



STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER September 2023

Web: www.sahs.uk.net

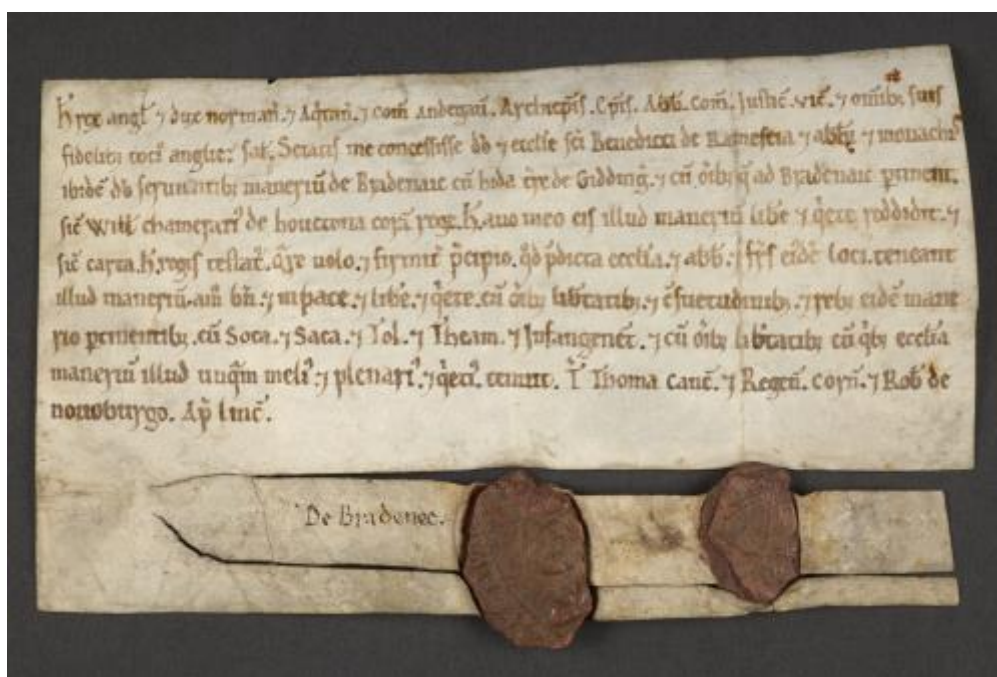
Issue No 144

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Henry II's 'lost charter' for Newcastle-under-Lyme is discussed in detail by Nigel Tringham. This is not the lost charter but one of Henry II's other charters, this one from Ramsey Abbey to provide an illustration of what the Newcastle-under-Lyme charter might have looked like. The Newcastle charter is only known from a reference in a charter for Preston, now also lost, but happily transcribed in more modern times.

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As anyone living or passing through Newcastle-under-Lyme will know, the town is now celebrating the 850th anniversary of Henry II's charter of 1173 granting certain (unspecified) privileges to its burgesses. A very wide range of events will continue until the end of the year, and details can be found on the Borough Council website. The main event has already taken place (on 3 June), when there was a 'battle' performed by the Keele Re-Enactment – this was on foot, in contrast to the somewhat alarming horse-mounted tournament which took place (in the days before Health and Safety) during the charter celebrations in 1973.

There was also an exhibition (until 9 July) at the town's Brampton Museum, with several royal charters on display, although not the one by which Henry II founded the borough as that is now lost. Indeed, the only evidence that such a charter existed is because it was mentioned in a similar charter given by the same king in late 1179 or early 1180 to the burgesses of Preston.

Undated but almost certainly issued in 1173, the 'lost charter' was discussed at the time of the 800th anniversary in 1973 by David Palliser, then a research fellow at Keele University, in volume 13 of the *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies*, but the best Latin text (from a 13th-century registered copy) is now that in Nicholas Vincent's monumental (six volume) edition of the *Letters and Charters of Henry II* (Oxford, 2020). I give this text below, along with a translation (with the passages referring to Newcastle in bold).

Latin text

Henricus Dei gracia rex Anglorum et dux Normannorum et Aquitanorum et comes Andegavorum archiepiscopis, episcopis, abbatibus, comitibus, baronibus, iusticiis, vicecomitibus et omnibus ministris et fidelibus suis totius Anglie salutem. Sciatis me concessisse ac presenti carta mea confirmasse burgensibus meis de Prestona omnes easdem libertates et liberas consuetudines **quas dedi et concessi burgensibus meis de Nouo Castello subtus Limam**. Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod predicti burgenses mei de Prestona habeant et teneant bene et in pace, libere et quiete, plenarie, integre et honorifice, infra burgum et extra burgum omnes eas libertates et liberas consuetudines salua iusticia mea **quas burgenses de Nouo Castello subtus Limam habent sicut predictis burgensibus de Nouo Castello eas concessi et carta mea confirmavi**.

English translation

Henry by grace of God king of the English and duke of the Normans and of the Aquitainians and count of the Angevins to archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, barons, justices, sheriffs, and all his ministers and faithful men of England greeting. Know that I have granted and by this my present charter have confirmed to my burgesses of Preston all those liberties and free customs **which I have given and granted to my burgesses of New Castle under Lyme**. Wherefore I wish and firmly order that my said burgesses of Preston may have and hold well and in peace, freely and quietly [i.e. *quit* or free from financial burden], fully, wholly and honourably [i.e. fittingly], [both] within the town and outside the town, all those liberties and free customs, saving my justice [i.e. royal rights or authority], **which the burgesses of New Castle under Lyme have as I granted them** [i.e. the liberties and free customs] **to the burgesses of New Castle and confirmed by my charter**.

What does all this mean?

The context of the Newcastle grant still needs to be explored. It may be a consequence of some re-organisation of both the local tenurial and ecclesiastical arrangements ordered by

Henry II not long after he became king in 1154, as part of a programme to assert royal authority and erase that of Ranulf, earl of Chester (d. 1153), the founder of the nearby Trentham priory. And the charter itself might have been issued to coincide with the marriage of Henry II's half-sister Emma of Anjou with Dafydd ap Owain, prince of Gwynedd, as there is some circumstantial evidence that it might have taken place at Newcastle.

Henry's charter probably did indeed create a 'borough' (*burgus*) where there hadn't been one before, enabling some (peasant) residents to become burgesses. As readers of this Newsletter will know, this would mean that the new tenants could hold plots of land for a fixed rent (typically 12d. a year) and owe no labour services. Burgesses could also freely devise (i.e. bequeath) their burgage plots without having to get permission from a lord, and this was an important consideration for tradesmen, as they could pass on a business to the best person around (often a wife). Such new towns, however, also attracted newcomers – indeed Henry might well have 'planted' some of his own men – and so one might have expected a fair number of outsiders as the original burgesses.

Quite why Newcastle was chosen as a model for the rights assigned to the new burgesses of Preston is unclear, but it may simply be that Newcastle was the most recent 'borough' founded by the king, and the royal clerks still had the Newcastle charter fresh in their mind. There are indeed other borough charters which refer to the privileges being granted as those previously granted to another borough, and it might be worth exploring whether there is some pattern here.

The 'replica' charter

One of the celebratory events being held this year will be to get children to practise writing medieval charters with a quill pen, and the Brampton Museum exhibition had a 'replica' of what the 'lost charter' might have looked like – it's done very well (not by a child) and looks very convincing!

Of course, as the original charter is lost, there is no way of knowing how much detail it contained, and the 'replica' therefore contains 'what it might have said', which is fair enough. It records the 12d. rent for a burgage plot, and that the burgesses should have some land 'in the fields' outside the borough and the right to collect dead wood in the king's forest – a forest at this time really means an extensive area set aside as a habit for deer but it would have included woodland, and there was indeed a forest around the town, called 'New Forest'. This is all very likely. Unfortunately, the first main section of the 'replica' has the burgesses enjoying the 'liberties and free customs' granted in the charter *as they were wont to have them* in the reign of Henry II's grandfather Henry I (r. 1100 x 1135) – this implies that it was Henry I who first granted the burgesses a charter, but there's no evidence for Henry I ever having done so.

Further research

There is still much work to be done on the origin and purpose of the 'new castle' which gave its name to the settlement – not least why it was called 'new'. There are other examples of

places called 'New-' castle/forest/market, but it's not clear whether the word refers to something that that was entirely 'new' or a replacement for something that was 'old' (which may be the case with Newcastle-under-Lyme, as well as Newcastle-upon-Tyne). The circumstances behind the creation of the borough also need to be fully investigated.

Nigel Tringham

[Versions of this Note have also appeared in the Newsletter of the North Staffordshire Guild of Historians and that of the Ranulf Higden Society.]

**** Annual Membership Subscriptions – SA&HS Year 2023-2024 ****

Renewal of annual Membership of SA&HS became due as at **1st September 2023**. 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. Additionally one or two 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 Staffs Arch & Hist Soc), 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'. PayPal is an often used option – it is secure, quick and easy. Cheques should be sent to: Keith Billington, Hon. Membership Secretary, SA&HS, 4 Gainsbrook Crescent, Norton Canes, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 9TN. Please note, it is NOT necessary to fill in a Membership application form. All subscription payments, when received, will be acknowledged by email.

Queries and enquiries please to: kjboutthere@yahoo.co.uk

Thank you.

Keith Billington

**** SA&HS Transactions – Back Numbers available FREE to enquirers ****

As reported in the May Newsletter, the Society maintains a back stock of some of its past Transactions (the annual SA&HS journal) and copies are now available for free to anyone who would like them, the offer being open to both the SA&HS Membership and beyond. Not included are the 5 most recent Volumes, i.e. L to LIV, copies of which can be obtained for a price, details available on application. So for FREE – all Volumes up to and including XLIX, though please note, some of the past issues are now out of print. An inventory of the current remaining stock can be located on the Transactions webpage of the Society's website; or make enquiries. All that we ask is for the cost of postage and packing to be covered. Indexes of the Transactions, which may assist, are to be found on the SA&HS website.

All enquiries please to: kjboutthere@yahoo.co.uk **Keith Billington**

FOR USE BY NEW MEMBERS WISHING TO JOIN
STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP 2023/2024
SOCIETY YEAR COMMENCING 1st SEPTEMBER 2023

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 2023/24 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

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Gordon Tuckley

It is with regret that we record the death of longstanding SA&HS Member Gordon Tuckley who died on 11th May – he was 85. Gordon was a very regular attendee over the years at the Society's lectures and the organised visits to places of historic interest and so on. There was always a cheery word from him with a smile on his face.

Keith Billington

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Charles Close Society Midland Group Meetings

The next meeting will be at Wall Village Hall on Thursday 26 September at 7.30pm. It will be a 'Bring and Tell' meeting. The venue is on Watling St, Wall, Lichfield WS14 OAW. All welcome. For more information please email lez@watsonlv.net.

Our Autumn Programme of Lectures starts on Friday 22 September 2023.

Live Lectures at The Guildhall

September to December 2023

22nd September Dr David Lepine

The Cult of St Chad in Lichfield Cathedral

St Chad is almost synonymous with Lichfield cathedral. Although he was bishop for less than three years, he remains at the heart of its identity and his cult flourished there for eight centuries, from his death in 672 until the destruction of his shrine in 1538. Despite almost all traces of the cult being swept away at the Reformation a surprising amount of evidence survives from which its medieval glory can be reconstructed. This lecture will explore all facets of the cult: its shrines, images, altars, liturgy and feast days, and the Lives of St Chad as well as its popularity. In the later Middle Ages the cult was given new vigour by the benefactions of three medieval bishops, most notably Walter Langton, and its status was raised from an essentially local, diocesan cult to one observed across the whole province of Canterbury.

Dr David Lepine is a historian of the late medieval church with a particular interest in secular cathedrals and their canons. He has written extensively on the lives and careers of medieval clergy. His publications include work on cathedrals and charity, John Gower and the Church, clerical status and display, and the commemoration of clergy.

20th October Dr Mark Knight

Transforming the Trent Valley Archaeology, incorporating the investigation at Catholme Neolithic Site.

Dr Mark Knight is the Cultural Heritage Officer with The Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership.

A revitalised and treasured landscape of wildlife-rich waterways and wetlands is being made possible thanks to the 'Transforming the Trent Valley' scheme successfully securing a large grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund in December 2018 to deliver a multi-million pound scheme in the Trent Valley across 200km in Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

Transforming the Trent Valley is a partnership project of 18 organisations working together to restore and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Trent Valley, with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust at the helm.

3rd November Dr Imogen Peck

The Aftermath of the Civil War in Staffordshire

Dr Peck studied for a BA in History and Politics and an MSc in Political Theory at the University of Oxford. After a brief stint working in various charity and media roles she returned to academia to study an MPhil and then a PhD at the University of Bristol. On finishing her PhD in 2018 she was appointed as a Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick. Dr Peck joined the University of Birmingham in autumn 2022. Dr Peck is a historian of memory and communities, with research expertise in local and family history, the social history of archives, and the mental afterlife of conflict. She is especially interested in

the ways memory and the representation of the past shape individual and collective identities, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of non-elite men and women.

1st December Teresa Gilmore

Portable Antiquities Scheme - Staffordshire

Tonight's lecture will bring the Society up to date with the finds from Staffordshire.

Teresa has been working with finds since she finished her degree in 2002. Although on all university excavations, she tended to end up in the Finds Hut as opposed to out in the trenches with everyone else. Once the degree was finished, she started working for Cotswold Archaeology within their finds department. It was during this time, that she gathered all the knowledge about the different types of pottery. After that she started working within the PAS West Midlands. There was a short spell with the Cheshire & Merseyside PAS team followed by a short spell at Wardell Armstrong, before returning to the West Midland PAS team. Teresa is currently the Finds Liaison Officer (East Staffordshire and North West Midlands) for the Portable Antiquities Scheme/ Birmingham Museums Trust.

These talks are held in the Guildhall Lichfield on Friday evenings at 8.00pm. Doors open and refreshments usually available from 7.30pm. Visitors are welcome; £3 at the door.

ZOOM LECTURES SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2023

6th October Dr Kate Round

Stourbridge Glass - A History

This talk is a good introduction to the subject of Stourbridge Glass, and traces the roots of Stourbridge glassmakers back to the 8thC BC, from The Alabastron of Sargon II to their arrival in Stourbridge. We explore the hot side of the industry, the workings of our unique glass cones, and the distinctions between the hot and cold side of the industry. I explain how glass is made, the source of the ingredients and the importance of the canals and associated trades. On to the cold side of the industry we look at the innovations in glass decorating and the skills and fame of local craftsmen including the reproduction of The Portland Vase. This is a fascinating look at how the geology of Stourbridge shaped its history, its wealth and the health and working lives of its people.

Dr Kate Round is an outreach presenter and tour guide for Dudley Museum Service. In the glass industry, her interests include the historical development of the industry in the Stourbridge district, how the geology and geography impacted on the wealth and sociology of the area, driven by the rivalries of our Glass Dynasties. In a previous life, Kate was a research chemist and lecturer so understands the chemistry of glass having worked on the synthesis on 'zeolites' (silica based materials) with her work published in International Journals. Kate has always lived in the Black Country and has a strong industrial family heritage, and has also been proud to serve her community as a local Magistrate for twenty years.

17th November Gillian White

Bess of Hardwick

Bess of Hardwick is one of the most fascinating women of the sixteenth century and her most famous building, Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, survives as a fine example of Elizabethan creativity, magnificence and pride. This talk outlines Bess's remarkable life and then will briefly touch on the architecture and contents of Hardwick Hall, surely her lasting monument.

Dr. Gillian White specialises in the history and visual arts of late medieval and sixteenth-century England. She began her career at the Warwickshire Museum and then worked for the National Trust as Curator / Collections Manager at Hardwick Hall, about which she then wrote her PhD at Warwick University. She now teaches art history part-time in the Continuing Department at Oxford University, as well as freelance lecturing and teaching. This lecture is the fourth outing for Gillian with us.

Lectures at the Guildhall start at 8.00pm with refreshments available beforehand.

All are welcome, non members £3 at the door.

After our winter break the first lecture of 2024 will be by Zoom on Friday March 1st. Further details and information about all of our Spring 2024 programme will be in our December newsletter.

Bawdy Court Blogs

The Bawdy Court was the Consistory Court of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and gained this title in the Eighteenth Century because of the perceived emphasis on the control of moral behaviour. In fact its function was to enforce the church law, that is canon law, and those who appeared before it were considered criminals just as much as those who appeared before the civil criminal courts.

The court has left very extensive records of its activities and these are now held in the County Record Office in Stafford (soon to become the New History Centre). For the past few years volunteers (several of them members of this society) have been working on the surviving papers and releasing their findings in the form of blogs which can be accessed at <https://lichfieldbawdycourts.wordpress.com/>

The records of the court have been neglected by professional historians but they give us much insight into the activities of ordinary people. The surviving records start in 1571 and continue into the mid nineteenth century and whilst mostly in Latin before 1734 the depositions, that is the statements of witnesses, have always been in English and it has been these that have provided the bulk of the records looked at.

There were many categories of cases; defamation cases, usually of a sexual nature, whilst numerous are perhaps the least interesting but even these show that people spent much time in their neighbours houses and gossiping at their front doors, activities which have now almost totally vanished.

Recently there has been an increase in the number of blogs published as the project nears its end. Some of these we have circulated as e mails to members but there are now too many to do this so here is a summary of new blogs that can be found on the website.

Amanda Godfrey: From Leek to Dorset: trade links revealed by the Bawdy Courts. Amanda's blog looks at an inventory in a case involving a disputed will – that of John Heapy of Adders Green in the parish of Alstonefield chapman, deceased who died in 1764 in Penkridge and was buried at Quarnford. The inventory lists his stock in trade of fabrics and buttons.

Richard Totty: Bickering over the boundary: Yoxall rate rage. This blog relates to the ferocious dispute between the parishes of Yoxall and Hamstall Ridware in the 1630s over the right to levy a property rate on Rowley Park then an important estate in the north of the area. What was in dispute was what parish was Rowley Park in? The records include a full list of the ratepayers of Yoxall, who were raising money to repair the bells in Yoxall church, and descriptions of long-gone customs such as perambulating the bounds of the parishes. Yoxall won.

Patrick Brough: Inconvenient and useless, the Whorwood Tombs at West Bromwich. This is a faculty case in which the removal of these tombs was proposed by William Earl of Dartmouth in 1762 on the grounds that the Whorwood family were extinct. The request was granted and the tombs removed although parts of them have survived being found in a coal hole in 1872.

Ann George: The unusual origins of Lichfield Library. Anne has uncovered the unusual motives behind the rebuilding of St Mary's Church, Lichfield, in 1868. St Mary's is now deconsecrated and is home to the beautiful Lichfield Library but in 1868 it was a city-centre church. The court case papers contain a wealth of information about its history.

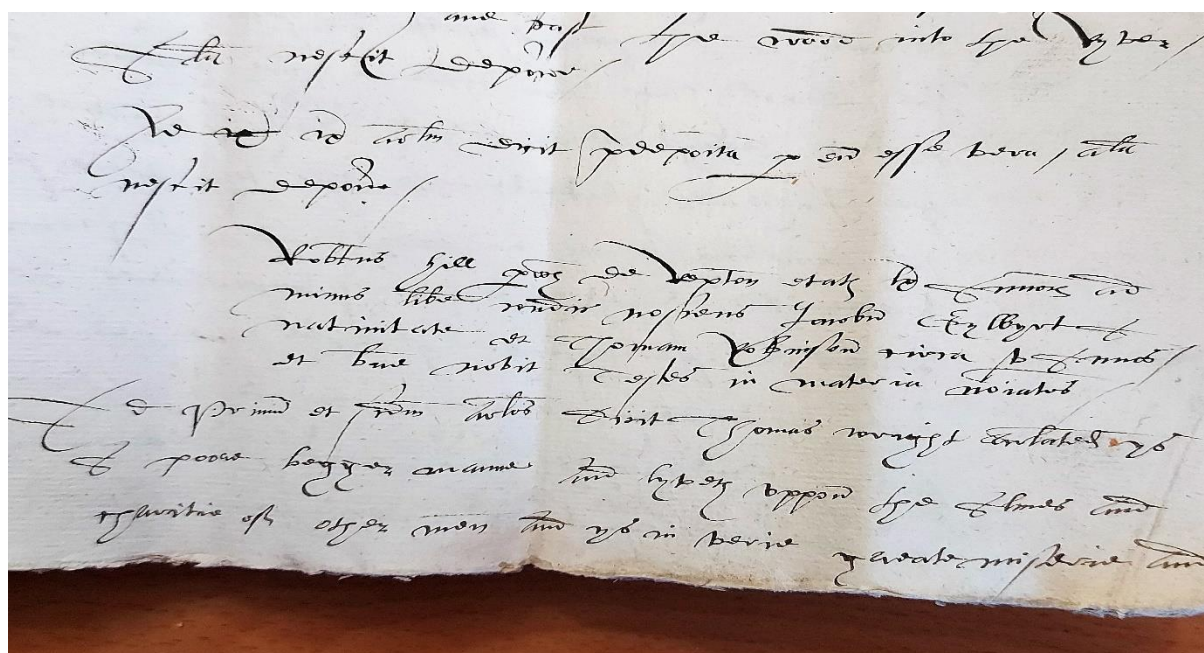
Liz Newman: Design for a new parsonage house at Kedleston. Liz looks at and has explored the story behind a faculty design presented to the Consistory Court in 1759. Two pieces of fragile paper with writing in faded ink are all that remain of an application for a faculty for a new parsonage house at Kedleston near Derby but they provide the basis for a much wider study.

Richard Totty: Simon Marten, Notary Public. In this post, Richard has tracked the career of Notary Public Simon Marten of Lichfield. He has also explored the evolution of the consistory court through the Civil War and into the Commonwealth period.

Anne George: The Court during the Civil War, a case study of a dispute around Joyce Lakin's Will. In this post, Anne explores how the court continued to operate during the Civil War, at a time when the cathedral was under siege. A previous blog (by Liz Newman) reviewed the last wishes of Joyce. After her untimely death, the contents of her will were challenged and this post investigates that case.

The tactics used by the proctors (the lawyers) in the court are sometimes quite interesting. Mud slinging was a favourite and here is a witness Robert Hill of Repton Derbyshire asserting that a

witness for the opposing side, Thomas Wright of Barrow upon Trent, 'is a poor beggar man and liveth upon the almes and charitie of other men and is in very great misery' (last three lines of text).



Robert Hill was but one of several witnesses who said the same about Thomas, and his brother William, concluding that they were men of no credit amongst their neighbours. Thomas was 88 and his brother William was 66 and their evidence seems convincing. This was another long running and bitterly fought inter-parochial dispute, from 1582, and concerned common rights in and around the river Trent. Witnesses included local husbandmen who depastured (grazed) their cattle on the disputed common and local fishermen. The case is noted for the evidence of one John Warde of Repton 'this deponent has lived continually within the parish of Repton for these xxxviii years last past with his wife who now is an old woman above lx years of age and saith he hath heard his wife say many times when she was a little girl in the Priors time that last which is above xlvii years sithens (since) that she drove her father's cattle on the common'. The Priory of Repton was dissolved in 1538 so his wife is referring to a time when the monasteries still existed and the local magnate was the Prior of Repton. Repton won.

New Staffordshire History Centre

Work continues on the development of a New History Centre in Stafford on the sites of the Old Staffordshire Record Office and the former William Salt Library in Eastgate Street. Six months into the project stripping out has concluded and new constructions are beginning to appear; Great Excitement was caused by the appearance of an enormous crane in early August. The new facility will open to the public at some time in 2024.

Gold Coins Found in Cheddleton

A metal detectorist has found a small cache of 8 Henry VIII half sovereigns and one Edward VI half sovereign during an organised exploration at Ashcombe Park Hall near Cheddleton.



They have been properly reported and it will be determined if they will be declared treasure. Their total value is thought to be about £30,000.

Gresham College Lectures


Free public history lectures series [*Magic, the Supernatural and the Lost Gods of Europe*](#) and [*Black History Month*](#) at Gresham College this autumn and winter. They include lectures by Professor Ronald Hutton, Professor Kate Dossett, and more!

For details click on the series links above. They are all ticketed but free!

These lecture series are hybrid as you can watch online, in person or on replay at a later date.

A Date for your diary

LOCAL HISTORY STUDY DAY



Staffordshire
History Centre

Saturday 18 November 2023
10am - 3pm
Chasewater Innovation Centre

Would your local history society,
heritage organisation or museum
like a free stand at this event?
Please contact - helen.johnson@staffordshire.gov.uk

**This free event will feature
speakers, local and family
history workshops and
networking opportunities.**
Full programme to be confirmed.


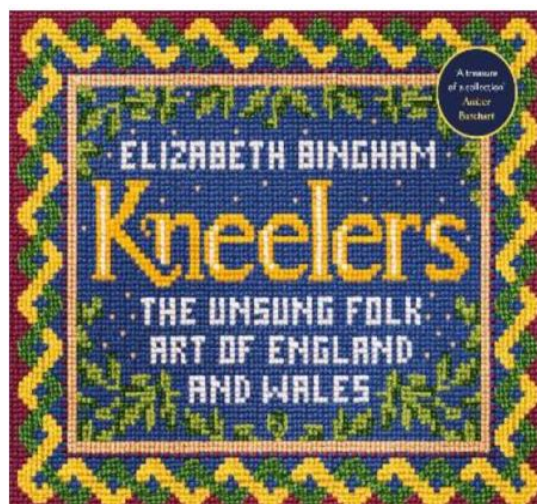


Image: Norton Pool (Chasewater) 1905. Courtesy of Jake Whitehouse Collection

THEIR FINEST HOUR

Their Finest Hour is a University of Oxford project that aims to collect and digitally archive the everyday stories and objects of the Second World War that have been passed down the generations. They wish to make individuals and groups aware of the project and get them involved. The project's aim is simple: to collect and digitally archive as many as possible of the stories and objects that have been passed down to us from the WW2 generation. The stories and digitised objects will be made available in a free-to-use online archive in June 2024. The primary method of collecting stories and objects is by training an army of volunteers from across the UK to organise Digital Collection Days in their communities - in libraries, museums, places of worship, schools, universities, and so on. Members of the public can also directly upload stories and photos of objects to the online archive. If you or your group would like to organise a Digital Collection Day, you can take advantage of free training sessions to equip you with all the skills and knowledge required to organise and run a day in your community. Or you can just go along to one of the Digital Collection Days with any Second World War-related stories and objects that have been passed down to you, to be digitised and uploaded to their online archive. More details can be found at <https://theirfinesthour.english.ox.ac.uk/events>

Kneelers: the unsung folk art of England and Wales Elizabeth Bingham ISBN: 9781784743963 Vintage House, 2023. £20.00 144pp. A history of the craft of embroidering kneeler cushions, with full-colour illustrations of some of the amazing designs. Many church collections are featured. Essential reading for those interested in church history.

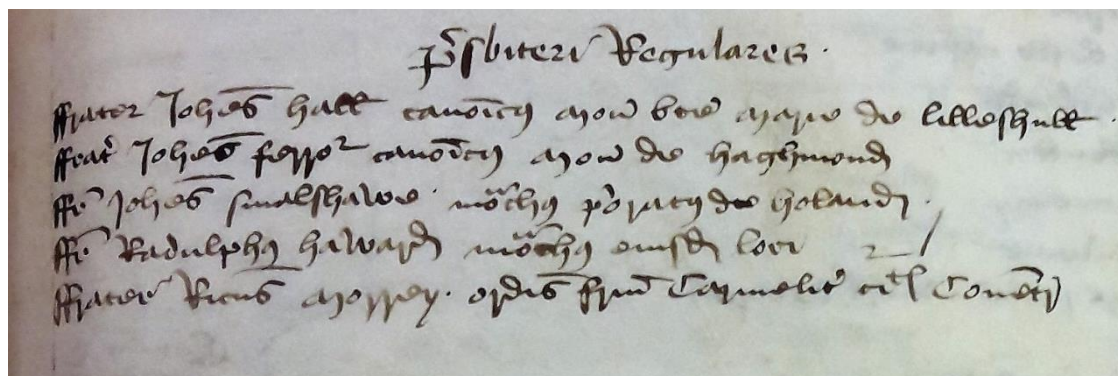


New Database

<https://mediaevalordinations.com> is a new website which lists the ordinations of secular and religious clergy which appear in the registers of the Bishops of Lichfield and Coventry from 1300 to 1529. The transcripts have been made by David Bethell apparently from microfilm copies of the registers (the originals are now in Stafford). The transcriptions are valuable for those interested in the mediaeval church and its organisation and record all the names appearing in the lists which include those ordained as acolytes, sub deacons, deacons and priests, divided into the religious (i.e. monks and canons) and the secular individuals. Usually given is the sponsoring religious house and the diocese of the person being ordained (usually Coventry and Lichfield unless letters dismissory had been obtained from another Bishop). Also given is the date and place of the ordinations – by no means always the cathedral – and the name of the Ordaining Bishop (often suffragans). The

database is useful for following the careers of individual clergy). There is much information here which is now available for a detailed analysis as has been done for other dioceses. Bethell fails to identify either the owners of the registers (the current Diocese) or the Record Office which holds them (Staffordshire) although he does give the document numbers. And the database perhaps needs a more extensive introduction. This was an extensive labour as some of the names in the registers are difficult to decipher from the originals let alone microfilms. There is much yet to be revealed about how the whole process actually worked.

For comparison here is the list of religious priests ordained at the Cathedral in Lichfield on 1 June 1493 by Bishop William, and for comparison Bethell's transcript.



Prsbiteri Regulares

Frater Joh'es Hall' cano'ic^s Mon' b'te Marie de lilleshull'

Frat' Joh'es ferro' cano'ic^s Mon' de Haghmond

Fr' Joh'es smalshawe mo'ch^s p'orat^s de Holand

Fr' Radulph^s Haward mo'ch^s eiusd' loci

Frater Ric'us Merrey ord'is fr'm Carmelit' ci'ts Coue'tr'

The monasteries are St Mary Lilleshall and Haughmond both in Shropshire and both Augustinian Houses, Upholland Priory a Benedictine House in Lancashire (both Smalshawe and Haward were from there) and the Carmelite Friary (Whitefriars) in Coventry.

The transcriptions are very good but the indices are as yet incomplete with data for the later 1400s still to be added. Notes are missing so some aspects of the lists are not quite as clear as they might be. The data for the Benedictine House of St Mary and St Modwen in Burton upon Trent is not mentioned in the index of Houses but it can be found with a little searching, and this may be true of other houses. Overall an excellent development much to be welcomed but not without a few ongoing issues.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When historians of the future look back to write their histories of the early part of the twenty-first century the development of the internet and the growth of what is now called social media will undoubtedly be a key part of any discussion. The Society has had a website, managed and developed

for us by Lez Watson now for quite some time: www.sahs.uk.net used to be a source of information and also to enable member access to all issues of *Transactions*.

We have recently added a twitter (now called X – at least at the time of writing) profile. This latter activity has been primarily for advertising purposes as well as any last-minute announcements or changes to events to ensure we can get to as many people as possible as quickly as we can. If you have a ‘twitter’ account do please follow us @Staffs_ArchHist Your ideas on how we can develop our usage of this ‘channel’ will be most welcome.

Two new accounts are under development, Facebook and Instagram. Again, the intention is to use these accounts to publicise the lecture programme, excursions and other activities of the Society and also publicise other news and activities of interest to budding historians and archaeologists about such work in the County. You can find the Facebook page at [staffs arch](#) and the Instagram page at [staffs_archhist](#). Both sites will be more visual than text-based, and we are looking for members to follow the Society both on Facebook and Instagram if you use these platforms. Both accounts will be developed over the next few months, and, working with Lez Watson and Kelvin Brown our intention will be to integrate them into the website to act as a first point of reference for anyone looking to find out more about the rich past of the County.

Members views on how we could use these sites are most welcome and should come to me through slewitt@btinternet.com

Steve Lewitt, Hon. Sec.

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Heritage Open Days- Bromwich Hall and Sandwell Priory

Friday 8 September, 10.30 am: Bromwich Hall (West Bromwich Manor House)- Talk on Bromwich Hall and medieval West Bromwich and an opportunity to walk around this medieval building. Free, prior booking not required. Details at <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/www.sandwell.gov.uk-joininmuseums1>

Friday 8 September, 2pm: Sandwell Priory Heritage Walk. Small charge, prior booking essential <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/west-bromwich/sandwell-valley-visitor-centre-formerly-sandwell-park-farm/sandwell-priory-heritage-walk/e-ebqxbk>

There is also a talk about Sandwell Priory on Thursday 28 September and another heritage walk on Saturday 21 October- for details, email visitor_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Birmingham Heritage Week

Saturday 9 September, 11.30 am and 2pm: Medieval Yardley walk. Small charge, prior booking essential <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/events/birmingham-heritage-week-old-yardley-walk-2>

Monday 11 September, 7.30pm: Talk by Zoe Toft on the Crystal Palace, Sutton Coldfield. Trinity Centre, Church Hill, Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield. Free, prior booking not required. Details at <https://birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/event/a-history-of-sutton-coldfields-crystal-palace/>

Tuesday 12 September, 10am: Sutton Park Archaeology walk, starting from Sutton Park Town Gate, Park Road. Free, prior booking not required. Details at <https://birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/event/sutton-park-archaeology-walk/>

Thursday 14 September, 7.45pm: Talk by Stella Thebridge on Bishop Vesey's stone houses. Trinity Centre, Church Hill, Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield. Small charge payable on the door, prior booking not required <https://birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/event/a-des-res-in-sutton-coldfield-bishop-veseys-stone-houses/>

Friday 15 September, 2pm: Talk on the prehistoric and Roman periods in the Sutton Coldfield area. Holy Trinity church, Church Hill, Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield. Free, prior booking not required. Details at <https://birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/event/what-did-the-romans-do-for-sutton/>

Saturday 16 September, 11.30am and 2pm: Weoley Castle fortified medieval manor house guided walk. Small charge, prior booking essential <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/events/birmingham-heritage-week-weoley-walking-tour-2>

Sutton Park

Saturday 14 October, 10am: Sutton Park archaeology walk. Start Streetly Gate, off Thornhill Road. Free, prior booking not required. (Friends of Sutton Park Association)

Wall Roman site

Saturday 28 October, 2pm: Hidden gems of Roman Wall- guided walk. Small charge, prior booking essential. <https://www.wallromansitefriendsofletocetum.co.uk/> 01543 418464 (Friends of Letocetum)

Heritage Open Days Staffordshire

In September there are many events forming part of the annual Heritage Open Days; there are too many to list here but you will find them all at [Printable Area Lists | Heritage Open Days](#)

Highlights include:

A Talk on the History of Grinding and a tour of the 1857 Grinding Mill at Etruria on 13 & 14 September

The Creation of the Trentham Landscape at Trentham Parish Church 15 September

Celebrating Sinai's Heritage Apple Orchard – apple picking, barbecue and a tour of the house at Sinai Park near Burton on Trent 16 September

A History of Rail Travel Poster Art, Stafford Railway Station 14 September

St Mary's Church Collegiate Church Bell Tower Stafford, in the Ringing Room 13 & 16 September

And many more, potteries, churches, museums etc. etc.

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***Illustrated Tales of Staffordshire* by Helen Harwood. ISBN: 9781398107762. Amberley Publishing, Stroud. July 2023. Paperback, 96 pages.**

This is the second volume in Helen Harwood's exploration of Staffordshire, as she has earlier written about the history of the Staffordshire coal industry.¹ A third volume in the series is planned for next year.² Helen is a native of Stoke and was brought up in Wolstanton, so writes with both interest and family-based knowledge about her native county.

Amberley as a publishing house is probably well-known to Society members as it has published widely on themes associated with national, local and military history. Indeed, the website lists 86 books associated with Staffordshire alone, most notably the 'village through time' series.³ These are not books for the academic, but make useful introductions for the lay reader or those seeking to know the county in a little more detail.

This volume is no exception, as the author investigates in well-illustrated detail the myths, legends and other folklore mock histories associated with the county. She describes activities quite well-known outside the county, for example the Abbots Bromley horn dance as well as lesser-known stories such as the weeping statue of our lady of Brewood, Endon's well-dressing ceremony and the teapot parade at Flash. Altogether, she outlines 19 different locations in the book's opening section with their traditional stories and events, bringing the book into the twentieth century (and later) with descriptions of the 1944 explosion at Fauld, the hedgehog rolling festival at Grindon and of course the 2009 discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard at Hammerwich.

The second section of the book considers some rather more eccentric events and stories. These include a section on Newcastle-under-Lyme's Mock Mayor ceremony and bull-running at Tutbury amongst others. These sections are written in more detail and tie -in the event under discussion to wider historical themes. The third section reflects something of the author's family history associated with coal mining as she looks at two industrial stories linked to the Kidsgove Boggart and the murder of Christina Collins.

The book is well illustrated, mostly with photograph's taken by the author. A little more careful editing would have been of benefit, notably for example the blurred and out-of-focus shot of part of Tutbury castle, but this is a minor caveat in a volume where the photographs do complement the text. All-in-all this book I am sure would be a welcome gift for newcomers to the county looking to find out a little more about the area where they live in an easily-digestible form.

Perhaps a final point can be made given the recent lamentable destruction of the Crooked House Pub at Himley. The author describes the history of the location and gives the local name as Sidon

¹ H. Harwood, *Staffordshire Coal Mines*, Stroud, Amberley Publishing, 2018.

² H. Harwood, *Staffordshire Churches*, Stroud, Amberley, 2024.

³ For example N. Collingwood and G. Shufflebottom, *Newcastle through time*, 2012.

house (side on house) with a photograph, also reproduced on the front cover. Sadly, such illustrated short notes such as this may be all we have left of this vital link with Staffordshire's industrial past and the social histories of those who worked to make the county what it is today.

Steve Lewitt, Hon. Sec.

Knights Templar at Enville?

Early in 2022 a story appeared in the national press highlighting the investigations of a group of enthusiasts at the Staffordshire church of St Mary's, Enville (SO 82368 86836), who claimed to have discovered a series of grave slabs that they identified as representing several Templar burials. The church, with which I was already familiar from previous research, is a fine building of twelfth century date and later (and restored 1872-4) and has some very interesting features but claims of Templar associations were highly suspect. I revisited the church in March 2022, specifically to record the cross slabs as a part of the 'Staffordshire Medieval Cross Slabs Survey', currently in progress, and confirmed that the supposed Templar links had no substance. Unfortunately, I find that the story has reappeared recently with renewed vigour in several national newspapers, presenting the church as harbouring previously unsuspected 'secrets' of national importance, even invoking allusions to Dan Brown's fictional, 'The Da Vinci Code', and inaccessible evidence locked away in the Vatican. This short item is intended to inject some historical rationality into the discussion and demonstrate that there is no basis whatsoever for the fantastic claims currently being promoted.



The tombstones at Enville

Let us begin by reminding ourselves of who the Knights Templar were. Founded as a religious community in 1119-20, they were a military order established by Hugh de Payns

and Godfrey de Saint Omer, at that time comprising nine knights sworn to protect pilgrims from Moslem attacks when travelling to Palestine to visit the Holy Places of Jerusalem and elsewhere. They were not the first military order as in 1100 the Hospitaller Order of St John had been founded by Gerard the Hospitaller, which was recognised by Pope Pascal II in 1113. What the military orders brought as an innovation was the combination of monk and soldier. Recruitment in France and England was particularly enthusiastic, so that by the end of the 1130s the Templars had emerged as a fully-fledged military order with a hierarchical structure. The poverty of these founding knights and their monastic ethos was conveyed by the seal that the order adopted, of two knights sitting astride one horse. However, as with monastic orders more generally, this intention was not easily kept and the order in fact became a very wealthy one, a factor that contributed to its downfall in the fourteenth century with the opportunity to plunder its wealth.

By the 1140s the Templar province in England had established its headquarters at Holborn in London, but with communities established across England whose preceptories were largely modelled on manorial structures, often in fact manors that were transformed into religious houses, functioning like any other medieval manor; some estates they retained while others were leased. In 1185 a survey of Templar possessions in England was made which included returns for the *baillia de Warewic* whose estates extended across six counties (Warks, Leics, Worcs, Northants, Staffs, Shrops) among which their preceptory at Temple Balsall was to later emerge as the chief focus of Templar authority and interests in the western midlands. Only two parish churches were recorded at this point as having been given to the Templars in the Warwick baliwick, those of Sherborne in Warwickshire and Cardington in Shropshire. In Staffordshire the Templars held an estate at Keele and land in Madeley, with the former becoming a preceptory in the thirteenth century.

The fall of the Templars came in France, in the fourteenth century, commencing with arrests that included, on 13th October 1307, the Grand Master, Jacques de Molay. While trials on spurious charges of 'heretical depravity' followed, the motivation really lay in short-term financial advantages to the French crown as Philip IV was heavily in debt, and so their possessions were confiscated or sold off. The arrested Templars were turned over to the Inquisition and by a subsequent papal bull Pope Clement V (1305-14) ordered the arrest of all Templars in the Christian West. Although in 1312 the papal Council of Vienne found that the charges against the Templars lacked merit, Pope Clement V nonetheless dissolved the Templar Order and in March 1314 Jacques de Molay and Geoffrey de Charnay, the Preceptor of Normandy, were burned to death on an island in the Seine. In England, under pressure from the Pope, Edward II in 1308 ordered the arrest of all Templars with their property coming under royal control. What remained of the property was turned over to the Hospitallers in 1323.

Let us now turn to Enville and consider the arguments being offered, which are based on four recumbent carved and incised sandstone grave slabs laid out in the northwest corner of the churchyard (SMCSS refs: S001, S002, S003, S004, with another, S005, an antiquarian record). They are damaged and have suffered erosion, but they are clearly headed by crosses with splayed arms in roundels and appear to date to the thirteenth century. It is the application of these crosses that appears to have prompted the claims of Templar associations, based on the popular but mistaken belief that this was a distinctively Templar device. A 'Google search' using the term 'Templar Cross' will illustrate the point and may be counted among modern reinventions of the Middle Ages. In fact, this was not the form of cross employed by the Templars, as the wall paintings in the twelfth century Templar chapel at Blanzac (between Cressac and Blanzac) in the Charente (France) readily illustrates – using straight-armed crosses with slightly 'flared' terminals, after the fashion of altar and processional crosses of the period. These terminal features may be exaggerated in some carvings but not as splay-arm crosses. On the other hand, the splay-arm cross head was a

popular and widely used device on funerary monuments by the thirteenth century, particularly on cross slabs.



The Enville Cross Slabs

The design of the Enville cross slabs is typical of the type, the crosshead, in a circle, being set on top of an incised shaft running the length of the slab. S003, a piece of some competence, is different in that it sits on top of an equal-armed cross with 'flared' terminals, another common design, and although the lower part of the slab, with the incised shaft, has now been lost, it appears to have been intact and among those drawn by John Chessell Buckler in 1820. The most elaborate of the group is S004, which survives only as a fragment and is probably a little later in date than the other slabs. Although placed alongside S003 in the churchyard, it is clearly part of a separate slab whose head comprised the arms of a cross with triple-lobed terminals but with no suggestion of a circle or roundel. In addition to the surviving slabs, a similar fifth grave slab (S005) is known from antiquarian drawings, comprising a splay-armed cross in a circle, on a staff, the top of which is further elaborated as on S003. The design of both S003 and S005 seem to be derived from processional crosses. S005 is further distinguished by an inscription identifying the interred individual as *Rogerus de Morf*. The earliest illustration that I have traced comes from June 1762, with the comment that it was found about five feet below ground level when digging a grave a few years earlier. By 1820, when drawn by J. C. Buckler, the slab was situated in the chancel of the church, and it was drawn again to illustrate a book published in 1854.

None of the slabs have additional symbols, such as a patten and chalice or a sword, the former indicative of a priest, and the latter often associated with men-at-arms. One might suppose that Templar men-at-arms might have warranted such a distinction although by the mid-thirteenth century, in common with the rest of the knightly class, recumbent effigies might be favoured by those of appropriate status.

It is unclear if these stones are *in situ*. The suggestion that they were recently rediscovered is misleading as the stones, according to the church warden, have been known and in their present location for at least forty years. It seems more correct to say that their importance as medieval monuments has only recently been appreciated. It is not improbable that they have been moved (there is a churchyard cross on the south side of the church and churchyard), but this cannot be presently demonstrated.

Thus, the designs on the Enville grave slabs are not distinctively or diagnostically Templar, but rather were taken from a repertoire of patterns that by the thirteenth century were widely applied to cross slabs across England. There are no Templar connotations whatsoever inherent in the design, and what these stones actually reflect is the growing sophistication in

the commemorative monuments of the better-off families in medieval communities of the period.

Therefore, when the 'Templar hunters' observe that they have not yet been able to find any links between Enville and the order, it is not because the evidence is locked away in the Vatican, but rather more probably, because there is none to find. Neither the manor of Enville nor its church were ever conveyed to the Templars. Recorded in the Domesday Book as a part of the honor of Dudley, the manor of Enville had by the mid-twelfth century become a possession of the de Birmingham family, one of the principal families holding their estates in the honor as tenants of the barons of Dudley. Some of the manors that they acquired were used to make provision for younger sons and kin, as at Morfe, and in Enville, in 1166, Ralph de Enville held the manor as the tenant of Peter de Birmingham. The manor descended with the Envilles, held in 1284 by William de Enville, and in 1291 the manor, with the advowson of the church, some of whose incumbents were drawn from the de Birmingham family, was held by Andrew de Enville of William de Birmingham. In the 1291 *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas, Enville was an independent parish church under the patronage of the manorial lord.

It is not known precisely who the Roger de Morf named on the grave slab, S005, was. He may have been a relative of the manorial lords of Morfe, who were themselves tenants of, and kin to, the de Birmingham. However, there is no basis to associate either Roger de Morf, the lords of Enville or the de Birmingham with the Templar order, or to suggest that the manor of Enville, lands within it, or the church itself had been given to the Templars at any point. The honorial and manorial history is quite clear on this.

Therefore, enticing and intriguing as the story sounds, no evidence has yet been presented to associate Enville with the Knights Templar. The cross slabs are indeed important, and there may well be more buried in the churchyard, but their significance lies in what they convey about burial and commemoration in Enville in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, particularly among the gentry and better-off parishioners. They are also an important detail in the artefactual record and material culture of the medieval west midlands. But there are no Templars here!

As a final but related footnote, although he had absolutely nothing to do with Enville, several accounts of these 'discoveries' also invoke William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, as the most famous of England's Templars. This statement too needs to be nuanced. William Marshal, who died in 1219 and was subsequently buried in the Temple Church in London, was not a Knight Templar until inducted into the order on his deathbed. While reputedly fulfilling a vow made earlier in his life, aristocrats entering into a religious house or order at the point of death was a common practice in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, intended to speed their *postmortem* journey towards redemption and salvation!

John Hunt.

A NEW BENEFIT FOR MEMBERS – BRING A FRIEND FOR FREE!

Society members who want to bring a friend to the first lecture of the 2023-24 lecture programme on Friday 22 September at 8pm to listen to Dr David Lepine discuss Lichfield Cathedral and the Cult of St Chad can now do so **for free**. On this one-off occasion the normal £3 fee for a guest is being waived. If members want to bring two people or more then the second guest (and of course any others) will need to be paid for at the usual rate of £3 a head. If this experiment is a success, the Society will look to repeat it in the future.

So if you do know of people who would like to know more of the County's history, or, want to find out something else about Lichfield cathedral and how the cult of its founder, St Chad was promoted through the ages, do 'feel free' to bring them along!

Steve Lewitt, Hon. Sec.

Paul Norris - Retired Committee Member

It is with regret and sadness that we record the death on 14th August of longstanding SA&HS Member Paul Norris. He was 91. Paul had served with distinction on the Society's Committee since the early 2000s until his retirement just earlier this year. During his working life he had been involved in the technology sector and the background knowledge which he possessed was to prove invaluable when stepping forward to take on different roles to serve the Society. Paul was admirable in that he fulfilled 'vacancies' on Committee when they arose, firstly agreeing to take over as Editor of the Society's regular Newsletter, a job he did successfully from January 2008 until the autumn of 2016. In 2014 he came to the rescue to manage and co-ordinate the website, something he excelled at in view of his background. This he continued with until 2018, with a colleague then taking the reins in his stead, though he remained an in-house IT 'consultant' for some while to come. But then early in 2020 along came Covid ! Paul was now to be instrumental in the establishment of Zoom as the alternative way for us as a group to communicate and conduct operations virtually, both the lecture meetings programme and the holding of our Committee meetings, and so on. It's true to say that without Paul and his commitment to and enthusiasm for Zoom, we would have struggled to implement this now vital technological concept, and we owe a lot to him for the success which it has undoubtedly proved to be.

Paul had always had an interest in history and archaeology and first became involved with SA&HS following his completion of a Keele University Archaeology Studies qualification at Staffordshire University's Lichfield campus nearly 25 years ago. He was also a keen member of Lichfield Science and Engineering Society; no surprise perhaps ! Paul is survived by his widow Jean, who is probably known to many of you, and three now 'middle aged' children with their respective families. Mention has been made of his dry, occasionally wry, sense of humour ! He will be missed.

As we went to press, arrangements for Paul's funeral were yet to be announced.

Keith Billington

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

Comments will be most welcome.

Views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Society.

Our Website is www.sahs.uk.net

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