatural, and cover major international events as far afield as Sicily and Russia. The later entries are substantial and are a notable source of information concerning medieval politics, demonstrating that the purview of a medieval cleric extended far beyond the everyday concerns of his lay subjects. It is clear from the annals, written at Burton, that the abbey had strong links with the monastic house at Winchester, which was a major supplier of trained monks in England, seven of Burton’s first eight abbots having originated there. There are several surviving annals from other Benedictine houses throughout Europe and it is also clear that an extensive and effective communications network existed. From the establishment of Burton abbey, the first Abbot Wulfgeat and his successor Brihtric I, and then Geoffrey de Mala Terra, Nigel, Geoffrey of Burton, and Robert had all been attached to Winchester before making the journey to the Midlands.²⁹ Winchester was also a Benedictine house, dedicated to St Swithun (or Swithin), which had been established around 964.³⁰

* * *

The later Abbot Geoffrey, known as Geoffrey of Burton and the writer of the *Life and Miracles of St Modwena*, had been prior of Winchester until his deposition by the bishop there, William Giffard, in 1111. Following this, he was able to secure the abbacy of Burton in 1114. Deposition was not uncommon, and clearly did not mean the end of the road for a deposed cleric. This Geoffrey, writing the *Life* (as the editor, Robert Bartlett, surmises) between 1118 and 1135,³¹ recounts an interesting story from the time of Roger the Poitevin who had been exiled in 1102,³² and so presumably originating during the abbacy of Geoffrey’s namesake, Geoffrey de Mala Terra. Roger comes into conflict with the ‘father of the monastery’³³ over a matter of feudal dues, and the story, which involves revenants and supernatural dealings, describes an armed conflict between Roger’s men and the abbot’s knights. Notable, not least for its descriptions of the dead rising from the grave, the story nevertheless provides a rare insight into the everyday management of a monastic estate and the tensions that were likely to arise between the church and nobility. It also demonstrates that the abbot of a Benedictine house such as Burton wielded considerable authority and martial power.

The literary skill of much of the ecclesiastical hierarchy has been noted, and that an abbot would have been capable of writing literary Latin was not in question. Not only was one of Mala Terra’s successors the writer Geoffrey of Burton, but a writing tradition also existed at Winchester which, as we have seen, had close ties with Burton. Of post-Conquest ecclesiastical appointments, the 18th-century antiquary Thomas Wharton wrote:

‘Many of the Norman prelates preferred in England by the Conqueror, were polite scholars.

Godfrey, Prior of Saint Swithin's at Winchester a native of Cambray, was an excellent epigrammatist, and wrote with the smartness and ease of Martial.'³⁴,

The ongoing conflict between Church and Crown offers the backdrop to politics in the late 11th century and it is relevant to examine the reign of William II and the two men who occupied the see of Canterbury during Mala Terra's abbacy. Lanfranc had been the prior of the abbey of Bec (in Normandy) until 1063, when Duke William of Normandy (later William I) appointed him the abbot of his new monastic foundation of Saint-Etienne, Caen.³⁵ Lanfranc was probably responsible for young William's education and was archbishop of Canterbury in 1070, after William had become king.³⁶ An 'eminent scholar', Lanfranc originated in the city of Pavia in Lombardy,³⁷ and as archbishop of Canterbury he would have overseen the appointment of Mala Terra to the abbacy of Burton. It is interesting to note that after Lanfranc's death in 1089 the see of Canterbury vacant, and it was not until 1093 that Anselm (also formerly of Bec) was appointed to fill the vacancy. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, William II had a policy of 'leaving bishoprics and abbacies vacant after the deaths of their incumbents, so as to profit from the revenues of their extensive estates.'³⁸ Following a period of ill-health, which may have inspired greater consideration of his soul, William made the appointment, secure in the knowledge that here was a formidable theologian and scholar whose piety and reliability were also well-attested.³⁹ Archbishop Anselm, also from northern Italy, may have been instrumental in the deposition of Mala Terra which occurred the following year.

In a broader context, the papacy was in the midst of what was to become known as the Investiture Controversy. This movement was led by Pope Gregory VII who proscribed the lay investiture of clerics in 1075.⁴⁰ Pope Gregory and the later Pope Urban II seemed to have been committed to papal reform and to removing the 'polluting influence of the laity',⁴¹ attacking rulers such as Emperor Henry IV with spiritual censure. By the 1090s, with Pope Urban in Rome and Anselm in Canterbury, the church in England had two formidable figures of reform. When Urban preached his sermon at Clermont calling for a crusade to aid Byzantine Christians and to seize the city of Jerusalem from the hands of Islam, Europe started to look eastwards, and towards the staging posts of crusade in Southern Italy and the Adriatic.

It is, of course, speculation as to whether papal reform, the appointment of Archbishop Anselm, and a more general tenor of respect for the church that had been adopted by King William II following an illness, had any bearing on the deposition of Mala Terra from the abbacy of Burton. These events, however, do chronologically presage the end of his abbacy and, following his deposition in 1094, Geoffrey de Mala Terra disappears from the historical record in England, to be replaced as abbot by Nigel.⁴²

* * *

As suddenly as Geoffrey de Mala Terra disappears, another Benedictine monk of the same name appears, namely Goffredo Malaterra, the author of the *De Rebus Gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae Comitis et Roberti Guiscardi Ducis fratris eius*, a history of the conquest of Sicily and especially of Roger I, the brother of Robert Guiscard, the principal Norman conqueror of Sicily.⁴³ Prior to his arrival in Sicily, there is no extant record of Goffredo, but his origins are referred to in a short introductory paragraph to *De Rebus*:

Praesentialiter non interfuissem, sed a transmontanis partibus venientem, noviter Apulum factum, vel certe Siculum ad plenum cognoscatis.

A modern translation has:

For you are well aware that I come from a region on the other side of the mountains,
having only recently become an Apulian and indeed a Sicilian.⁴⁴

The translator appends a footnote that the mountains referred to are ‘almost certainly’ the Alps.⁴⁵ So, not only does Goffredo confirm his recent arrival, he also tells us that he comes from outside Italy. His origin cannot be established with certainty, however, since these remarks could be interpreted as referring to his whereabouts immediately prior to his arrival in Sicily, rather than his origin. Moreover, we are tantalisingly close to having an insight into Malaterra’s origins in the very first sentence of *De Rebus*, in which he writes ‘ab antecessoribus Malaterra agnomen trahens’,⁴⁶ which has been translated as ‘inheriting the cognomen Malaterra from my ancestors’.⁴⁷ But this statement actually tells us very little, except perhaps that he confirms that his name is ancestrally Malaterra.

According to the abstract to Marie-Agnès Lucas-Avenel’s article ‘Le recit de Geoffroi Malaterra’, ‘the received view [is] that Geoffrey was a Norman.’⁴⁸ As already noted, the *De Rebus* is a history of the Norman conquest of Sicily, chronicling the deeds of Robert Guiscard and Count Roger I of Sicily; it includes Pope Urban II’s papal bull of 1098 and Behemond’s joining the First Crusade, but not the conquest of Antioch, the Fall of Jerusalem, or Roger’s death in 1101, and this has led Wolf to surmise that it was completed around 1098.⁴⁹

Lucas-Avenel also exhorts caution in making an identification. She points out that Goffredo alludes to the origins of his name in the introduction to *De Rebus*, and she also notes that someone of the same name was expelled from Burton abbey for embezzlement or *malversation*.⁵⁰ She goes on to draw the conclusion that Malaterra the author probably originated from Châteaudun in Perche, between Chartres and Orléans (in the modern *département* of Eure-et-Loir), hence was not Norman at all.⁵¹ This is supported by her citation of evidence from the archives of the Maison Dieu de Châteaudun. Her research suggests that the Mala Terra family were notable members of the fief of Haye-Maleterre,⁵² offering us the possibility that this was the origin of the Malaterra family.

In addition, Dugdale notes that a ‘Goisfridus Mala Terra’ witnessed a charter of William II’s; *Carta Willielmi II. Regis, qua Abbatiam S. Petri Bathoniae Johanni Episcopo Sumersetensi ad ampliandos Episcopatus donat*.⁵³ This charter was also witnessed by some senior ecclesiastical figures in the Benedictine administration including ‘Wido abbas sancti Augustini Cantaurii’. Wido’s (Guy’s) term at St Augustine’s ran from 1087 to 1093,⁵⁴ so is consistent with Mala Terra’s time as abbot of Burton. The appearance of a Malaterra/Mala Terra in several contexts, in both France and England, and the possibility that his surname sprang from a prominent French dynasty make it increasingly likely that the witness of William II’s charter is the same ‘Gafridus’ as Burton’s abbot, and it is plausible that they refer to the same person as the author of *De Rebus*.

Members of the 11th-century ecclesiastical hierarchy were well-travelled. We have seen that many of the Benedictine abbots and priors of English houses were of Norman and Italian origin. Archbishop Anselm similarly originated in Italy and in the latter part of William II’s reign is recorded as prevailing upon the king for permission to visit Rome, permission that was finally granted around 1097.⁵⁵ Anselm was never to see William again, but it is interesting to note that there was a well-trodden Benedictine route between 11th-century England and Italy. This is a journey that Abbot Geoffrey could easily have taken in 1095, given that somebody of similar social stature with the same name appears suddenly in Sicily at the same time, ready to offer his literary services to the Norman aristocracy and evidently

keen to leave a chronicle of their achievements.

Goffredo tells us that his origins were *transmontanis*, which has caused historians to scrutinise his background and there are numerous coincidences of place, time, and personal quality linking abbot Geoffrey to the historian Goffredo. Significantly, they share the same name and they were both Benedictine monks, well-travelled (at least in the abbot's case from somewhere outside England), and probably adept writers of literary Latin. The timeline also fits tantalisingly well: Geoffrey having been expelled from Burton just before Goffredo appears in Sicily. Considering the limited amount of evidence surviving from the late 11th century, it is unlikely that it will ever be established unequivocally whether Geoffrey and Goffredo were the same person, but on the balance of evidence, it does seem a probable conclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are indebted to Prof. David Fernig of the University of Liverpool for his assistance with French translation, and to the editor of the Society's Transactions for his invaluable direction.

REFERENCES

- 1 D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke, and V. C. M. London (eds), *The Heads of Religious Houses England and Wales 940–1216* (Cambridge, 1972), 31.
- 2 G.. Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard*, translated by K. B. Wolf (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2005).
- 3 U. C. Hannam and M. W. Greenslade, 'The Abbey of Burton', in *Victoria County History of Staffordshire*, III (1970), 202.
- 4 W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1817–30 edition, reprinted 1846), III, 47–8.
- 5 Knowles et al., *Heads of Religious Houses*, 30.
- 6 *VCH Staffordshire IX: Burton upon Trent* (2003), 109
- 7 Great Domesday Book, f. 247b
- 8 I. Atherton, 'Burton Abbey Church: A Reconsideration of its Built Form', *TSaHS*, XXXVII (1995), 116.
- 9 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, III, 47–8.
- 10 Atherton, 'Burton Abbey Church', 116. Atherton discusses Bartlett's point in footnote 80.
- 11 Hannam and Greenslade, 'Abbey of Burton', 212.
- 12 C. Healey, C. Howard-Davis, and A. Bates, 'Excavations on the site of the infirmary of Burton Abbey, now The Abbey Inn, Burton upon Trent', *TSaHS*, XLIII (2006), 88.
- 13 G. N. Garmonsway (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (1972), 217.
- 14 Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, (London, 1854), 28.
- 15 S. A. Jeavons, 'The Pattern of Ecclesiastical Building in Staffordshire During the Norman Period' in *TLSSaHS*, IV (1963), 5.
- 16 Ibid. 8.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 M. Morris, *The Norman Conquest* (London, 2013), 240–41.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid. 220.
- 21 Ibid. 223 seq.
- 22 Ibid. 232.
- 23 'The Burton cartulary: Introduction', in G. Wrottesley (ed.), *Staffordshire Historical Collections*, V (1), (London, 1884), 1–6.
- 24 H. R. Luard (ed.), *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores Annales Monastici* (Rolls Series, 1864), I, 185.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 *SHC*, V (1), 1-6.
- 28 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, III, 34.
- 29 Knowles et al., *Heads of Religious Houses*, 79.
- 30 Ibid. 30–31.
- 31 R. Bartlett, *The Life and Miracles of St Modwena* (Oxford, 2002), p. xi.
- 32 Ibid. 193.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 T. Wharton, *The History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh to the*

Commencement of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1815), II, 210.

35 E. Mason, *William II: Rufus, the Red King* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2005), 32.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid. 13.

39 Ibid. 104.

40 Ibid. 107.

41 Ibid. 13

42 Knowles et al., *Heads of Religious Houses*, 31.

43 F. Neveux, *A Brief History of the Normans*, translated by H. Curtis (London, 2008), 148.

44 G. Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard*, translated by K. B. Wolf (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2005), 41–2.

45 Ibid. 42.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 M.-A. Lucas-Avenel, 'Le récit de Geoffroi Malaterra ou la légitimation de Roger, Grand Comte de Sicile' in D. Bates (ed.), *Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, XXXIV (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2011), 169.

49 K. B. Wolf, *Making History: The Normans and their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy* (Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1995), 146–7.

50 Lucas-Avenel, 'Le récit', 172.

51 Ibid. 173.

52 Ibid.

53 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, II, 266–7.

54 Knowles et al., *Heads of Religious Houses*, 36

55 S. N. Vagn, *Archbishop Anselm 1093–1109: Bec Missionary, Canterbury Primate, Patriarch of Another World* (London, 2016), 98.

Writing archaeology for Pevsner: Birmingham and the Black Country

Mike Hodder

I'm sure many members use the excellent "Buildings of England" series of county architectural guides originally written by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (the Staffordshire volume, the last in the original series, was published in 1974). The series is currently being updated and a new volume on Birmingham and the Black Country (and including part of Solihull), written by architectural historian Andy Foster, will be published in 2021. When I was invited to write the archaeology introduction for this volume (for Pevsner purposes, regarded as prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon) and to suggest sites for inclusion in the gazetteer, I welcomed the opportunity to draw attention to the amount of information now available for these periods in the area, and also to mention, albeit briefly, the archaeology of medieval and later periods. I have put forward some less well-known sites for the gazetteer: these had to have fairly visible remains, even if they were not publicly accessible. Here is a preview of my work for Pevsner, which of course includes several sites formerly in Staffordshire.

Very few Palaeolithic objects have been found in the area but important concentrations of flint tools used by Mesolithic hunters and gatherers, together with the debris from their manufacture, have been discovered at Bourne Pool in Aldridge (by Jim Gould- there is a report on the flints in SAHS *Transactions* Vol 14) and in excavations at the medieval Sandwell Priory (*Trans.* Vol 31). The oldest visible features in the area are probable barrows or burial mounds of Neolithic and Bronze Age date, including the mound that gives its name to the Birmingham suburb of Kingstanding, a mound near Aldridge church and another at Rushall Hall. Past vegetation change, indicated by pollen in peat near the River Tame in Perry Barr, shows that the first significant clearance of woodland for agriculture in the area took place around 2100 B.C., in the earlier part of the Bronze Age. There are many Bronze Age "burnt mounds" in the area. These are mounds of heat-shattered stones and charcoal which are the debris from using heated stones to produce steam for bathing, or to boil water for cooking. Examples can be visited in Sutton Park, and a burnt mound in Sandwell Valley has been excavated (*Trans.* Vol 28). Although Iron Age hillforts (hilltop settlements defended with banks and ditches) are rare in the area now,

placenames and antiquarian observations suggest that more may have existed. Castle Old Fort in Walsall Wood is not publicly accessible, but footpaths pass the larger Wychbury (near Hagley), which straddles Dudley's border with Worcestershire. Iron Age farmsteads have been excavated in Sutton Coldfield, Solihull and Kings Norton.

The extremely well-preserved stretch of Roman road in Sutton Park is part of the Ryknield Street, linking Wall with Metchley, a Roman fort whose site is now occupied by Edgbaston's QE Hospital and the University of Birmingham. Extensive excavations revealed that the fort was first established in the middle of the 1st century AD, and there was a short-lived civilian settlement outside it, then it became a supply depot and was replaced by a smaller fort. Unlike Wall, civilian occupation did not continue after the fort had been abandoned in the 2nd century. Modern landscaping includes grassed banks on the lines of the fort's ramparts. Roman farmsteads have been found in excavations in Sutton Coldfield, King's Norton and Elmdon, and more sites are indicated by concentrations of pottery on field surfaces. Roman pottery was made in kilns in Sutton Coldfield and Perry Barr, and fossils in the mortar of Roman buildings at Wall show that its lime was made from Rushall limestone.

The only visible structure of the Anglo-Saxon period in the area is a 9th- or 10th-century decorated pillar or cross shaft at Wolverhampton. Some finds and radiocarbon dates from Dudley Castle suggest that the hilltop here was occupied before the castle was constructed in the 11th century.

Like Dudley, the other two castles in the area are of motte and bailey type (and Birmingham's medieval manor house may have originated as a ringwork castle). The motte at Castle Bromwich can still be seen (the bailey is crossed by the A452) and excavations here revealed timber buildings and defences. Kingshurst Castle, overlooking the River Cole, is now surrounded by tower blocks. Weoley Castle in Birmingham was a fortified manor house. The remains of a great hall, kitchen, solar and guardrobe, chapel and other buildings dating to the 13th to 15th centuries, are surrounded by stone wall, towers and a moat.

Most of the numerous unfortified moated sites in the area were constructed in the 13th and 14th centuries. The moat, which surrounded timber buildings, was a status symbol rather than a defensive barrier. The most extensive excavations have been at Walsall Moat (*Trans.* Vols 16 and 18) and at Sydenhams in Solihull where the main building was interpreted from its archaeological remains as a hall with a central base cruck like that still surviving at West Bromwich Manor House (*Trans.* Vol 17). At Kents Moat near Yardley and Hawkesley Farm Moat in Longbridge, remains of medieval buildings found in excavation are no longer visible and the moats now surround modern buildings. Ashmore Park moat in Wednesfield, Perry Hall moat in Perry Hall Park and Hobs Moat in Solihull are in open spaces within the built-up area. Gannow Green Moat on the River Rea in Frankley is accompanied by the dam of a former fishpond, and some of the pools in Sutton Park were constructed as fishponds within a medieval deer park whose 12th century boundary ditch and bank can still be seen, along with its internal subdivisions and 16th-century enclosed woodland and 18th-century millpools.

Some of the many watermills in the area originated in the medieval period, but all the surviving mill structures are of later date. In addition to pools and their dams, the extensive water engineering works for mills include leats (head and tail races). At New Hall Mill in Sutton Coldfield a head race 700m long runs on an embankment to feed a tiny mill pool, and the 18th-century head and tail races for Sarehole Mill and Trittiford Mill run parallel to the River Cole for one-and-a-half miles.

Excavations have revealed more information about the area's historic buildings. Postholes of 13th-century timber structures were found under the 15th-century Saracen's Head in King's Norton and at Blakesley Hall in Yardley a 13th-century pebble surface was found under the 16th-century building.

Several of the area's churches contain visible medieval masonry and architectural details. Excavations below the floor of Holy Trinity in Sutton Coldfield revealed wall footings of earlier phases of building. There are remains of medieval monasteries at Halesowen, at Dudley and at Sandwell, where you can see the excavated walls of the church and east range of a priory founded in the 12th century near the Sand Well spring (*Trans.* Vol 31). Sandwell Hall, which was built on the site in the 18th century, has since been demolished but its surviving landscape includes a lake that originated as fishponds of the Priory, an icehouse and a sweet chestnut avenue (*Trans.* Vols 27 and 28). Near Swan Pool, which was the Priory's mill pool, there are a building and spoil heap of the Jubilee Colliery, which was in use from 1897 to 1960. Two bridges cross the line of a tramway that transported coal from the mine.

Canals and their landscapes of locks, cuttings, embankments and tunnels are some of the most prominent and impressive remains of the area's recent industrial past. Freeth Bridge in Perry Barr crosses a deep cutting for the Tame Valley Canal, opened in 1844, and the lines of canal tunnels in Kings Norton and Woodgate Valley are marked by large heaps of spoil brought up shafts.

Remains of the Second World War are often under-appreciated. An anti-aircraft gun battery built in 1941 on high ground in Handsworth, overlooking Birmingham, contains two octagonal concrete gun emplacements, approached along concrete roads. On the other side of the city, a concrete pipe with slits on the Worcester Canal is an unusual pillbox which was intended to look like an industrial chimney.

A more detailed article on the prehistoric and Roman archaeology of the Black Country boroughs will appear in a forthcoming edition of The Blackcountryman magazine. There is more information on sites of all periods in Birmingham in my book, Birmingham: the Hidden History. Birmingham Museums Trust's book, Walk Birmingham, and the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society's "See it for free" at <https://bwaa-online.co.uk/home/see-it-for-free/> give directions to sites you can visit.

Lockdown Memories is a project working to create a lasting record of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures and how it has affected the lives of Staffordshire people. Everyone has been affected by the pandemic. You might have spent lockdown working for the NHS or as a key worker, or socially isolating in your own home, or may even have suffered through illness. Whatever your experience we would like to hear your story.

We would like to collect as many reminiscences as possible - these will help us to document Staffordshire's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, and may be used for an exhibition, publication, or website.

Please complete our short questionnaire which is at https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Heritage-and-archives/Events-and-projects/Lockdown-Memories.aspx?utm_medium=govdelivery&utm_source=email. (copy and paste into your browser) Please take care to complete the section giving permission for us to make use of any stories you submit.

Also, if you have any objects, photographs, drawings, paintings or documents relating to your lockdown experiences that you would like to lend or donate to the Archive Service or the County Museum's collections, please let us know. This might be protective clothing or leaflets, things linked to VE Day or the Black Lives Matter events, or anything else which you associate with your lockdown memories. Contact details Archives & Heritage, Unit G, Beacon Business Park, Weston Road, Stafford ST18 0WL Email: chris.copp@staffordshire.gov.uk

Annual Membership Subscriptions 2020-2021

Renewal of annual Membership of SA&HS became due as at 1st September 2020. The subscription rates have been held, not having changed since 2013. They remain for the various categories: Individual £20.00. Joint £30.00. Student/Unwaged £15.00. Many Members choose to pay by bank standing order, so renewal is taken care of. Others are already paid up in advance. Otherwise there are of course the different ways to pay: you can send a cheque in the post (payable to SA&HS), make a bank transfer (please enquire the Society's bank details) or use PayPal to make payment electronically using your bank card, in which case please go to our website <https://www.sahs.uk.net> and follow the links – on webpage 'Joining Us'. We would recommend PayPal – it is secure, quick and easy. Payments are always acknowledged – by email from both PayPal and the Hon. Membership Secretary/Treasurer. Cheques should be sent to: Keith Billington, Hon. Membership Secretary, SA&HS, 4 Gainsbrook Crescent, Norton Canes, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 9TN.

If you are unsure whether you are currently paid up, or if perhaps you would like to enquire about setting up a standing order, please contact the Hon. Membership Secretary/Treasurer. Email: kjboutthere@yahoo.co.uk

=====

FOR USE BY NEW MEMBERS WISHING TO JOIN

STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP 2020/2021

SOCIETY YEAR COMMENCING 1st SEPTEMBER 2020

Annual Subscription Rates: Individual £20 Joint £30 Student/Unemployed £15

Title(s)..... Full Name(s)

Postal Address.....

..... Postcode

Email Address.....

Telephone Number.....

I/We enclose £..... re applicable annual subscription for the year 2020/21 for Individual / Joint / Student / Unemployed Membership. Please make your cheque payable to SA&HS.

Signed Date

.....

Please send the completed form with your payment to Mr Keith Billington, SA&HS Honorary Membership Secretary, 4 Gainsbrook Crescent, Norton Canes, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 9TN.

NB Alternatively you can join SA&HS by using the online facility available at the Society's website:

<https://www.sahs.uk.net> You will be asked to select the PayPal option to make your payment

Another new volume from VCH Staffordshire

By Nigel Tringham

Since its revival in 1950 (after a rather long gap since the publication of the first volume in 1908), Staffordshire has had a good record of producing VCH ‘big red books’ and just before Easter the fourteenth was sent off to the type-setter (the final ‘tidying up’ of files having to be done under national ‘lock-down’).

Volume XII – yes, number 12, although the 15th in the complete set (it’s a bit too complicated to explain briefly) – is on *TAMWORTH*, both the town and parish with its several out-townships, along with the adjoining parish of Drayton Bassett.

It’s been a complicated volume to work on because Tamworth was in two counties – Staffordshire and Warwickshire. The county boundary ran right through the centre of the town, with the church in Staffordshire and the castle in Warwickshire. The Warwickshire part of the town was added to Staffordshire in 1890 – on the grounds that there had been a couple of hundred more people in the Staffordshire part in the 1881 census, although this was the only time it did have a majority in the 19th century. Having got the Warwickshire part of the town, Staffordshire almost inevitably got the Warwickshire villages too, but not until 1965.

The 1965 change-over was connected with the second phase of the transformation of a small market town into the hub for vast housing estates laid out to accommodate overspill tenants from Birmingham. Between 1956 (when the first phase was commenced) and the present day, the population of town and wider parish has increased SIX-fold, causing a degree of local resentment (with large-scale demolition of ‘old’ houses and shops), and with social problems on some of the early council estates. But without the influx of new residents, Tamworth would have struggled to survive as a separate entity with its own local authority.

Done under the Town Development Act, 1952, the overspill programme is a *fascinating* story, and makes a striking contrast with Tamworth’s other main period of importance – as a centre for kings of Mercia in the 8th and 9th centuries, along with its re-fortification in 913 by King Alfred’s daughter Æthelflæd, ‘lady of the Mercians’. Although buried in Gloucester, she died in Tamworth in 918, and two years ago she was commemorated in what many attendees thought was one of the most extraordinary (and lengthy) church services they had ever attended – along with Prince Edward, earl of Wessex. Visitors are now confronted by a more-than-life-size statue of her as they come out of the railway station.

Between its Mercian hey-day and the present day, Tamworth was basically a market town – or rather, of course, a two-market town, as there were markets in both halves! Also, two court houses for the two borough courts. But the division doesn’t seem to have been a real problem – there was only one church, and so everyone met up each Sunday and had to get along with each other.

Drayton Bassett parish, which adjoins Tamworth on the south, has been included in the volume because there were very close links between the two places from the middle ages onwards. Indeed, it was the home from the 1790s of the cotton manufacturer Robert Peel, who tried to create a ‘cottonopolis’ at Tamworth – or at least, the locals thought that they were going to rival Manchester. It never took off, but Peel’s son Sir Robert, the prime

minister, remained in the area, building a mansion house called Drayton Manor in the 1830s – it was demolished in the 1920s, and the grounds are now part of Drayton Manor amusement park. The PM was a keen collector of paintings, many displayed in a special gallery he had built onto his house, but the collection has to be dispersed later in the century as the family got into financial trouble – rather a sad story.

The volume is also remarkable as it marks the end of the present county editor's forty-year career with the *Victoria County History* – a fitting end, it is hoped, but that is for others to say.

Reprinted from Local History News Summer 2020

The Lecture Programme 2020-2021

The uncertainty continues!

We do live in the hope of returning to some semblance of normality in the spring of 2021 but we are not in control of that.

The Programme that is set at the moment is still limited. There are a couple of TBC (to be confirmed) meetings for which we are awaiting responses and changes will be advised as and when there are firm booked speakers for the stray dates - keep watching the website!

There are still four lectures outstanding unheard from last season 2019-2020 (Rob Early - HS2, Tom Devlin - West Midlands dialect, Nick Daffern - Prehistoric West Midlands and Cat Jarman - Viking Repton) to try and accommodate sometime in the spring it is hoped, subject to an available venue, the Guildhall or elsewhere. Again watch the website for updates.

Finally, the published programme is still at the moment extremely basic and the information provided currently is minimal. I apologise for the brevity of the information but will expand with more detail as I receive it, adding it to the website.

Brian Bull

19th February 2021	Bob Williams - Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Trust Plus the Annual General Meeting at 7.30pm
5th March 2021	Dr Charlotte Ball - Medicine and Magic in Anglo Saxon England
19th March 2021	Dr Andrew Sargent - Early Medieval Cult of St Chad Lichfield and the Lands of St Chad
9th April 2021	Philip Modiano - Reverend John Louis Petit and his Tours of Staffordshire
23rd April 2021	TBC - Invite out awaiting response
7th May 2021	TBC - Invite out awaiting response

All lectures are held in the Guildhall Lichfield at 8.00pm. The Annual General Meeting

will be held at 7.30pm on 19th February 2021 before the evening's lecture. Visitors are welcome; £3 on the door – though subject to any Covid-19 pre-booking requirement.

COVID-19 and the Impact on Forthcoming Lectures

Please take note of the various content of this Newsletter regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Society's programme of lectures held at the Guildhall in Lichfield. This includes: a Message to the Membership from the Honorary President, Dr John Hunt; details of the lectures re-arranged for spring 2021; the revised date for the AGM which is now 19th February 2021.

Donations and Bequests

Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society relies principally for its income on annual Membership subscriptions, grants and donations. There are though other sources, for example repayment of Income Tax under the HMRC Gift Aid Scheme, which as a Charitable Organisation we are signed up to. And various other sources.

A principal area of expenditure is with regard to publication of each Volume of the SA&HS *Transactions*. There are also the Society's programmes of lectures to pay for. And of course our other activities, commitments and responsibilities.

As costs continue to rise, we are always looking to make ends meet. It becomes more difficult over time. With this in mind, you might perhaps consider making a donation, or further making a bequest to SA&HS in your will. This would help add to our funds and make things more secure and so ensure we can continue to be able to meet our charitable aims and provide benefit to our Membership into the future. Should you be interested in one of these courses of action we would be pleased to hear from you. In which case it is suggested you contact the Honorary Treasurer, or otherwise any Member of Committee.

We would be most grateful. Thank you.

Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society is a Registered Charity No. 500586.

Keith Billington

Visit our website at www.sahs.uk.net

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

Views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Society.