

STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LECTURE SEASON 2018-2019

28th September 2018

Dr Richard Bifield

1709-2009: Celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Birth of the Industrial Revolution at Coalbrookdale

1709 refers to the date when Abraham Derby first perfected the technique of smelting iron using coke from coal as opposed to charcoal the traditional fuel. From the innovation stemmed a whole series of technological firsts that made Coalbrookdale the world's most important iron making district by the end of the 18th century.

Richard qualified as a Town Planner working at Lincoln, Newcastle upon Tyne, Reading and finally before retiring Wrekin as Conservation Officer. Since retirement Richard spends his time between Publicity/Education Officer for Shropshire Historic Churches Trust, Wellington Literary Festival and other voluntary organisations.

12th October 2018

Nigel Page

Recent Investigations at Baginton Warwickshire

I am currently a Senior Archaeological Officer at Archaeology Warwickshire and since joining AW in 2017 have been lucky enough to work on some incredible projects including a small Early Bronze Age hengiform monument that had five later Bronze Age burials in the ditch in Newbold on Stour. But, if that wasn't enough for my first year I then moved onto this site at Baginton, which was not only one of the largest area excavations we have done, but it also turned out to be an incredibly important site.

A total of c.7ha was excavated, the majority on the high valley slopes on the south bank of the River Sowe. The earliest evidence encountered was a series of possible Neolithic pits containing flint artefacts located on a northerly

promontory over the Sowe valley. The truncated remains of a possible Bronze Age ring ditch was recorded on the shoulder of the valley along with a possible burnt mound of assumed 2nd millennium BC date close to a former spring. A Roman cremation cemetery extended over the western part of the site. Many burials were urned and some were accompanied by grave goods including additional vessels and personal items. They can with some certainty be associated with the Lunt Roman Fort which is c.500m to the west. A series of field boundaries to the east of the cemetery may also have been of similar date.

Anglo-Saxon activity on the site included a series of sunken featured buildings, pits and a small cemetery. No human remains survived but some burials included grave goods; one grave in particular was rich in artefacts and included the remains of a hanging bowl.

Metalwork from the site required immediate conservation and a range of important organic remains was also discovered in the process.

26th October 2018

Dr Malcolm Dick

Slavery, Anti-Slavery and the Black Presence in the West Midlands 1700 to 1838'

After 1700, the West Midlands became increasingly connected with a global economy after 1700. One dimension involved the export of manufactured products to Africa and the West Indies as part of the transatlantic slave trade - and one result was the arrival of black individuals in the area. By the late-eighteenth century, however, local people were also actively participating in the abolitionist movement. This presentation will explore and evaluate these aspects of the region's history with particular reference to Staffordshire evidence.

Malcolm is Lecturer in Regional and Local History at Birmingham University.

He is also Editor in Chief of the "History West Midlands Project". His research work is predominately covering the West Midlands in all its aspects as well as being a prolific author.

9th November 2018

Shane Kelleher

From the Most Extraordinary District in the World' to a 'Very Poor Bit of the Fag End of It': Archaeology at the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and other tales from a career in ruins.

This talk will be an introduction to Staffordshire's new County Archaeologist and will focus largely on his time at the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site where he was responsible for advising on the care, conservation and interpretation of some of the most important industrial monuments in the world, inspired new generations of archaeologists by setting up and running the Ironbridge Young Archaeologists' Club, and through his running of Ironbridge Archaeology, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's commercial archaeology unit, managed and undertook projects at high profile sites such as the Iron Bridge, Bedlam Furnaces, Middleport Pottery, and the Jackfield Stabilisation Project. The talk will also look at Shane's time as the Industrial Heritage Support Officer for England, touch on his time at Birmingham Archaeology, including his work on the Staffordshire Schools Project, Betley Model Farm, and Beaudesert Hall, and provide an introduction to his new role which will include an overview of the Chase Through Time and Transforming the Trent Valley projects.

Shane Kelleher is the new Staffordshire County Archaeologist having taken up his position in mid-January 2018. Shane has moved to Staffordshire County Council from the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust where he worked for seven years as the Archaeology and Monuments Officer/Museum Archaeologist and latterly as the Historic England-funded Industrial Heritage Support Officer for England. Prior to this he was a Project Manager with responsibility for built heritage and conservation at Birmingham Archaeology, the commercial archaeology unit of the University of Birmingham. He is a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCI(A)), an Affiliate Member of the Institute for Historic Building Conservation, a Council member of the Association for Industrial Archaeology, a former Trustee Director and Secretary of the Birmingham Conservation Trust, an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Birmingham, and a specialist lecturer at Birmingham City University. Shane has a Joint Honours degree in Archaeology and Geography from University College Cork, Ireland, where he also took an MA in Archaeological Methods and Practice, before receiving an MA in the Archaeology of Buildings at the University of York.

23rd November 2018

Dr David Freke

Mind the Gap: 2500 years of high level activity at Warmington, South Warwickshire

The talk describes the ten years of community investigation of a south Warwickshire prehistoric and Roman site in its landscape context. The "gaps" in the title are topographical, chronological, artefactual and interpretational, and they are as intriguing as the material revealed at the site, which includes 2 Roman coin hoards, a Neolithic burial, a massive iron age earthwork and much more.

David Freke MA DipAD FSA MCIfA has 50 years of experience of archaeological investigations, principally in England and the Isle of Man. He lives on a smallholding in South Warwickshire , which includes a DMV and 70 sheep.

7th December 2018

**Annual General Meeting
AGM 7.30pm start - Lecture 8.00pm start**

Mike Glasson

Walsall, Town of a Hundred Trades

A celebration of the remarkable diversity of trades which have been practised in Walsall over the past 800 years- everything from handbags and saddles for the Queen to wheelbarrows, whips, and washing machines. Lloyd George thought that Walsall had more trades than any other town of similar size in the country, and he was probably right! The talk will explore some of these trades in detail, and examine the themes of ingenuity, excellence, adaptability and diversity which have characterised the local manufacturing tradition.

Mike Glasson is a graduate of York and Leicester universities. He was curator of the Walsall Leather Museum for 30 years and Head of Walsall Museums Service until his recent retirement. He lives in Walsall.

22nd February 2019

Dr Henry Chapman

Bog Bodies and Sacrifice

Henry Chapman is a prehistorian specialising primarily in the archaeology of wetlands. Most recently, his research has focused on the topic of Iron Age bog bodies – human remains preserved within peatlands. Here, the debate centres on whether these remains represent the victims of murder, human sacrifice or criminal execution. Henry's research has approached this debate by investigating the landscape archaeology of these events and the exploration of the suffering that the individuals experienced in their final moments. This will be the focus of his lecture.

Henry has worked for the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, the University of Hull and Channel 4's Time Team. He is currently Professor of Archaeology at the University of Birmingham and is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

8th March 2019

Tim Skelton

Lutyens and the Great War

This Lecture will be a 7.30pm start

Tim is a retired chartered surveyor and, twenty years ago, started researching the various memorials that were designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in connection with the dead of World War One, which included his extensive work for the then Imperial War Graves Commission - it was part of his work that had never before been investigated in detail. It led, in turn to the opportunity to write a book "Lutyens And The Great War" with Gerald Gliddon (published 2008). The illustrated talk will look at all of the aspects of this work and will include some of the stories behind the commissioning of individual memorials which is, in itself, a revealing portrait of community life in the years after the end of the War.

22nd March 2019

Dr Chris Callow

What happened in Medieval Iceland? Using sagas and other sources to assess political change.

Iceland was colonised from scratch in the Viking Age and eventually emerges as a fairly conventional-looking western European society by the fifteenth century, although always remaining a relatively poor community of pastoral farmers. The sources for its medieval history are, however, anything but conventional. Sagas form a large and interesting corpus

of information which we have to make use of for the period of Iceland's history before 1300, providing significant challenges to historians for various reasons. I will offer my view on how we can assess the power of Iceland's 'chieftains' in the period before Icelandic leaders formally submitted to the Norwegian king in the 1260s, considering the sagas but in the light of other forms of evidence such as archaeology and more conventional documents.

Chris has been Lecturer in Medieval History at University of Birmingham since 2005 and his research interests lie in the Middle Ages with particular specialisms in Iceland and the Vikings. Prior to 2005 Chris held temporary posts in the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity at Birmingham including the Ironbridge Institute, Birkbeck College and UCL.

5th April 2019

Jane Hearn

**Britain's Post War Prefabs - Building
the Post-War World**

The Prefab Museum tells a story that resonates today and paints a picture of social, domestic, and working class life in Britain from 1946 to the present day. These prefabricated homes were designed to last 10-15 years when they were erected between 1946-1948 but thousands have survived, lived in and loved by their residents. Jane Hearn, co-director of the museum, will talk about the history and development of the post-war prefab, the architecture and designs, and the communities that lived - and still live - in them.

Jane Hearn is co-director of the Prefab Museum and a community development worker. Her interest in post-war prefabs dates back to 1990 when she first visited the Excalibur Estate of 187 prefabs, the last large group in London.

26th April 2019

Dr Jenny Gilbert

The Hodson Shop Collection

Walsall Museum's Hodson Shop Collection contains over 5,000 items of mass produced clothing shop stock. Following its discovery in 1983, it began a journey from piles of dirty old clothing to a renowned museum collection. This journey has not been straightforward, with the collection's status fluctuating over the years. This talk introduces the collection, describes its history, raises important questions about the place of everyday clothing in museums and considers the risks facing collections in small local history museums.

Dr Jenny Gilbert is a lecturer in Design Cultures at De Montfort University, Leicester. She completed her PhD at University of Wolverhampton in 2016, which was an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award project. The research built a detailed biographical case study of the museum life of Walsall Museum's Hodson Shop Collection. Jenny's research focuses upon every day, and arguably mundane, experiences of dress, fashion and retail. She is currently working on a project exploring large clothing wholesale firms, operating in Birmingham 1900-1960. The project is set to include an exhibition, conference and education programme at Winterbourne House and Gardens in 2019. Jenny is passionate about sharing research, ideas and knowledge outside academia and has featured on BBC Radio 3's *Free Thinking* and other BBC broadcasts.

10th May 2019

Dr Della Hooke

Water and the Environment in the Anglo-Saxon World
This Lecture will be a 7.30pm start

Water was a dominant feature in everyone's lives throughout history but and the Anglo-Saxon world was no exception. In this period, river-names, rights to water etc. are recorded in documents and more known about its cultural and symbolical role. An attempt will be made to relate much of this discussion to Staffordshire. Here some major rivers such as the Trent, and even some smaller streams, continued to bear names of British origin; other names display their nature as perceived in this period, whether describing their flow or the animals and birds that were found in the vicinity, providing an insight into the Anglo-Saxon countryside. Some rivers also gave their names to adjoining settlements. On a spiritual level, water had been revered since at least Mesolithic times and springs or wells might enjoy a special mystical or sacred role. In this period many were Christianised by becoming associated with a Christian saint and their presence might influence the siting of a new church or cathedral – the water used in liturgical practices. Water had a liminal quality, separating the everyday world from the sacred (although wetlands might sometimes be regarded as places of danger), and might influence the location of early minsters and monasteries, often established on 'islands' formed in a braided river. However, such locations were to prove immensely beneficial as trade expanded and markets were established, often by the monasteries themselves.

Della Hooke, PhD and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, pursued a career as a university research fellow and lecturer before becoming a free-lance consultant in Archaeology and Historical Landscapes. She is an Associate Member of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Science, in the University of Birmingham. She is also the editor of the Routledge journal, *Landscape History*, and of the *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*.