

SAHS LECTURE DATES & DETAILS 2025-26

[L] Live at the Wade Street Church in Lichfield. [Z] Via Zoom.

19th Sept 2025 [L] Dr. Rachael Jones (University of Oxford)

The changing landscape in the C19th Black Country: canals, mines, houses and sandpits

Dr Rachael Jones is a tutor on the Advanced Diploma in Local History at the University of Oxford. Her great grandfather, Thomas Frederick Worrall, was born in Wednesbury in 1872.

This presentation will explore changes in the urban landscape as industrialisation proceeded and declined across the 1800s. There will be a focus on the Darlaston, Wednesbury and Tipton areas. Implications for people's health and well-being will be considered.

3rd Oct 2025 [Z] Dr. Charlotte Ball (independent scholar)

Vikings in Mercia: Repton, the Saint and the Viking

Dr Charlotte Ball is an early medievalist with a special interest in the way the art, literature and burial practises of the period intersect with the natural world. She has her PhD from the University of Leicester where she lectured in early medieval history. Currently, Charlotte has her own business as a teacher, speaker and history communicator, working with young people and adults to inspire a love of the English language and its early history.

In the early medieval period, the village of Repton was the setting for dramatic events involving monarchs, murder and marauding Vikings. It was, at various times, a burial ground of kings and a military stronghold. This talk examines the stories of two men who were buried at Repton – a Saint and a Viking – and looks at what recent archaeology can tell us about our local history and the Viking age.

17th Oct 2025 [L] Dr. Duncan Frankis (Birmingham Newman University)

Birmingham Brass Founders: Politics & Industry during the Age of Revolution

Duncan began his academic career at Aberystwyth University studying European History during his undergraduate degree, and focusing on Early Modern British History for his MA.

Following the completion of his MA in 2012, he spent two years as a researcher for an international development charity based in Honduras before returning to the UK where he was granted a full PhD scholarship at the University of Birmingham.

Duncan's thesis focused on the historical links between politics and industry in the West Midlands – during the age of the Atlantic Revolutions. Whilst studying at the University of Birmingham he was appointed as a Teaching Fellow in History and Education, specialising in the Early Modern Atlantic World, the history of Honduras, and decolonizing the British education system.

Following the completion of his PhD, Duncan moved to Newman University to work as a lecturer in History and Applied Humanities – and became co-programme lead of History in January 2023. He has since completed his Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education and become a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (Advance HE). He also works as a reviewer for the Journal of Eighteenth Century Studies and is turning his PhD into a book.

During the long eighteenth-century Birmingham was known as the city of a thousand trades, and its industrial and scientific networks have been explored extensively in the academic literature of the West Midlands. However, there is a dark political history involving many of the most prominent and famous industrialists that is generally overlooked. In this seminar, Duncan Frankis (Newman University) discusses the political manoeuvring, cutthroat capitalism, and less-than-reputable trade links amassed by a group of politically conscious industrialists based in the town in the late eighteenth century.

31st Oct 2025 [Z] Dr. J Hunt

Researching parish churches in the western midlands.

The stone-built parish churches scattered across the English landscape are among the most visible and familiar of medieval monuments. By about 1200, England possessed between 8,000 and 9,000 parish churches, and the Church of England today has around 16,000 churches in its charge, the vast majority of which are parish churches. The aesthetic attractions of parish churches that engaged the scholarship of past generations, their architectural accomplishment and achievements as works of art, continues to hold its fascination, but in addition our research agenda has developed and broadened, taking these buildings into the context of the communities that built and used them, seeking insights into local society, and pursuing increasingly multi-disciplinary approaches. Parish churches, which represent our most tangible material entrée into medieval society, are explored in this talk from the perspective of the medieval west midlands region.

14th Nov 2025 [L] Gareth Seddon (independent scholar)

'Dud formation' to 'stars of the war': the incredible learning curve of the South Staffordshire Territorials 1914-18

Gareth Seddon has worked in industry and education, both in the UK and abroad. He holds an MA in British First World War Studies (University of Birmingham) with a

particular emphasis on the experience of the South Staffordshire Territorials, and completes a second MA in West Midlands History (also UoB) in 2025. He has undertaken numerous research projects on behalf of groups and individuals around the country and is also the Society's Lecture Meetings Secretary.undertaken numerous research projects on behalf of groups and individuals around the country and is also the Society's Lecture Meetings Secretary.

Much has been made over the years of the Great War contribution of men from towns such as Accrington, Barnsley, Leeds, and Liverpool, to name but a few – the 'pals battalions'. However, the part played by the men of our county, from the beginning to the end of the war, is less well known. This talk will explore the background to their early introduction to the fighting and the pitfalls of learning under fire, via accusations of cowardice, to their stunning role in victory.

28th Nov 2025 [Z] Prof. Tim Grady (University of Chester)

Exhuming the Enemy: The Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery

Tim Grady is Professor of Modern European History at the University of Chester. His most recent book published with Yale University Press in 2025 is *Burying the Enemy: The Story of those who Cared for the Dead in Two World Wars*. He has written extensively on aspects of First World War and interwar German history including *A Deadly Legacy: German Jews and the Great War* (2017); *The German Jewish-Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (2011); and with Roland Clark: *European Fascist Movements: A Sourcebook* (2023).

Almost 5,000 Germans killed in the two world wars are buried on Cannock Chase in the UK's only German military cemetery. At first glance, the burial ground appears to be very similar to its Commonwealth War Graves neighbour, only this time for the enemy dead. However, there are two peculiarities to the German Military Cemetery, which are the focus of this talk. First, the site was only dedicated in 1967, some 50 years after the first wartime deaths. Therefore, there is a large pre-history that has to be explored. Second, the term 'German' fails to capture the wide variety of people buried within the cemetery's boundaries. Nazi war criminals rest alongside refugees, while Dutch, Ukrainian and Romanians lie with men from Berlin, Bremen and Bonn. In short, this talk lifts the lid on some of the complexities involved in 'Burying the Enemy'.

27th Feb 2026 [Z] Dr. Nat Alcock (Warwick University)

The Stratfire Project: studying buildings in Stratford-upon-Avon to understand the effects of the late C16th fires on the town

Nat Alcock has made a lifelong study of vernacular architecture and social history, and he worked closely with the late Bob Meeson, researching Midland buildings. He

has published more than 60 papers and 18 books in these fields. The books include most recently *Cruck Building: A Survey* (2019, jointly edited with P. S. Barnwell and Martin Cherry, with contributions by 12 authors), and *Tracing History through Title Deeds: A guide for family and local historians* (2017). He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and past president of the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG).

The Stratfire project (supported by Historic England) involves the combination of building recording, tree-ring dating and documentary research on historic buildings in Stratford-upon-Avon. Some 20 buildings in the centre of Stratford are being studied, that either were or were not destroyed or damaged in the 1594 and 1595. The lecture will discuss the information so far obtained, including the identification of several previously unrecognised 15th century houses, and others of c. 1600-20, rebuilt after the fire.

13th Mar 2026 [L] Annual General Meeting. To be followed by

Elle Carter (Archaeology Warwickshire)

Finding the unexpected/unknown in archaeology: a case study of ceramic tubes with an unknown purpose found at a Roman Kiln site in Longford near Gloucester.

Elle Carter is an archaeologist working for Archaeology Warwickshire. She grew up in Tamworth and was fascinated by history and archaeology since a young age. She completed my Bachelor's degree in History in 2020 and a Postgraduate Diploma in Antiquity (Archaeology) in 2022 whilst working in the field. She currently works closely with Archaeology Warwickshire's in-house post-excavation team which allows her to handle all the finds and samples retrieved from site. She especially enjoys Romano-British history, and hopes to begin a mentorship with one of the country's few Roman pottery specialists very soon. Archaeologists aim to make sense of what they find based on their knowledge and experience but, from time to time, finds deny immediate explanation. What is it? What is it for?

This talk will explore the difficulties archaeologists can encounter in dealing with such finds, highlighted by examples from a dig at a Roman site in Gloucestershire.

27th Mar 2026 [Z] Dr. Victoria Yuskaitis (independent scholar)

The 'Medieval' Leper Squint: Origins, Purpose, and Meanings

Dr Victoria Yuskaitis (FHEA) completed an MA in Medieval Archaeology from the University of Sheffield and an interdisciplinary PhD in Medieval Studies from the University of Leeds. She has continued to work in academia across various institutions and is currently a Recruitment and Outreach Events Manager at Bath Spa University. She continues to actively research, publish, and deliver public

engagement such as talks and podcasts in her field of expertise. Leper squints are common features in parish churches across England, interpreted as medieval responses to fears over contagion. The archaeological, historical, and literary evidence indicates a more complex interpretation, demonstrating that views of medieval lepers have been shaped by antiquarian assumptions and concerns, which continue to resonate. Find out more about leper squints, their connection to anchorite squints, and the enduring legacy of these features today!

10th Apr 2026 [L] Prof. Ann Hughes (Keele University)

From Warwick Castle to Dublin Castle: doing well in the "English" Civil War

Ann Hughes is retired from Keele University where she was Professor of Early Modern History for almost twenty years. Throughout her career she has focused on the wide-ranging

upheavals in mid-seventeenth century England, summed up as the English Revolution. Her first book was *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire* and she has also published a book on religious conflict and print culture: *Gangraena and the Making of the English Revolution*; two more general studies, *The Causes of the English Civil War* and *Gender and the English Revolution*, besides co-edited works including an edition of the collected works of the Digger Gerard Winstanley and more recently of the household accounts of the second Lord Brooke and his widow. She is currently working on the religious manuscripts and public life of a London parliamentary merchant, and on how local people interacted with the powerful parliamentary war-time state

This talk follows the career of a minor Warwickshire lawyer, John Bridges, Governor of the parliamentary garrison at Warwick castle for much of the civil war, and later prominent as a soldier and politician in Ireland. Bridges, along with his father, aunt and four of his brothers were all senior servants in the household of Robert Greville, Lord Brooke (whose death in 1643 during the first siege of Lichfield is commemorated in Dam Street). Brooke's premature death and the upheavals of war brought John Bridges independent military and political roles – including friendship with Oliver Cromwell's son, Henry. Success in England, and in Ireland, brought profit and political advancement but also resentment and rivalry. His career and the fortunes of his family offer insights into the social and political implications of the English civil war; the complex relationships between England and Ireland; and general processes of social change through the seventeenth century.

24th Apr 2026 [Z] Dr. Jacob Fredrickson (University of Edinburgh)

'Whose Utopia?' Belonging, Community and Property-Owning Democracy in Bournville, Birmingham 1950-1970

Dr Jacob Fredrickson is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Prior to this, he was the Director of the Centre for Midlands History and Cultures at the University of Birmingham, and a research fellow working on new histories of utopian garden cities, with a focus on Bournville. His work has featured in Twentieth Century British History and Cultural and Social History, and his forthcoming first monograph, Crimes of Passion: Violence and the Making of Modern Love, will be published in 2026.

Who does Bournville 'belong to'? In one telling of this story, the answer might be the Cadbury family, and particularly George and Richard Cadbury, the brothers who moved the Cadbury firm to the 'factory in a garden'. Bournville promised a new vision for worker welfare, guided by the Cadbury's Quaker faith and liberal politics. Certainly histories of Bournville can give this impression. Yet in this paper, Dr. Fredrickson will explore a period of Bournville's history not usually included in the grand narratives of Cadbury's philanthropy: the mid-twentieth century. It is a moment where, for the first time, Bournville Village Trust lose freehold autonomy over Bournville Village. This paper brings to life this rather choppy and contested moment in the trust's history, where home-owners on the Bournville estate increasingly challenge the power and authority of the Cadbury family, particularly in their vision for the estate's future home-building plans. In so doing, it explores how Bournville responded to the political, social, and economic co-ordinates of the mid-twentieth century: one very different to the late nineteenth century that spawned the original 'utopia'.

8th May 2026 [L] Nadia Awal (Black Country Living Museum)

Forging Ahead – developing an authentic 1940s-60s Black Country town experience

Nadia Awal is a museum professional with over 15 years' experience in the arts and heritage sector. Starting her career in university museums, she has worked with an array of collections such as fine art, heritage, and African collections. She is currently a Researcher at the Black Country Living Museum and has been working on *Forging Ahead* since 2018. Her passions lie in finding new and engaging ways to represent the histories of people from all walks of life.

Forging Ahead was Black Country Living Museum's ambitious capital project, which saw the museum transformed with the addition of a 1940s-60s Black Country town. Starting from the very beginning, this talk explains how stories and buildings were identified, and how they were developed into immersive experiences for the visiting public. The talk will cover all the 'little details' that help to make the authentic whole, such as interpretation, research, objects (and even light shades!).

22nd May 2026 [Z] Dr. Steve Lewitt (independent scholar)

16th-19th century South Staffordshire ironmasters - a new look

Steve Lewitt acquired his doctorate from the Institute for Historical Research in 2023 after a career in both the public and private sector. He has been Secretary of the Society since 2018.

This talk will consider the creation, development and subsequent decline of the iron-making industry in the Smestow valley, south Staffordshire - a precursor to the creation of the Black Country. It will consider how those who developed the industry from the late 16th century and then extended it can be categorised, and, if this new typology which is proposed here can be extended to cover the development of other iron-making areas, locally, regionally or nationally, or, indeed, other industries created in the same time frame.

5th Jun 2026 [L] Prof. Jayne Carroll (University of Nottingham)

The History of English Place Names

Jayne Carroll is Professor in Early English and Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham, and also Honorary Secretary of the English Place-Name Society. She was educated in London before receiving her PhD from the University of Nottingham and conducting research at the University of Iceland as the recipient of an Icelandic government scholarship. Her work has been widely published, including studies of Staffordshire, Shropshire, and areas of the Danelaw, and she is actively involved in a number of ongoing projects, including working with Staffordshire Record Office.

This talk will shed light on the somewhat hidden history to be found in place names which might easily be taken for granted. It will include aspects of landscape, settlement, and language in considering twenty-first century interpretations of place-name studies, drawing examples from Staffordshire, its immediate neighbours, and beyond.