



STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER May 2025

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The Glascote Torc. The Iron Age gold alloy collar has finally returned to its hometown, previously held in safe keeping by Birmingham Museum Trust, and is now displayed in Tamworth

Castle's Saxon Gallery for all visitors to see for the next three years.

The torc found in 1943 but not identified until 1970 is formed of twelve gold wires twisted in pairs with loop terminals cast on. Each terminal is divided into three segments by punched wavy lines. Analysis shows the content as: gold 29.8%, silver 41.9% and copper 27.2%; such an alloy would be strained to the

limit by the manufacturing process, and indeed one wire had failed in attachment to the terminal, thus rendering the ornament unsaleable. The closest parallel is the Needwood Forest torc in the same county, and it seems that there must have been a craftsman based here. To provide the gold for the Glascote torc

between twenty and eighty coins (depending on fineness) would have had to be melted down, and the presence of such a wealthy patron suggests a tribal chief. There is some evidence to suggest that the area was more than an unregarded territory between Coritani and Cornovii . From Transactions 1971 Kenneth S. Painter

News of a Change of Venue for future SAHS Lecture Programmes

From the start of the SA&HS 2025 autumn lecture programme in September, we will be holding our 'live' in person Friday evening talks at **Wade Street Church, Frog Lane, Lichfield, WS13 6HS**. We will meet each time in the Lichfield Room at Wade Street Church which will provide comfortable surroundings for an audience of up to 75 attendees and is at ground level with no stairs to negotiate. Entrance to the building is from Frog Lane and there is a public car park directly opposite. Seating in the Lichfield Room will be set out auditorium style, in rows facing the speaker and screen, so as is currently the case, and refreshments will continue to be available, served from a kitchen hatch at the back of the room. Arriving by car, it is necessary to enter the Wade Street one-way system from St John Street, driving round past the Garrick Theatre on your left and into Frog Lane. In the meantime the spring 2025 programme continues to be at the Guildhall, Bore Street in Lichfield. Two lectures remain there, on 9th May and 6th June.

The first lecture at Wade Street Church will be on 19th September 2025.

Keith Billington

Forthcoming Lectures in our Spring 2025 programme

Friday 9th May 2025 – LIVE – Tim Malim

The Old Hillfort Oswestry Shropshire

Old Oswestry is considered to be one of England's most precious archaeological jewels, described by Sir Cyril Fox in the 1930s as 'the outstanding work of the Early Iron Age type on the Marches of Wales', and its design is unique amongst hillforts in the UK. Located on the edge of the Shropshire Plain and just a kilometre north of the market town of Oswestry, the hillfort (and its hinterland landscape) can trace activity through artefactual evidence back at least 5000 years, with the last 3000 years evident as earthworks.

Tim has over 35 years practical application of archaeology and cultural resource management involving many different aspects of the discipline, knowledge of many periods, and with an extensive record of publication. He has worked in local government and the private sector.

Friday 23rd May 2025 – ZOOM – John Halstead

HS2 Update

John is currently a Senior Historic Environment Research and Delivery Strategy (HERDS) manager for HS2. This has followed on from roles as Associate and Principal Heritage Consultant at Atkins, working on Environmental Impact Assessment and archaeological project management for large infrastructure projects.

Friday 6th June 2025 – LIVE – Dr Mathew Morris

Castle Hill Park Leicester Investigations

Another visit by Mathew Morris who has over the past few years presented lectures at the Guildhall and during "Covid" some ZOOM lectures. Tonight's lecture is LIVE at the Guildhall.

Mathew has worked for University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) since 2004, excavating a wide range of rural and urban archaeology across the Midlands, from the Prehistoric period through to the Industrial Revolution. Members of the medieval Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem are commonly known as the Knights Hospitaller. Their sites are largely unexcavated in the UK – making this a rare opportunity at Castle Hill to explore this type of monument.

Live Lectures at the Guildhall Lichfield start at 8.00pm with refreshments normally available from 7.30pm. All are welcome; £3 on the door, members free. Zoom lectures are for members only who will be notified of the Zoom link on the day itself by e-mail.

The first lecture in our Autumn 2025 programme will be on 19 September and will be held live in Wade Street Church (entrance via Frog Lane) Lichfield

The first two lectures in our Autumn 2025 Programme are as follows:

Fri 19 Sept 2025 - 8pm - Wade St Church, Lichfield: Dr. Rachael Jones (University of Leicester) will speak on "Darlaston: Growth of a Staffordshire Industrial Town During the Nineteenth Century"

Fri 3 Oct 2025 - 8pm - by Zoom: Dr. Charlotte Ball will speak on "Roman Influence in Anglo-Saxon Art".

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A significant Exhibition at Lichfield Cathedral -

Book of Books - the Story of the English Bible

News of a significant exhibition now on at Lichfield Cathedral, from 8th March to 20th July. Drawn from the Cathedral Library, on display there are nine rare and precious bibles, dating from the 8th to the 17th centuries. The exhibition tells the story of how and why the Latin bible of the pre-Reformation was translated and authorised into English. Using the Cathedral collection of bibles together with the St Chad's Gospels, there is an exhibit of a rare manuscript copy of John Wycliffe's 1410 translation of the New Testament, a spectacular recently restored 1539 first edition of Henry VIII's Great Bible and rare editions of the 1611 Authorised Bible. The exhibits range from beautiful medieval manuscripts (some produced under threat of death) to finely printed volumes (sometimes with embarrassing printing errors) produced through turbulent periods of English history.

The bibles exhibited reflect the history of the first attempt to translate the Latin bible into Middle English, the first authorised bible in English during the reign of Henry VIII, the different outlooks of Christians during the Reformation, to James I's efforts to find a middle way, and up to today. The Bible has of course become the best selling book ever in the English language.

You can visit the exhibition during the Cathedral normal opening hours, **admission is free**, though it's suggested a donation be made as you enter. It is advisable to check the Cathedral website: <https://www.lichfield-cathedral.org> or call 01543 306100, to check for any special events taking place which might affect ability to access the exhibits.

Keith Billington

Society Journals

The society holds copies of Current British and World Archaeology
There are often well written and informative articles on all aspects of archaeology
Odd Socs highlights some unusual aspects of readers interests
These journals are available for members to peruse at home
Just sign out editions with your name on the appropriate sheet and cross off the details when you return copies
We ask you to give a good home to any copies over two years old
I am at almost all meetings if you would like to discuss any details
Thank you

Diana Wilkes

Lost Merlin Manuscript Discovered in the Binding of a 16th-Century Book

The document had been torn, folded, and stitched into the binding of a property register. At first glance, the 16th-century register found in the Cambridge University Library might not seem the most remarkable of objects. Its brittle pages simply held handwritten records of property deeds in Suffolk, the U.K., dating back to the Elizabethan era. But when researchers from the institute unfurled the volume's binding in 2019, they were in for a surprise. Hidden within the binding was a segment of a 13th-century manuscript. What's more, it has been determined to be part of the *Suite Vulgate du Merlin*, part of the Vulgate Cycle, a medieval narrative on the lives of King Arthur and Merlin. Though popular in its time, few of the French manuscripts from the cycle have survived.



The inner front cover of the manuscript as it was discovered. Photo: Cambridge University Library / CHIL.

See the full article by [Min Chen](#) at [Lost Merlin Manuscript Discovered in the Binding of a 16th-Century Book](#) which gives more details of the scientific techniques used and the stories revealed in the text.

Events

The Charles Close Society

The next meeting of the Ordnance Survey map study group at Wall Village Hall will be on Tuesday 1st July 2025, at 7.30pm. The topic for the evening is ***What I did on my holidays. Mapping my vacations***. The venue is on Watling St, Wall, Lichfield WS14 0AW.

For more information please email lez@watsonlv.net or phone/txt 07812144675

Sandwell Priory: Talks on Sandwell Priory and medieval West Bromwich 1st June and 3rd August. Walks around Sandwell Priory and other sites in Sandwell Valley 10th May, 12th July, 18th September. All start at 11am. Advance booking essential Heritage Walks and Talks with Dr Mike Hodder at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre (formerly Sandwell Park Farm) event tickets from TicketSource

Bromwich Hall, West Bromwich: Talk, finds talk and walk- Tuesday 10 June at 10:30am, Wednesday 9 July at 6pm, 17 September at 10:30am. Advance booking
<https://www.visitsandwell.com/things-to-see-and-do/bromwich-hall-museum-west-bromwich-manor-house-museum-p1414751>

Sutton Park (Friends of Sutton Park): Archaeology, history and ecology walk- Saturday 9th August. Small charge, advance booking not required.
Bronze Age sweat lodge demonstration- Sunday 14th September. Advance booking essential
Talk about the Roman Road in Sutton Park- Monday 15th September, 7.30. Advance booking not required.

Archaeology walk, Tuesday 16th September 11am. Advance booking not required.

Details of all events and booking, where required <https://fospa.org.uk/>

Holy Trinity C of E church, Sutton Coldfield: Talk on Buildings in Sutton Coldfield before 1528. Friday 19th September, 2pm. Free, advance booking not required

Wall Roman site (Friends of Letocetum): walk and talk 18th October. Small charge, advance booking essential
<https://www.wallromansitefriendsofletocetum.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=655913> or 01543 418464

Vikings

The University of Oslo has recently launched the Great Viking Survey, a groundbreaking study to explore how people across the world perceive and engage with the Vikings as history and heritage, and to map the many ways in which contemporary media and academia shape these views.



This online survey invites anyone, anywhere, over 18, to share their thoughts on the iconic Viking warrior figure, as well as the enduring legacy and memory of the Vikings in the modern world. In doing so, researchers will be able to shine an unprecedented light on the means and mechanisms that allow images and myths of the Vikings to be shaped and spread in the public sphere.

The survey is part of the [Making a Warrior-project](#), a pan-Nordic network of scholars examining the concept of viking ‘warriorhood’ and its representations past and present. By determining how ideas and images of vikings are shared among different communities and demographics, the project is able to inform future outreach and cultural heritage initiatives that respond to public interest, while fostering a nuanced appreciation of the Viking Age. The *Great Viking Survey* is now live at vikingsurvey.org, and remains open until mid-May 2025.

The UiO press release can be found [here](#).

In March 2025 we visited the churches at Berkswell and Ansley in North Warwickshire in a tour guided by our President Dr John Hunt. Fifteen members had an enjoyable day with John in these two fascinating churches on this excursion which included an excellent lunch at the café in Berkswell village. We'll try for another one next year.

New Book

'The Making of the Black Country: A Unique Industrial Landscape.'

The book was a labour of love. It has ten chapters : Coal, Iron, Glass, Chemicals, Nails, Chains, Locks and Keys, Other Industries, Railways and Canals. Each chapter describes how these industries developed to create the Black Country of the nineteenth century, when it really was "black by day and red by night."

The author was born in Walsall in 1941, lived in Caldmore and the Chuckery, attended Queen Mary's Grammar School, then the University of Aston and then worked at the late lamented Walsall Power Station. Work then took him south, but he always kept in contact with the Black Country, returning frequently to research the book, combined with watching the Saddlers.

The book retails at £19.99 but the author is able to offer it to SAHS members at the special price of £12 including postage.

For details, contact Geoff Marshall g.marshall41@btinternet.com

Graffiti

Did you know that the walls of Salisbury Cathedral are covered in historical graffiti? The Cathedral now has a fascinating tour discovering who made these marks and what they mean. Expert guides explore hexafoils and curses, gaming boards and music, symbols of religion, heraldry and pilgrimage, as well as design drawings left behind by the stonemasons. These are the hidden stories of the people who worked, worshipped and visited the Cathedral over the past eight hundred years.

Tours run on Thursdays at 10:30 and Saturdays at 14:30 and last approximately 75 minutes. Tickets £18 if booked on line in advance, £20 for walk up

Cannock Chase Museum Closes

We are very sad to confirm that the Museum of Cannock Chase in Hednesford finally closed on 25 April 2025. This is a backward step in the presentation of history to local communities and is very much to be deplored. The Museum was an attractive facility in an area of the County not noted for such things. It was on the edge of Cannock Chase and was readily accessible to all and held a collection illustrating the history of the Chase and also housed temporary exhibitions including some arranged by the Staffordshire County Museum. The closure is on cost grounds. There is no information available on what will happen to the collection, the building or the grounds.

For Cheese Lovers

Held by Cultural Collections at the University of Leeds, the earliest-known English book about cheese is revealing its fascinating and sometimes nauseating contents to the public for the first time.

A new transcription, made by Tudor re-enactors at Kentwell Hall, is now available to read online alongside the digital version of the original handwritten manuscript.

'A pamphlet compiled of Cheese, containing the differences, nature, qualities, and goodness, of the same' was unpublished and unknown until it surfaced at auction in 2023 and was acquired by the University with the support of a grant from Friends of the Nation's Libraries. The 112-page vellum-bound manuscript is thought to date from the 1580s.

[University of Leeds' Cultural Collections: Oldest English Book on Cheese Newly Transcribed | Leeds Living](#)

Free on-line lectures are available from the Bodleian Library in Oxford. [The Lyell Lectures 2025 | Visit the Bodleian Libraries](#)

This year's lectures are by Leah Price who is Distinguished Professor at Rutgers University, where she founded and directs the Initiative for the Book. Her works include *What We Talk About When We Talk About Books* and *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain*.

'Victorian Books and their Servants'.

Most Victorians who owned a bookcase employed a servant. These lectures ask how that fact shaped both parties' cohabitation with books. What kinds of labour made print usable? How did masters and servants picture each others' reading? Why did they care?

The first lecture draws on manuals that taught brides to keep house and bachelors to collect books; the second on novels that pit institutional library against bourgeois study and bohemian lodging-house; the third on inscriptions in the pastedowns of tracts sold to mistresses for foisting onto maids; the fourth on children's fiction which transposes domestic debates about literacy to the West Indies; and the fifth on journalism that makes the maid a hostile witness to literary production.

Lecture 2: Shirkspaces: Where don't George Gissing's characters write?

Thursday 1 May 2025, 5.15–6.15pm

Lecture 3: Proxy print: How rich and poor readers pictured one other

Tuesday 6 May 2025, 5.15–6.15pm

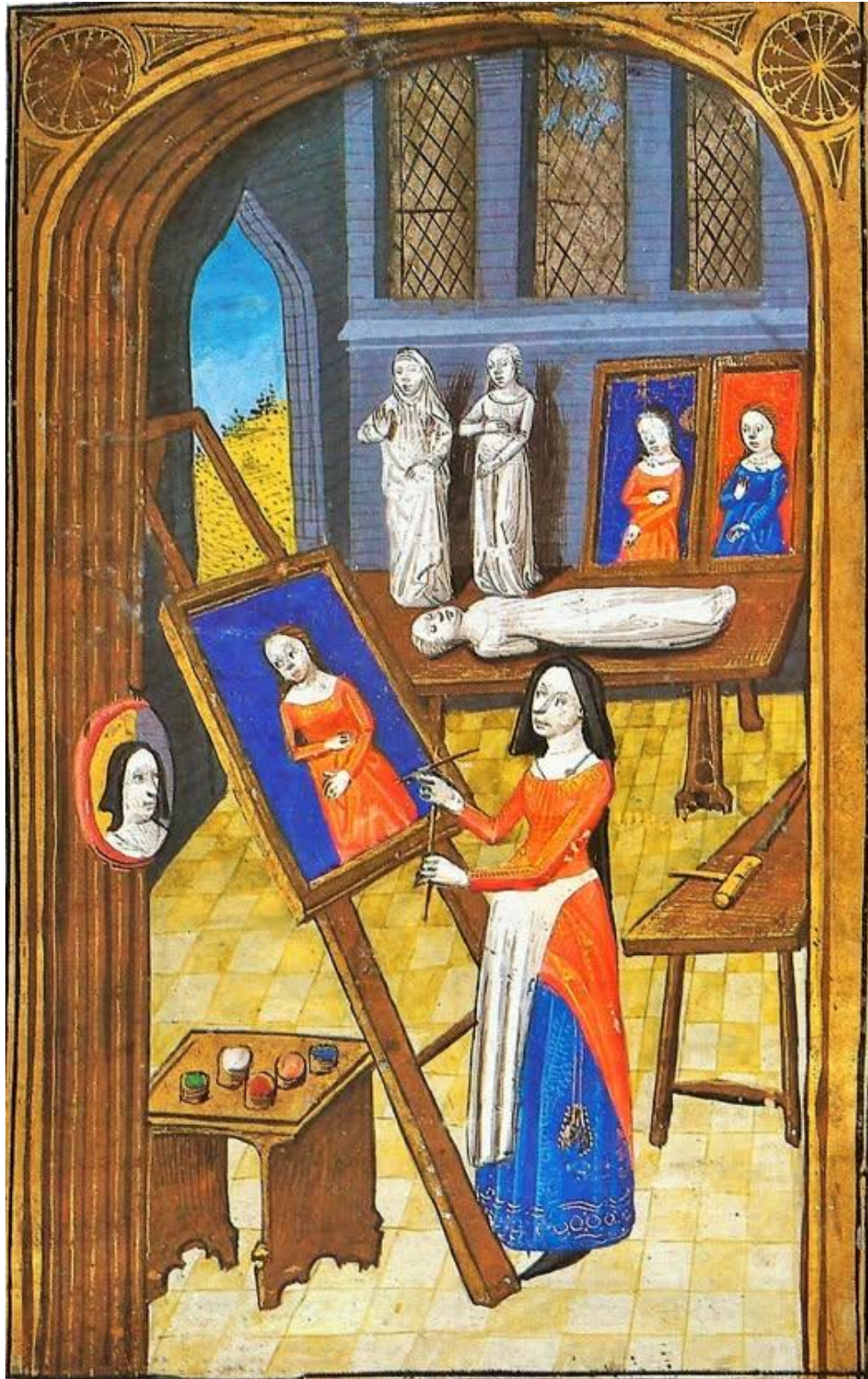
Lecture 4: Undercover downstairs: Why servants and freelancers judged one another

Thursday 8 May 2025, 5.15–6.15pm

Lecture 5: The angel in the library: reading aloud between chattel slavery and domestic violence

Thursday 15 May 2025, 5.15–6.15pm

These are free; book on line and the lectures are delivered by Zoom or Teams in the case of the last lecture (The first lecture in the series was on April 29 but a recording of it is available on the Lyell Lectures website as will be the case with all the other lectures).



Unknown, Artist in her Atelier, Des Clères et Nobles Femmes (Clerics and Noblewomen), c. 1470, Spencer Collection, The New York Public Library, New York, MS. 33, f. 37v.

It is often said that there were no women artists in medieval times but here is clear evidence to the contrary. The artist is working in her studio on a self portrait, with completed works including paintings and sculpture around her. She is well dressed, see the detail in her blue underskirt, and has a mirror with which to paint herself so she is clearly from a wealthy household. Medieval life is often best or clearly seen through this kind of work rather than documentary evidence but they are not well known as the general quality of the works is not so great to attract much attention from art connoisseurs.

Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives (FoSSA)

Wednesday June 4 2024 at 2.00pm

In the Hildegard Simon Room at the New History Centre Stafford

You are invited to a talk by Penny Lawton

The Book of Husbandry by Master Fitzherbert published 1523– what archive material can tell us about the authorship

Penny is a member of the Richard III Society. The monument to Ralph Fitzherbert of Norbury shows him wearing a livery collar of Richard III with a boar pendant. Norbury isn't far for her and so she decided she would try to find out more about Ralph Fitzherbert. This led her into the wider history of the Fitzherberts of Norbury. It also led her to the question of the authorship of the Book of Husbandry. The book was first published in 1523 and is the first book in English and probably the first in western Europe on the subject. It went through many editions, the last of which, Skeat's, is still easily available in re-print, or to download, a testimony to its importance for the history of agriculture.

The Book of Husbandry was written by a Master Fitzherbert and has been widely ascribed to Sir Antony Fitzherbert the great lawyer of the reign of Henry VIII but there has always been some doubt as to whether Antony was the author or his lesser known elder brother John. Most sources acknowledge that doubt.

The wills of Ralph, his wife Elizabeth and his son and heir John are in the Staffordshire archive. These together with a couple of other documents in the Staffs archive and one in the National Archive and other archival material available on-line, such as IPMs, hold information which I think makes it possible to be sure of the authorship of this historically important book. The talk will concentrate on the documents in the archives and what they can tell us.

Tea/Coffee and biscuits provided. Please let us know if you intend to come. All welcome. The talk will last about 45 minutes.

richard.totty4@gmail.com or malcolm.price49@outlook.com

There is no charge for attending this talk which is free for FoSSA members, SAHS members and their guests

"The Book of Husbandry" by Master Fitzherbert is an agricultural guide written during the early 16th century. This treatise discusses various aspects of farming, including instructions on ploughing, sowing, and livestock management, while addressing both practical and philosophical dimensions of husbandry. Through this work, Fitzherbert provides insights for husbandmen to improve their agricultural practices, thereby enhancing their livelihood. The opening of the text presents an introduction by the author, emphasizing the importance of labour and the role of husbandmen in society. Fitzherbert begins by explaining that husbandmen primarily sustain themselves through agriculture, particularly by engaging in ploughing, sowing crops, and raising animals. He elaborates on different types of ploughs suited for various soils and outlines the necessary tools and materials for effective husbandry. Through these discussions, the author aims to equip readers with practical knowledge and advice vital for farming success. The tone suggests a combination of practical instruction and moral reflection on the responsibilities of land cultivation and stewardship."

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

Comments and suggestions are welcome.

The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Society.

SAHS is on social media: X, Facebook, Instagram, Bluesky and Threads (Note that our account with X, formerly Twitter, will close in July.)

Our Web page can be found at www.SAHS.uk.net

Stop Press

For a new experience in viewing remote exhibitions on historical subjects see [Lambeth Palace Library - Unfolding Time](#) which is an interactive way of seeing their current bibliographic exhibition.

At the time of writing there are still places available for the first Staffordshire History Day to be held in the new Staffordshire History Centre on Saturday 3 May 2025 starting at 9.30am. Enquiries to helen.johnson@staffordshire.gov.uk. £15 a head which includes a light buffet lunch.

Graffiti Training. A date has been agreed with the churchwarden at Tatenhill to suit his diary, and the graffiti training will now be on Saturday the 14th June at 11am. We will circulate more detailed information in due course.