



# STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER September 2022

Web: [www.sahs.uk.net](http://www.sahs.uk.net)

Issue No 141

email: [sahs@sahs.uk.net](mailto: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



Shennelston's standalone medieval tower restored page 16

## **Frances Elizabeth (Betty) Fox 1.11.32 - 6.8.22**

With great sadness we have to advise the death on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2022 of Betty Fox at the age of 89. Betty was well known to many of you. She had been a Member of SA&HS for as long as we can remember, eventually joining the Society's Committee in 1982 and going on to serve as Membership Secretary, Archivist and being appointed Honorary Vice-President some years ago in recognition of her committed service and contribution. She had handed over the reins as Membership Secretary just a few years back, but continued to be very much an active Committee Member until earlier this year when it was apparent she was unwell, her illness unfortunately becoming more serious and devastating with the passing of the weeks.

Betty arrived at SA&HS (South Staffs Arch & Hist Soc, as it then was) on joining the volunteer digging team, under director Bert Round, at the Society's then ongoing excavation project at the Roman site at Wall (Letocetum). This was around about 1975 and that is where she met her great friend, and eventual fellow Committee Member, Diana Wilkes. As mentioned already, Betty went on to serve on Committee and very successfully so, fulfilling many roles and functions. As well as being Membership Secretary and Archivist, she was also responsible for sales of the Society's publications to enquirers, she was principal attending representative on our stands at events attended by SA&HS, selling our wares and promoting Membership, and additionally she was the officer who over the years painstakingly prepared and edited the various editions of the Indexes of all the Transactions Volumes. Another thing she would occasionally do is write articles on matters of history for the Society's Newsletters, always very well researched and presented. And in the past she was the occasional organiser of Society visits to places of historical interest.

It is clear Betty lived a full and varied life. She was the eldest of four siblings. Her early family life was spent in Coventry, then Coalville, her father being involved in the war effort as a development engineer working on the Spitfire fighter programme. Post-war saw the family move to the West Midlands and Betty attended school in Coseley before winning a scholarship to Sutton Coldfield High School for Girls. Working life commenced with a post at Perry Common library, then a job in the office at Tube Investments in Aldridge, before moving to Aldridge School as school librarian. In 1973 Betty joined the staff at Walsall Local History Centre newly opened in Essex Street. By this stage her interest and passion for history were to the fore and she embarked on research work and going on to write publications, often in conjunction with Aldridge Local History Group of which she had become a member. She made some firm friends at Walsall Local History Centre and when years later she retired from the latter, she continued to volunteer there working behind the scenes, on a variety of cataloguing projects to do with the archive of local records in store.

Betty, and her late husband Geoff, were seasoned travellers, including many trips over the years to New Zealand, to visit Betty's sister Judy. They were also keen sailors, owning their own boat, Geoff becoming Commodore of their sailing club. In her teenage years, Betty had pursued a passion for cycling, including a holiday by bike all around Denmark with a group of friends.

She enjoyed the practical side of history and her inclination to dig the ground began prior to involvement at Wall as it is known she took part in archaeological excavations at Stafford Castle probably in the late 60s or early 70s, and in 1972 at the Walsall Manor site, followed by another dig in Lower Rushall Street in Walsall.





Betty Fox at Middleton Hall History Fair 2013

Betty's particular love in life is said to be, not Geoff, but Middleton Hall (Grade II\*) near Tamworth. There from the start, when the historic property had to be rescued from complete neglect in 1980, she eventually came to be the longest serving and then the oldest volunteer. She worked in the early years as part of the restoration team, along with Geoff, whose practical skills were utilised in repairing the building's fabric. Betty became archivist, seemingly her forte, and wrote articles and information pieces, and prepared material for period displays within the various rooms. Otherwise, notably she became a room guide, and

eventually a Trustee of Middleton Hall, sitting on Committee until very recently; she took great pride in this.

She was a Friend of New Hall Mill at Sutton Coldfield. This was another of her passions and she loved attending their lectures, volunteered in the Mill tea room and organised coach trips to other ancient mills for the group. Then there was membership of Walsall Spinners. She possessed her own spinning wheels and looms and was adept at spinning wool from sheepskins and using the spun wool she could make lengths of fabric, on the looms. She was an expert needle-woman and in younger life could make her own clothes. All quite a skill. It is also known she was a masterful baker, making her own delicious bread, on occasions using ground flour bought at the mills visited on the mill trips, and her Christmas cakes were legendary! And much involvement with Aldridge Youth Theatre.

Betty volunteered at the William Salt Library in Stafford where she worked on improving the catalogue entries for the library's collection of historic auctioneers' estate sales catalogues. This is just the sort of thing she excelled at, demonstrating a prowess and enthusiasm born of deep interest to engage in actively helping preserve our rich heritage. With this in mind, it has to be said Betty Fox served Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society with great distinction and was a committed and significant contributor to the running of the Society over a long period of time. And above all, in essence she was a fine historian, with a wealth of knowledge, and will be greatly missed.

Betty and Geoff, who were married in 1956, had two sons, Richard and Michael. Richard, who suffered from muscular dystrophy, unfortunately died at the age of 32 many years ago. This was understandably a tragic loss for the family. Geoff Fox passed away in 2008. Geoff used to accompany his wife without fail to all the SA&HS lecture evenings over the years and they made a splendid twosome, manning the entrance desk together at St Mary's Centre in Lichfield, as the venue then was. A cheery welcome given to all who entered!

Keith Billington

---

## **Live Lectures Resume at The Guildhall Lichfield September 2022**

**23rd September**      Dr Tara Hamlin

A Day at Home in Early Modern England 1500-1700

Tara works on the social and cultural history of Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (the Tudor and Stuart periods). She is interested in how the profound changes to religion and society over the course of this period played out in domestic life and practices of belief, with particular focus on the role of visual and material culture (images, objects, built environment) in shaping people's experience of everyday life.

Tara is Reader in Early Modern Studies at Birmingham University.

**7th October**      Dr Jennifer Browning

The Rutland Mosaics

This Lecture is about the Roman Villa Mosaics discovered by Jim Irvine on his farm during 2020 which hit the media in November 2021.

Jennifer is a Project Officer at ULAS, with over 25 years of archaeological experience, following a BA in Archaeology at Nottingham and Landscape Studies MA at Leicester.

## **21st October**

Lucy Smith

Staffordshire Asylums - Stafford, Burntwood and Cheddleton

Lucy graduated in 1991 with a BScEcon(Hons) in Politics from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. Since then she has been employed in various roles within Education and Adult Social Services. In 2019 Lucy completed a part-time Open University MA in History and was awarded ESRC funding for a NWSSDTP CASE Studentship at Keele. Working in collaboration with the Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service on their Wellcome Trust funded Asylums Project, currently Lucy is exploring the history of mental health care in the Asylums at Stafford, Burntwood and Cheddleton which is the subject of this evening's lecture. Information regarding the project is available on the blog <https://staffordshireasylumrecords.wordpress.com/>.

## **4th November**

David Moore MA

The Purton Hulks of the River Severn

Dave Moore's association with history began inauspiciously. He was thrown off the History CSE course at secondary school for failing to show an interest and failing to hand in any course work. His working career started with an apprenticeship in the construction industry with an upward path leading to management in the private sector. Despite his worst efforts in school, Dave has always maintained an interest in history. He travels widely in pursuit of his passion for industrial heritage and social history. Early retirement allowed Dave to deepen his interests by studying public history at Ruskin college, Oxford, for which he was awarded an MA. Dave's other skills of photography, film-making and information technology support his work in the public history arena.

There are a number of abandoned boats and ships, deliberately beached beside the River Severn near Purton in Gloucestershire, in order to reinforce the river banks. Most were beached in the 1950s and are now in a state of considerable decay. The site forms the largest ship graveyard in mainland Britain.

A riverbank collapse in 1909 led to concerns that the barrier between the river and the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal would be breached. Old

vessels were run aground and soon filled with water and silt to create a tidal erosion barrier. The vessels included steel barges, Severn trows and concrete ships. The boats came from throughout the British Isles and were built in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. Since 2000, archaeological investigations have been undertaken to find out more about the vessels and their states of decay. Explanatory labels have been provided. One barge has been scheduled as an ancient monument and several are included in the National Register of Historic Vessels.

### **18th November** Dr Mike Hodder

#### Recent Research in Sutton Park

Dr Mike Hodder is an Honorary Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Birmingham and President of the Friends of Sutton Park Association, and a long-standing member of the Society. He has been researching the archaeology of Sutton Park for many years. Sutton Park originated as a medieval deer park and it contains many well-preserved archaeological remains of various periods. Recent excavations have investigated a medieval park keeper's lodge in the centre of the Park and an earthwork next to the Roman road. In addition, peat has been sampled to analyse pollen in it which will show how the vegetation of the Park has changed since prehistoric times, and people's impact on their environment in the past.

### **2nd December** Robert Mee

#### The Village Lock-Up

Robert lives in West Hallam Derbyshire and has been giving history presentations since 2005. His talks are mainly about and generally cover the area where he lives with some exceptions. The Village Lock-Up talk covers a wider area. A village lock-up is a historic building that was once used for the temporary detention of people in England and Wales, mostly where official prisons or criminal courts were beyond easy walking distance. Lock-ups were often used for the confinement of drunks, who were usually released the next day, or to hold people being brought before the local magistrate.

## **Zoom Lectures September to December 2022**

### **14th October** Dr Rachel Crellin

Round Mounds of the Isle of Man encompassing Berk Farm Burial Mounds



**Visit to the Staffordshire Museum Stores on Wednesday October 12 at 10.30a.m**

The stores are on Commonside just outside Stafford on the Weston Road before you come to the Showground. All the collection is here (except those items that are on temporary display elsewhere) and we can explore it. There is an excellent collection of costumes and jewellery, some art, many domestic appliances from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and some quite large agricultural items. We are limited to 16 places so if you would like to come book now! Simply indicate that you would like to come to [richard.totty4@gmail.com](mailto:richard.totty4@gmail.com). There will be a charge of £5 a head collected on the day to include tea/coffee and biscuits. There is ample parking on site and several nearby places for further refreshment. (If there is a particular item that you would like to see let us know and we will ask that it is made available.)

XX

A SHORT ANNOUNCEMENT TO  
GIVE ALL MEMBERS EARLY  
NOTICE THAT THE 2022 AGM  
WILL NOW BE HELD AT 1930 ON  
17 FEBRUARY 2023 AT THE  
GUILDHALL, LICHFIELD,  
IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE  
LECTURE.



### Robert Anthony Meeson, MA, FSA, MIFA

It is with deep sadness and regret that we record the death, on Friday May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, of our longstanding friend, colleague and fellow SAHS member, Bob Meeson. He was 78 years of age. Members will recall Bob's affable presence at our lecture meetings and his ability to pose disarmingly simple but erudite and incisive comments – a reflection of the breadth of his interests and innate scholarship, marked by his election as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in March 1973.

Bob was Staffordshire County Council's 'Archaeological Officer' for around two decades, the then equivalent of our County Archaeologist, whose close colleagues during this period included Ken Sheridan, Chris Wardle and Chris Welch. But Bob's links with the 'Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society' reach back many decades earlier, to when the Society was then known as the 'South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society'. He and his wife, Jean, were among those excavating with the Society at Wall in the 1960s and in the closing years of that decade Bob had joined the committee of our Society. At various points over some thirty years, Bob served the Society as either an elected or co-opted member of the committee, during which time he also took on specific responsibilities. In the days when our Friday evening lecture programme was offered on an alternating basis between venues in Tamworth and Lichfield, Bob was our meetings secretary for Tamworth from 1973 until 1981. When Dr John Cole became Honorary President in 1982, Bob stepped up to serve as the Society's Honorary Secretary until 1986, and he also served on our Editorial Committee.



Bob's contribution to our Society, both formally and informally, was immense, and perhaps not always widely recognized. However, we only need turn to the indexes of our *Transactions* to appreciate his contributions as an archaeologist and an author, with articles appearing in our pages from the late 1960s until his most recent paper, 'The Origins and early Development of St Editha's Church, Tamworth', published in our 2015 issue. Bob's time with the County Council coincided with periods of redevelopment in Tamworth which afforded him several opportunities to investigate the archaeology of the town, all the more intriguing because of its Mercian associations. In addition to St Editha's church, Bob's work in the town included the excavation of several timber-framed buildings, the defences of the Norman castle, and with Philip Rahtz, the Anglo-Saxon watermill discovered in the Bolebridge Street area of the town. Indeed, Tamworth was to be the subject of a very successful and influential MA thesis undertaken by Bob with the University of Birmingham. It was during Bob's tenure that archaeology in Staffordshire saw something of a quickening, with excavations in Lichfield, Tamworth and Stafford; surveys such as the moated sites

of Staffordshire, and of settlement and land use in the Manifold valley; and excavations at important sites like Drayton Bassett, to name but a few!

While the impressive range of articles published in our *Transactions* reflected the scope of Bob's interests, they certainly didn't represent the full extent of his prolific output as an author and researcher, and nor was his work limited to Staffordshire alone. When he left his employment with Staffordshire County Council, he became an independent historic buildings consultant, often described as a 'buildings analyst', as he brought together his knowledge of architectural history and the archaeology of structures to interpret buildings. It was Bob's particular expertise in the study of historic buildings that marked him out for many, ranging from churches to domestic buildings. He undertook numerous such studies, often aided in the work by Jean, leaving a rich legacy in published and unpublished reports. He served as both Secretary and President of the 'Vernacular Architecture Group' and was a contributing author to some influential publications on the subject by the Council for British Archaeology. 1996 saw the publication of *Recording Timber Framed Buildings: an illustrated glossary* (Practical Handbooks in Archaeology), among whose collaborators was Nat Alcock, with whom Bob worked on numerous other projects. In 2001 he edited with Sarah Pearson, *Vernacular Buildings in a Changing World* (CBA research report), and among his later publications was an essay on base crucks for the volume, *Cruck Building: A Survey* (Rewley House Studies in the Historic Environment, 2019) and a forthcoming contribution to the Festschrift for Nigel Tringham, to be published by the Stafford Record Society.

As might be guessed from such a record, Bob will also be fondly remembered as a lecturer and teacher, working especially with Keele University's then Department of Adult and Continuing Education; there are many who will recall taking courses with Bob, and particularly of joining him in fieldwork on projects investigating such as the village of Alrewas, and the church at Gnosall.

Bob's rich life and career touched many people, no doubt often without him realizing it. He also contributed greatly to our understanding of the heritage of our county, and to much beyond it. We would all have been much the poorer without his good-humoured company and his quiet but determined and insightful scholarship. To say that he will be missed barely scratches the surface!

A full appreciation of Bob's life and career will appear in our next *Transactions*.

John Hunt

### **Publicity Secretary**

The Society continues to have a vacancy for a Publicity Secretary, and invites members with interest in the role to contact any member of the Committee for a discussion about it. In essence, the post-holder will be asked to ensure that the Society's lecture programme and related activities receive the widest possible publicity through both 'usual' and digital methods within the County. This will include establishing links with relevant University departments of History and Archaeology as well as Schools. The post-holder doesn't have to attend Society Committee meetings, although this would be helpful!

If anyone is interested in joining the Committee in a more general capacity do please contact me for a discussion.

**Steve Lewitt Hon Sec** (sle Witt@btinternet.com 07769 296916)

## Transactions

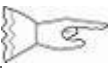

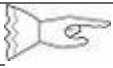
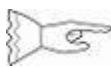

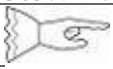

The Society has a number of copies of back issues of Transactions, and these can now be made available to members for no cost other than that of postage. If you would like to add to your collection, please let me know what issues you would like and your address and I will get in contact.

**Steve Lewitt Hon Sec** ([slewitt@btinternet.com](mailto:slewitt@btinternet.com) 07769 296916)

=====

Staffordshire had numerous monasteries in medieval times, each of which would have a library of religious texts. Very little of this has survived – destruction began before the dissolution of the monasteries when Cardinal Wolsey initiated a search of these libraries for texts which might support the King's 'Great Matter', that is his divorce from his wife Katherine and then facilitated the transfer of such texts to the King's library. He was followed by John Leyland who searched for texts that might support the King's case for independence from papal authority, and he too removed books, some for his own use. So even before the dissolution texts had been removed. But it is not clear what happened to libraries when the Houses were dissolved – many must have found their way into private hands.

This has been the subject of much research by bibliographers interested in medieval texts and there is now a database – MLGB3, available on line which lists the surviving material. There is surprisingly little from Staffordshire; 18 items from Burton but just one each from Ranton, Stone, Trentham and Dieulacres. Here is the Burton list, you can find the others on the MLGB3 website. Press control and click on the hand to take you to the relevant entry in the database, which has further brief details but alas no image. I'd like to know more about the Alchemica text from Burton – what was a monastery doing with this? The library catalogue states that it is a Medico-alchemical compendium, mainly in Latin, particularly indebted to the Lullian tradition and has the name William Symon on a flyleaf – there is also an image of one page for the curious.

- **BURTON-UPON-TRENT, Staffordshire, *Benedictine abbey of St Mary the Virgin and St Modwenna***
  - **Aberystwyth, Wales, National Library of Wales**
    - [c Peniarth 390C. Summa m. Bernardi, etc. s. xiii ex.](#) 
  - **Cambridge, Corpus Christi College**
    - [e e 281. G. Monemutensis, etc. s. xii–xiv. ?](#) 
    - [e e 353. P. de Vineis s. xiv. ?](#) 
  - **Cambridge, St John's College**
    - [¶i A.2.1. Liber Theodoli, etc. London, A.D. 1497, etc.](#) 
  - **Cambridge, Trinity College**
    - [c O. 8. 36. Alchemica s. xvi in. ?](#) 
  - **Cambridge, University Library**
    - [¶i Inc. 3057. Libellulus secundarum intentionum logicalium \[Paris, c. A.D. 1493\].](#) 
  - **London, British Library**
    - [c Add. 23944. Augustinus, etc. s. ix. \[B11.8\]](#) 

- ¶ C.77.d.17. W. Durandus Lyon, A.D. 1506. 
- i Cotton Cleopatra A. II. Vita S. Modwenne s. xii. 
- c Cotton Vespasian E.iii fols. 4–178. Annales, etc. s. xii med–xiii med. 
- **Norwich, City Library**
  - ¶i J. de Sacro Bosco, etc. Cologne, A.D. 1508, etc. 
- **Oxford, All Souls College**
  - ¶i i.12.15. J. Wallensis Lyon, A.D. 1511. 
  - ¶i LR.4.e.10. N. de Orbellis, etc. Paris, A.D. 1498, etc. 
  - ¶i SR.62.a.2. J. de Trittenham Paris, A.D. 1512. 
  - ¶i SR.77.g.13. P. Lombardus Basel, A.D. 1502. 
  - ¶e v.2.13. P. de Palude Paris, A.D. 1497/8. 
  - ¶i v.4.12. Guil. Pepin Paris, A.D. 1534. 
- **Oxford, Lincoln College**
  - e lat. 113. G. Ebroicensis s. xiv. 

### Annual Membership Subscriptions SA&HS Year 2022-2023

Renewal of annual Membership of SA&HS became due as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022. The subscription rates have once again 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. It is NOT necessary to fill in a Membership application form.

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](mailto:kjboutthere@yahoo.co.uk)

Thank you.

### Webinar: British Association for Local History: The 1921 Census: Opportunities for Local History

This talk will explore the recently released 1921 Census and its associated resources and demonstrate ways in which the records might be used to inform (or

inspire) local history research. The talk will be given by Jessamy Carlson, Family & Local History Engagement Lead at The National Archives in Kew.

Jessamy is a qualified archivist and historian. She has over twenty years' experience in research and has written on diverse subjects from babies named after First World War battles to teenage girls in "trouble" in the mid-twentieth century. She is passionate about getting people into archives, and into research.

Online, 6 September 2022, 7-8pm, members free, non-members

£5 [www.balh.org.uk/event-balh-balh-digital-webinar-the-1921-census-opportunities-for-local-history-2022-10-11](http://www.balh.org.uk/event-balh-balh-digital-webinar-the-1921-census-opportunities-for-local-history-2022-10-11)

### **Short Course: Beginners Renaissance Latin Intensive**

Continuing its online activities, this year the Warburg Institute offers Beginners Renaissance Latin as a virtual class via zoom over five intensive days either side of a weekend break: Thurs-Fri 8 & 9 Sept, and Mon-Weds 12, 13, 14 September 2022, 1-3pm and 4-5pm each day.

The course is designed for total beginners. It will focus on the rudiments of the Latin language, but with a key aim of helping students develop the ability and confidence to navigate their way around a range of early modern primary sources in Latin from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

Online, 8-14 September, 2022, Standard fee £160, students £145 [Beginners Renaissance Latin Intensive | The Warburg Institute \(sas.ac.uk\)](https://www.warburg.ac.uk/courses/beginners-renaissance-latin-intensive)

### **Diary Date**

**Wednesday 19 April 2023 at 2.00pm**

Visit to Maxstoke Castle near Coleshill. A genuine moated castle, only open to the public one day a year, this will be a private tour showing rooms not open on that day. With tea and cake. £24 a head. The gardens should be in Spring bloom and we are hoping to be able to visit the church and the site of Maxstoke Priory which are nearby. Further details and booking form in the January newsletter.

### **Book Reviews**

**J.L. Petit: Britain's Lost Pre-Impressionist**, Philip Modiano, RPS Publications, 122p. 2022, £20. ISBN 978-1-9164931-2-4.

*Britain's Lost Pre-Impressionist* is how Philip Modiano champions the prolific Victorian water-colourist and pioneering campaigner for the preservation of ancient buildings, Reverend John Louis Petit [1801-1868]. This new book continues to raise the profile of this neglected Staffordshire artist and follows on from *Petit's Tours of Old*



*Staffordshire* [2019] and *Clarke, Petit and St Mark's – A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Journey on the Isle of Man* [2022].

After introducing us to Petit, Modiano explores his subject's motivation, sets him in context with his contemporaries, and follows his subject's artistic development chronologically. He is a measured, authoritative and passionate guide. Petit was an opponent of Gothic Revival. He believed architecture should be original, not merely copying the past but learning from it and taking tradition forward. He took the same approach to his art. Numerous examples of churches, seascapes and landscapes, show how Petit ceaselessly refined his technique, developing a looser, more impressionistic approach, anticipating the direction in which art was moving. His later architectural studies in particular have an extraordinary subtlety. Painted on the spot, they deftly capture the essence of the buildings depicted while losing nothing in authenticity. Petit is important as an artist but his works are also valuable as historical documents.

This is the survey of his life and work that Petit deserves. I hesitate to write that this is the definitive book but it has already been highly praised by art historian Andrew Graham-Dixon as being the definitive reflection of Petit's work. It may well be that, as his star rises and more of his work continues to come to light, we may be able cherish even further the value of Petit's art and his life.

Trevor James

**Abbeys and Priories of Britain**, Stephen Platten, Pitkin, 2022, 96p [with 91 photos], £9-99. ISBN 978-1-84165-938-1

It is very obvious that this is a book prepared by an enthusiast because at every turn Stephen Platten readily shares aspects of the architectural or the aesthetic reputations of such buildings. This means that works by Pugin, Comper and Turner are celebrated, as they should be, but other features at particular locations that have historical or social significance are not mentioned. My examples are that at Dorchester Abbey, where the importance of its place in the veneration of St Birinius is clearly conveyed, the rare presence of a memorial plaque to John F. Kennedy is not. Equally at Dryburgh Abbey the presence of the tomb of Earl Haig is recognised but the significant message conveyed that this much-maligned military commander is buried under a memorial exactly similar to those thousands that died under his leadership is missed.

The advertising material suggests that this is 'definitive guide to the best surviving examples of monastic buildings' throughout Britain. This is a very carefully composed, very accessible and well-illustrated introduction to this subject but the selection of entries reveals the special interests of the author. He does include St George's Chapel at Windsor, which is not linked to the monastic tradition, and equally he omits structures to which many of us are devoted. Here in the Midlands Croxden Abbey and Buildwas Abbey are deeply loved and extensive structures but they have not

warranted inclusion. In Norfolk he explains the fragmentary remains of St Benet's Abbey but does not include the nearby Creak Abbey which closed as a result of a devastating plague outbreak, something that does resonate with us today in our shared experience of pandemic. In the north my list would inevitably have included Cartmel Priory and Howden Minster, both of which provide such striking impressions to their many visitors but they are not included.

Despite my reservations, over the selection of examples, this will be a very helpful guide for those who wish to embark on a study of monastic structures. I have visited half of these structures that Stephen Platten has described but he has now given me a list of thirty more that should take their place in future fieldwork.

Trevor James

---

**The National Brewery Centre** (for most locals The Bass Museum!) has been a Museum for 41 years, had 3 name changes and 4 owners (all Breweries) and are currently run by a fifth (tenant-not a Brewery!)

The site has approx. 100,000 artefacts and objects related to all aspects of the Brewing Industry. This includes 11 vehicles, a steam pumping engine and two full size locomotives. Most of the exhibition is housed in a 3 storey, Grade 2 listed, 1866 Joiners Shop (once part of the Bass Brewery)

The core of the Archive is from the Bass Company records and spans 750 linear metres of storage

There is one part time Collections Officer and 45 Volunteers who care for the Collections. See ([www.nationalbrewerycentre.co.uk](http://www.nationalbrewerycentre.co.uk))

When deciding on an online collections record management (CRM) system we knew we wanted a backroom, quick to update, simple template and we picked a Canadian open source software called AtoM. It is ideal for Archive records and can be adapted to artefacts at a basic level. A selected field template could then be hosted by a company called Orangeleaf.

Orangeleaf were (and continue to be) enthusiastic and incredibly supportive of the project-I think it had something to do with the beer! We were transferring 39,000 records from Micromusee to AtoM and then selecting record information to go to a public interface on Collections Base

Updates could be inputted by Volunteers offsite if necessary and browsers can add comments and stories of their own to increase and refresh our metadata.

Online exhibitions can be also be added

The process took 2 years and seems to have worked! On 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020 we launched our site ([www.nbcarchives.co.uk](http://www.nbcarchives.co.uk))

Response has been steady and we are checking Google Analytics regularly for any trends, with one eye on commercial potential.

Of course there is a lot of data cleansing-typo's and standardisation of terms as over the past 25 years and with over 30 system recorders mistakes are inevitable. The system was not developed to be for public access but purely as a CRM for staff.

Needless to say we are compiling a standard for inputting which will be Archive compliant

Vanessa Winstone

---

**Save the date** for the next Staffordshire History Day: 5 November 2022, at The Brampton Museum & Art Gallery, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

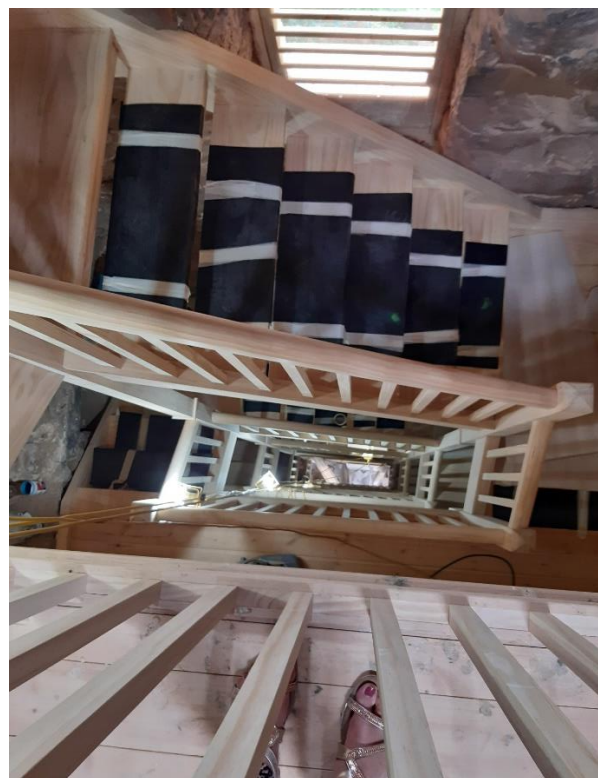
---

## **Friends of Shenstone Tower (FoST) – The Latest on Project Progress**

### **Repairing Shenstone's Old Church Tower (St John's Church Shenstone)**

This item is a further update on the rapid progress being made with restoration of Shenstone's surviving standalone Medieval Grade 2\* listed Church Tower. A huge community effort has taken place with strong support from a number of key Grant Funders. There is to be an opening ceremony on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 2.00 pm.

Work on the Tower finally commenced in August 2021, at which time the structure was in a very sorry state. Historic England and the PCC commissioned an initial survey in 2017 and a project cost estimate was arrived at. Then the Charity came into being - The Friends of Shenstone Tower (FoST) - the raising of funds was put in train and an architect was employed to draw up detailed plans. This enabled permissions to be sought from the Diocese and Lichfield District Council and tenders went out for the work to be done. Final restoration and fitting out for public access and community use will have cost in the end circa £500,000, the overall project turning out to be more difficult and costly than anticipated.



Along the way, the guidance, expertise and funding provided by Historic England has been vital; together with support and funding from Lichfield District Council, Shenstone Parish Council and grant funders: HS2, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Pilgrim's Trust, Leche Trust, and Bells Whisky. There was also invaluable and substantial support and donations from the local community.

The restoration work is now more or less complete, and then the fitting out will take place for the intended public and community use. An official "Turning the Key" opening ceremony is set for Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October at 2.00 pm, invited guests meeting initially in St John's Parish Church. There will be a few short speeches and thank yous, followed by the opening of the Tower, a trip to the top of it for those who wish to climb the stairs, followed by tea and scones back in the church.

A laudable community restoration project.

Keith Billington (information as provided by Bronwen Ross of FoST)

## More Diary Dates

### Wall Roman site

The site museum is open from 11am to 4pm on every other weekend until October): details <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/wall-roman-site/>

**Saturday 22 October (Friends of Letocetum):** guided walk of Wall beyond the baths and mansio, including the site of the Roman forts and the late Roman *burgus*. Booking essential: <http://www.wallromansitefriendsofletocetum.co.uk/> or 01543 418464

### Sutton Park Archaeology Walks

The walks are organised by the Friends of Sutton Park Association. They are free and booking is not required, but please wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear because they include rough paths and there is no shelter en route. Details <http://fospa.org.uk/>

**Tuesday 13 September** (Part of Birmingham Heritage Week): start 10am, Town Gate, off Park Road. Including millpools and medieval fishponds, deer park boundaries, and a former racecourse.

**Saturday 8 October:** start 10am Boldmere Gate, off Stonehouse Road. Including medieval deer park boundaries, Holly Hurst wood, and remains of a First World war army camp.

### Weoley Castle: Birmingham Museums Trust

Guided walks around the remains of a fortified medieval manor house. Booking essential: <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/weoley/whats-on>

**Saturday 17 September** (part of Birmingham Heritage Week)

### Medieval Yardley: Birmingham Museums Trust

**Saturday 10 September** Guided walks (Part of Birmingham Heritage Week) including the church, moated sites and ridge and furrow. Booking essential:

<https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/blakesley/whats-on>

Details <https://birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/>

Heritage Open Days: Local events include an illustrated talk “Bromwich Hall and medieval West Bromwich”, on Friday 9 September, 10:30, Bromwich Hall (West Bromwich Manor House). Booking essential at <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/west-bromwich/bromwich-hall-west-bromwich-manor-house-museum/bromwich-hall-and-medieval-west-bromwich-talk-as-part-of-heritage-open-days/2022-09-09/10:30/t-Inneqkg>

Birmingham Heritage Week: this includes several talks, guided walks, tours of historic buildings and other events in Sutton Coldfield, and guided walks of medieval Yardley and Weoley Castle fortified medieval manor house. Advance booking is required for some of the events.

## FOR USE BY NEW MEMBERS WISHING TO JOIN

### STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP 2022/2023

#### SOCIETY YEAR COMMENCING 1<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022

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 2022/23 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

.....



## New Book

### Weston Park: The House, the families, and the influence

by [Gareth Williams](#)

**Publisher** : Boydell Press (14 Jun. 2022) **Language** : English **Hardcover** : 256 pages

**ISBN-10** : 1783276126 **ISBN-13** : 978-1783276127 £36.60

(Reviews of this book would be welcome for our next newsletter)

## Looking Ahead:

### Live Lectures at The Guildhall

#### February to May 2023

**17th February** Elaine Joyce

Colonel William Careless: King Charles' most Faithful Servant

(The 2022 AGM will be held at 8.30 before the lecture)

**17th March** Dr Trevor James

Historic Inn Names

**31st March** Mathew Morris

Latest Works at Leicester Cathedral

**14th April** David Skillen

Knitters, Nailers and Traitors: Belper in the Industrial Revolution.

**28th April** Dr Kate Farr

From Plaque to Poo

### Zoom Lectures February to May 2023

**3rd March** Dr Victoria Yuskaitis

Anchorites

**21st April** To be confirmed

More details in our January newsletter – but note the dates in your diaries!

## THE GALLOWAY HOARD and MERCIA

I hope that it won't seem that I'm being disloyal to the county but having just seen the splendid Galloway Hoard exhibition in Aberdeen Art Gallery, I fear that for cultural significance it rather puts the Staffordshire Hoard into the shade.

Found by metal-detectorists (two of them church ministers) in 2014 on what is now (and may have been for a long time) church land, the hoard was deposited about 900 evidently by 'Vikings' – the weight of the silver ingots and arm-rings that make up its bulk (in the upper levels) conforming to the standard used in Viking-occupied Dublin at that period. But there are some items that are related to Christians. A 'decoy' burial at the very top (intended to satisfy plunderers and prevent them from searching further down) had a silver pectoral cross, presumably intended to ward them off, although that would be an odd thing for pagans to consider, unless they wanted to deter Christians in the locality. The bulk of the silver was revealed in a level below – ingots and arm-rings, some of the latter with runic inscriptions, but in runes used by Anglo-Saxons rather than Scandinavians, suggesting that the rings belonged to Christians (one of them named Egbert): of course, they could have been plundered by Vikings themselves.

The major find was at the bottom: a silver vessel some 10cm high, decorated not with Christian symbols (as are two other similar vessels that have been found in hoards discovered in Britain and Ireland) but with leopards and tigers, a winged crown, and a fire-altar, the latter associated with Zoroastrianism, the religion practised in Persia. Evidently the vessel was booty from Viking raids in the Middle East.

Astonishingly, remnants of textiles with which the vessel was wrapped have survived and are undergoing scientific analysis. Further textiles, including silk, were found within the vessel itself, used to protect several precious items, some clearly heirlooms with long histories of their own. Notably, these included a rock crystal probably from Classical Rome and so some 400 or 500 years old; valued for its luminosity (something needed in gloomy poorly-lit churches), the crystal had been encased in gold filigree with an inscription at the bottom 'Made by Bishop Hyguald', probably an otherwise unknown bishop of Lindisfarne or Whithorn.

Other items included balls of 'dirt', probably soil that had been gathered at holy (Christian) sites, perhaps in the Holy Land – why would a 'Viking' want these? Also, a black gold-encased 'touchstone' used for testing gold. Most of these finds can be seen on the website about the hoard hosted by the National Museums of Scotland.

And now for the **Mercian connection**. One of the 'relic heirlooms' in the vessel was a small gem, which had been made into a pendant by affixing to its top a perforated coin of Coelwulf, king of the Mercians (d. 821). Had it been made into a pendant in Mercia itself, or perhaps the coin was just one conveniently at hand – who knows.

This wonderful exhibition is at Aberdeen until 23 October, and having been at Kirkcudbright and the National Museum in Edinburgh it is unlikely to come South – it's *Scottish* and is staying there – but Aberdeen is *always* worth a visit, and the Gallery was re-opened recently after a major restoration and has much to offer in its own right.

Nigel Tringham

*There are many images of this hoard available on the internet but we have not found a good one of the Coelwulf coin - Ed.*



The countryside charity  
**Staffordshire**

[www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk](http://www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk)

CPRE Staffordshire invites you to a picnic and talk followed by our AGM.

Join Professor John Baker of the University of Nottingham to find out what place names can tell us about the history of the countryside.

## THE PLACE NAMES OF STAFFORDSHIRE AND THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

THURSDAY 22 SEPTEMBER

HALING DENE CENTRE  
PENKRIDGE  
ST19 5DT



### PICNIC AT 6:30PM

Refreshments  
provided

### TALK AT 7PM

### AGM AT 7:30PM

£5 PER PERSON

### BOOK ON EVENTBRITE:

STAFFORDSHIREPLACENAME  
S.EVENTBRITE.CO.UK

### More Information:

[www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk](http://www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk)

[protect@cprestaffordshire.org.uk](mailto:protect@cprestaffordshire.org.uk)

EVERYONE WELCOME!

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2022 AT 10 AM – 4 PM**

## **Open Day at St Margaret's, Draycott-in-the-Moors – ancient tombs and dragons**

This is a rare opportunity to see inside an ancient church that is usually closed. On the day, tours and easy-to-read guides are provided; paper quizzes (for both children and adults, separately) are available; and refreshments will be on hand. Historians can buy detailed booklet-guides. Free, but donations on the day will also be most welcome. You will see half-a-dozen medieval statues and tombs, find out why St Margaret and the Draycott Family are associated with dragons, and be able to take a guess at what the large 2500-year old bowl was really used for!

### **Further Ahead**

Wednesday 19 April 2023 at 2.00 we will visit Maxstoke Castle near Coleshill for a guided tour of the main apartments and an opportunity to stroll around the gardens (and moat!) Details in our January newsletter.



This newsletter is edited for the Staffordshire Historical and Archaeological Society by Richard Totty [richard.totty4@gmail.com](mailto:richard.totty4@gmail.com)

Our web site is [www.sahs.uk.net](http://www.sahs.uk.net)

Follow us on twitter [@Staffs\\_ArchHist](https://twitter.com/Staffs_ArchHist) / [Twitter](https://twitter.com/Staffs_ArchHist)