



SHROPSHIRE Archaeological and Historical Society

Shropshire
Archaeological
and
Historical Society

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📖 SOCIETY NEWS

Subscriptions: The Society's Subscription year runs from the beginning of January. The current rates are £19 for Individual membership, and £20 for family/joint membership. The Membership Secretary looks forward to receiving any remaining outstanding subscriptions as soon as possible; her contact details are given at the top of this newsletter.

Please remember to update existing standing orders and fill in a Gift Aid Declaration Form if you are a UK taxpayer – it is an easy way to provide additional support to the society, at no extra cost to yourself.

A recent reorganisation of copies of Transactions by the Publication Secretary has identified some duplicates in our collections that we would like to offer to researchers – please contact George Baugh if you would like to discuss this further:

georgecbaugh@gmail.com

📖 NEWS: SHROPSHIRE ARCHIVES

Wilfred Owen 100 and beyond

The project reached its culmination with a concert, including the world premiere of a specially commissioned piece by composer Bob Chilcott, at Theatre Severn on 4 November, the day 100 years ago that Wilfred Owen was killed in France. The overall programme has been incredibly varied with exhibitions, events, guided walks, talks and performances of all kinds. We have been delighted with the profile Wilfred Owen has achieved within the local, regional and national commemorations, and we hope we have helped to ensure his connections with Shropshire are now better understood.

Much Wenlock Charter Event

November 2018 marked the 550th anniversary of the Charter granted to the Borough of Much Wenlock by Edward IV in 1468. On the 17 November a celebration

was held in the town. We took the original charter, as well as the two first minute books of the town which date from 1495-1810, for the day. In the morning there was a selection of talks including myself and Andrew Davidson explaining the work that had been done on the records. Other speakers included Catherine, Lady Forester on the history of her family, and Dr John Hunt on 'The making of medieval Much Wenlock'.

December closed week

Some of the work carried out during the week

- A big sort and rationalisation of our Ordnance Survey maps
- Re-ordering and rationalising stores to create space for new accessions
- Accessioning and shelving some of our larger recent deposits
- Sorting and shelving local studies publications backlog
- Sorting uncatalogued parts of the Salt solicitors' collection
- Completing the cataloguing of the [Radbrook College collection](#) (ED8914)
- Completion of up to date cataloguing of small collections (MI sequence)
- [Field Name map catalogue](#) completed and launched online (7305)
- Surveying c.50,000 film and glass negatives, a repackaging project, working with volunteers from the Arts Society, will start shortly

Friends of Shropshire Archives 2019 events

Visit to Shrewsbury's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Saturday, 23 March 2019, 2pm

An opportunity to visit Shrewsbury Cathedral for a private tour and two talks about the building's history and its archives. £10 including refreshments

Coleham's industrial history talk and a tour of Coleham Pumping Station, Wednesday, 1 May 2019, 2pm
Barnabas Centre, Longden Coleham, Shrewsbury SY3 7DN

A talk by local historian Andrew Pattison on the industrial history of Coleham followed by a tour of Coleham Pumping Station. £10 including refreshments

AGM and visit to Shrewsbury School library, archive and chapel, Thursday, 6 June 2019, 2pm, Shrewsbury School, Ashton Rd, Shrewsbury SY3 7BA.

Our short AGM will be followed by a tour of the Taylor Library, school archive and chapel.

AGM: free, visit: £5

Visit to Pitchford Hall, Wednesday, 10 July 2019, 2.30pm

Pitchford Hall, Pitchford Rd, Shrewsbury SY1 3HS
Described as Britain's finest half-timbered house, Pitchford Hall was owned by the Colthurst family for more than 500 years before being sold in 1992. £22 including tea and cake

Visit to Chillington Hall, Tuesday, 20 August 2019, 2pm; Chillington Hall, Codsall Wood, Wolverhampton, WV8 1RE

A guided tour of Chillington Hall and gardens with a tractor ride to the lake. £20 including tea and scones

See www.friendsofshropshirearchives.org

Other events

Shropshire Victoria County History Day, Cosy Hall, Newport, Saturday 11 May 2019 see <http://vchshropshire.org/index.html> for more details

Mary McKenzie, Shropshire Archives

NEWS: FRIENDS OF FLAXMILL MALTINGS

'Tommy was ere'
WWII community archaeological project

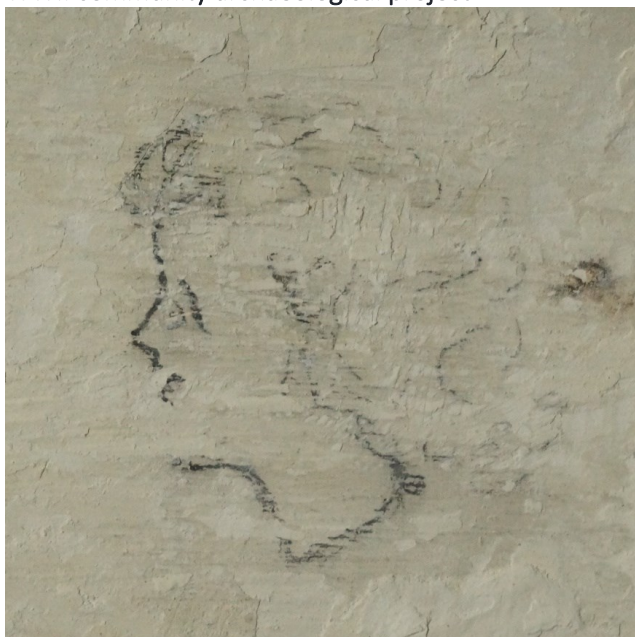


Photo by Allan Smith

The Ditherington maltings was converted into an Infantry Training Centre between 1939 and 1945 and trained infantry from Shropshire. Volunteers have discovered graffiti from Staffordshire, and unexpectedly, the Sussex, and Durham regiments. Investigation and research by the volunteers has provided more information about individual soldiers staying here, as well as the possible use of the site by the army between 1914 and 1918.

Some of the illustrations are small portraits, caricatures, or diagrams. They were probably drawn for recreation, as well as training.

To date we have 138 finds from the first and ground floors of the cross mill, and catalogued 258 photographs or images turned up by research and site work. The graffiti includes illustration, names, dates, army service numbers, as well as game scores. Help with recording techniques, and research was provided by Ironbridge Museum, the Regimental museum, and the Richmond Castle project. The second and third floors of the Cross mill have been investigated but only in a few sample areas.

The volunteers undertook their own research and photography, as well as learning techniques to carefully remove paint, and expose the underlying graffiti using small tools. The landscape of the site was also investigated using GIS, historic maps, and aerial photographs. WW2 trenches adjacent to the mill, railway line and in Greenfields were identified and geo referenced.

Simon Jeffery, Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings

NEWS: SHROPSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

A key aspect of life (and one of the perks of the job!) in the Historic Environment Record (HER) is the variety of material that comes across our desk, to add to our holdings on the archaeology and historic buildings of the county; from the well-known and researched, to the more obscure...

Below is a good example of some recent information added to our records that has highlighted the links between the collections held by the HER and Shropshire Archives.

'Monuments on the Move'

Readers with eagle eyes may have at times noted architectural fragments around Shrewsbury that don't seem to be where they originally stood! Much of this movement apparently occurred in the mid to late 19th century. Recent volunteer work by Tony Carr in both

the HER and Shropshire Archives has highlighted the history behind some of these itinerant monuments.

[The Limes, off Belle Vue Road](#), is a villa built by 1832. It was redeveloped (essentially rebuilt) by Samuel Pountney Smith – he moved there c.1862, but put it on the market in 1869. In 1871 it was used as a school with 10 boarders. Smith, local architect and mayor of Shrewsbury for 1873-4, used a number of architectural fragments in the house, obviously from buildings he refurbished - oak panelling within the master bedroom is of very high quality and the exterior of the building contains fragments of architectural salvage - including a 16th date stone from the Market Hall.

Similarly, the gardens contain a number of architectural fragments, from changes carried out to civil, ecclesiastical and domestic buildings. Most prominent amongst these is the [Grade II Listed relocated arcade screen](#), consisting of three arches finely carved with rosettes and other details.

This screen was apparently originally in St Mary's church, Shrewsbury – it matches a description given by Henry Pidgeon in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of July 1834. Designed by John Carline, junior, it is described as “divided into three compartments, formed by as many obtusely pointed arches, and divided by buttresses of two stories, highly decorated with reticulated divisions, containing an open flower in relief; round the inner recesses of the arches are text inscriptions from the Psalms in old characters.”



Window at 30 Belle Vue Gardens

Nearby, a stone window in Decorated style forms a [garden ornament](#) at 30 Belle Vue Gardens. The present owners have identified St Giles Church, Shrewsbury as the source of this stonework. The chancel was rebuilt in 1871-2 to the design of J.L. Randal. Drawings of the church before the restoration show this window in the East wall of the chancel. It has been suggested that it may have been re-erected here by the printer and antiquarian, Henry Adnitt, who lived here in the 1880s.

Slightly further afield, a re-erected window forms a [prominent garden ornament](#) at St Winifrede's House, 79 Underdale Road, Shrewsbury, built in 1840. Little is known of the origin of the re-erected window in its garden; perhaps it is the work of Pountney Smith - he was certainly involved in Shrewsbury politics and no doubt knew many propertied Salopians so may have been instrumental here.



The window re-erected in the garden of St Winifrede's House – but where did it originate?

To return briefly to the Market Hall – it bears witness to a series of relocated monuments on its main elevations; for example, a statue of Edward the 'Black Prince', eldest son of Edward III – adorning the middle of the north first-floor window – was taken from the Welsh bridge in 1791.



"This statue was removed by order of the Mayor from the tower of the Welsh Bridge in the year 1791".

Nearby, in The Quarry, a number of monuments have a similarly 'mobile history'.

The statue of Hercules, now standing proudly down by the Severn, is a copy of the original Roman statue of Hercules discovered during the excavation of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, undertaken in the 17th century by the Farnese family. It was cast in lead by the highly regarded Flemish sculptor and decorator John Van Nost. Originally at Conover Hall, it was bought from the estate by Mr Robert Hill, a plumber, with a business in Wyle Cop. In 1851, it was bought by the Borough of Shrewsbury and situated by the entrance gates into the quarry (adjacent to St Chads). It was moved into its present position in 1881.

And finally, to the Dingle, where the Shoemaker's Arbour was re-erected in 1877. Dated 1679, it had originally been the gateway to the guild feasting house of the Company of Corvisors (Cordwainers) at Kingsland Show. The Show is believed to have existed since at least the 16th century; it was suppressed on 6th March 1878 by the Home Secretary which led to Shrewsbury School moving to Kingsland.

We are aware of more 'monuments on the move' - many with obscure histories - and would be interested to hear from readers if they can provide references to follow up.

*Giles Carey, with Tony Carr
Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council*

THE EXCAVATION OF AN EARLY 19TH-CENTURY SUMMERHOUSE IN ATTINGHAM PARK

In June 2018 a previously unknown brick building was discovered during an evaluation in an area of recently-felled woodland just south of the Walled Garden. A research excavation, for the National Trust, staffed by NT volunteers, followed in August.

The core of the building was a five-metre-square room with thick brick walls, which may of have been of some height; it had external stone cladding around at least two sides, possibly all four, and a suspended wooden floor in its interior. A doorway in the centre of the north wall was framed by a pair of internal clasping buttresses, and there was fragmentary evidence of a corner fireplace in the south-west corner. Three-quarters of the interior, the former sub-floor space, was excavated, producing large quantities of demolition debris including: very thin window glass, the majority of it clear, a minority painted, from windows, with leaded lights in the east and west (side) walls; pieces of Purbeck Marble from a small fireplace, with its mantelpiece; thick wall/ceiling plaster with lath impressions on the reverse; pieces of sandstone, probably Grinshill stone, remaining from the cladding and possibly window jambs or sills. Architectural metalwork included masonry clamps, part of a possible iron window frame, an ornate keyhole cover, shutter fittings and door furniture and nails. Slate had been used in the walls for levelling-up the bedding for stone cladding, and on the roof. The building stood within a brick-walled enclosure measuring at least c.60m east-west by c.40m north-south.



After the building of the square room had commenced, one-room wings about four metres square were added either side, connected by a portico or corridor across the front (north) elevation; these wings were probably intended to be

lower in height than the square building to which they were added. Quite possibly before these wings had even been completed, their walls were demolished and the footings of all except the front (north) wall were thoroughly robbed of their brickwork. The front wall was retained as the base of a new structure represented by a line of long, rectangular sandstone blocks; these returned around the east side of the building, and may formerly have returned around the west side as well, though no evidence remained there. They are interpreted as the footing for a lightweight timber wall or, more likely, an open arcade, forming a portico or veranda around the building.

No independent archaeological dating evidence is available so far for the accurate dating of the construction – or the demolition – of this building. Nevertheless, graffiti on the mantelpiece reading ‘I Thomas Truman’, if correctly identified to the individual, and a button with an identified Birmingham manufacturer’s stamp, both amongst the demolition debris, are consistent with the disuse, possibly stripping, of the building in the second quarter of the 19th century. If the building is identifiable with the otherwise-unknown ‘summerhouse in the woods’ quoted as a potential source of re-usable stone on the estate in a letter of 1909, this leaves its non-appearance on the 1881 Ordnance Survey plan unexplained, unless the building was by then overgrown or had already been demolished and the stone salvaged and stored.

Construction is most likely to have taken place in the period c. 1810-25 for the second Lord Berwick, and further research is being undertaken by the National Trust on the documentary evidence, clay pipes and window glass to confirm this. The building can be identified as a summerhouse, or as a small lodge re-configured as a summerhouse, built in a setting more notable for its wooded seclusion than for its views in or out, leading to its christening as the ‘Regency love-nest’ by BBC regional news. It was built at a time when Lord Berwick was commissioning work, including lodges, around the park and at Cronhill by the architect John Nash and the landscape designer Humphrey Repton, and the building may have been the work of either of these figures.

Nigel Baker

RESEARCH GRANT FOR SHREWSBURY CASTLE

The Castle Studies Trust has just announced the award of a grant of £10,000 to the writer for research at Shrewsbury Castle this year – which, by coincidence, marks the 950th anniversary of the castle’s first appearance in the historical record in 1069, when it withstood a siege by English and Welsh rebels against Norman rule.

A two-phase research programme is planned, subject to the granting of scheduled monument consent by Historic England, commencing in the spring with a new geophysical survey of the inner bailey by Tiger Geo. This will be followed in the summer by the first-ever research excavation in the inner bailey. This will be staffed by professional archaeologists, volunteers, and undergraduates from the University of Chester. It will be open to visitors and will run from July 22nd to August 2nd.

Nigel Baker

A HARVEST OF FINDS: LATEST NEWS FROM TREASURE INQUESTS IN SHROPSHIRE

Mr John Ellery, HM Senior Coroner for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, held a Treasure inquest in late January into the discovery of a series of archaeological finds in the county. All of these were reported via The British Museum’s Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) as a result of responsible metal detecting within Shropshire.

A stunning find: the Shropshire Marches Bronze Age ‘bulla’

The Shropshire Marches Bulla was recovered from an undisclosed findspot in Shropshire during May 2018 by a responsible metal detector user who wishes to remain anonymous.

The find was swiftly reported to the Finds Liaison Officer for Shropshire – Peter Reavill and to HM Coroner for Shropshire – Mr John Ellery as potential treasure. Information pertaining to the landowner and finder are being kept secret to protect the findspot and associated potential archaeological remains.

The finder of the bulla has described it as *“the very best find of their detecting career – it’s simply mind-blowing.”* The discovery of this nationally important artefact has the potential of being one of the most significant pieces of Bronze Age gold metalwork ever discovered from the British Isles.



The Bronze Age gold bulla found in Shropshire. © Portable Antiquities Scheme

The artefact is known as a bulla (from the Latin for bubble) which is a hollow pendant suspended from a long-decorated gold tube. It is crescent in shape and wedged in profile. All surfaces are decorated with incised repeated geometric patterns. The gold plates are cut with opposing lines by a craftsman whose skill would have been almost unequalled in the period.

The design is such that the play of light over the surface is what you see most, changing with angle and light moving and shimmering, dancing and ever different. This would have been enhanced in the period where it would have been stunning when viewed by firelight or in bright sunlight.

The form of pendant is amazingly rare, with only one other direct parallel known. That example was discovered in the 18th century whilst cutting a canal on the River Irwell, Manchester. It was sold in 1806 and its whereabouts is not known. Six other broadly similar bullae are known from the northern part of the island of Ireland and all these examples are dated to the late Bronze Age (1000 – 750 BC).

Research led by Dr Neil Wilkin (curator of Neolithic and Bronze Age Collections at the British Museum) has shown that the Shropshire Marches bulla is hollow. It appears to contain a soil-like material, although currently it is unclear whether this material was originally part of the bulla or merely present as a result of burial. More analysis is pending. The bulla has been analysed by scientists at the Museum and has shown to be largely formed of thin sheet containing approximately 80% gold, the remainder of the alloy being silver and copper. Such alloys are consistent with metalwork created during the latter part of the Bronze Age.

A multi-agency research bid to investigate the archaeological landscape from which the bulla comes is currently being written by Historic England, Portable Antiquities Scheme, The British Museum and archaeological staff at Shropshire Council, so that this stunning find can be rightly set within its landscape context.

More information and images on the bulla can be found here:

Bulla: <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/902916>

Image: <https://finds.org.uk/database/images/image/id/1037310/recordtype/artefacts>

Further treasure: Medieval gold signet ring from St Martin's

A medieval gold signet ring was discovered in the St Martin's Area of North Shropshire; the find was initially reported to Dr Susie White of National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

The ring is in stunning condition given that it was found in a ploughed field. The form of the ring fits with examples dated to the period AD 1350-1550 – many of which bear religious iconographic designs. They fell out of fashion and are rarely seen or constructed after AD 1550.

This example is very large and robust weighing almost 16 grams. The bezel (centre) of the ring depicts a medieval windmill known as a post-mill as it sits on three substantial legs.

The design is well cut and would have acted as a personal seal matrix for impressing into wax to close or authenticate documents. The sides of the ring are further decorated with religious images of St Christopher and John the Baptist. Inside the ring (on the reverse of the bezel) is the depiction of the Virgin Mary with the body of Christ in her arms. This hidden symbol would have been invisible when worn and would have been in direct contact with the finger of the ring's owner. Each image is believed to protect the wearer. In this example the use of St Christopher would have protected the wearer from sudden death being the patron saint of travellers.



The [British Museum](#) hope to acquire and display the find on behalf of the nation.

17th silver thimble from near Bridgnorth

Also reported on at the inquest was a decorated thimble that dates to the mid-17th century and is formed from rolled silver sheet.



The body of the thimble is ornately decorated by three rectangular panels of lattice grid through which passes an inverted V shaped band forming a zig-zag pattern. Around the lower edge of the thimble is a short inscription which reads: FEARE GOD depicted in block capitals.



Although the piece is not hallmarked there is a maker's mark – a capital R within a square shaped stamp on the inside edge.

The thimble can be dated to the 17th century on the basis of style, spelling and the form of the seriffed capital letters, a form popular in the 1650s. The motto can be paralleled against other later 17th century silver artefacts including thimbles and posy rings.

It's also noted that: *'thimbles with waffle-shaped indentations and religious mottoes are typical of the Commonwealth period (AD 1649-1660). Small objects such as rings and thimbles often bore improving mottoes such as 'Feare God', 'Labour is profitable' or Worcke is profitable.'*

Dora Thornton (former curator at the British Museum) has stated that silver thimbles, increasingly used by nobility and gentry, were often donated by women on the Parliamentary side to be melted down during the English Civil War. Further, she notes that thimbles of this date are now rare discoveries but that they were imported from Holland into England in large numbers (145,000 in one year).

[Shropshire Museum Service](#) and Northgate Museum, Bridgnorth hope to acquire the thimble for display locally.

Peter Reavill, Finds Liaison Officer (Shropshire and Herefordshire) for the Portable Antiquities Scheme

■ CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, BILLINGSLEY

Midway through last year, a mysterious hole opened up outside the former "Cape of Good Hope" Inn in Billingsley.

This turned out to have arisen from a shaft that had collapsed. As the area is known to have a long history of mining, the Coal Authority investigated and have made the collapse safe. The 1:2500 OS maps from 1881 and 1901 suggest that whatever purpose was originally planned for the shaft, it ended its life as a well for the pub.

Shaft collapses, whilst posing hazards to the public and headaches for landowners, do provide an opportunity to investigate archaeology. In this case, it was possible to make some observations from behind the safety fencing put in place by the Coal Authority. The first few feet of the shaft passed through compacted clay, laid on top of black coal measure shales. Shaft sections from Billingsley suggest that water-bearing sandstone is found at the base of this shale, at depth of 25 to 50 feet. My guess is that the clay was laid down when the Cape was built, to provide a firm base for a yard in front of the inn. The clay was overlaid with brick pavements or, in one place, dhustone setts. There is no trace of any lining to the shaft; bricks may have been recovered when it was initially filled. Either side of the shaft are horizontal pipes, likely to have been laid for services to the Cape.

Next to the shaft, there was a shallow, square depression. This may have been the base of a pump.

Berrow's Worcester Journal for Thursday 31 August 1843 recorded an inquest at the Cape of Good Hope on Thomas Garbett, "employed in repairing the pump at the Cape of Good Hope, and went down into the well for the purpose of changing the bucket; and when about seven yards from the bottom, the stay upon which deceased was standing, and which supports the pump trees, slipped out, and deceased fell and came in contact with another stay, a short distance below the one he was standing upon, which inflicted a slight cut on the back part of deceased's head and stunned him, rendering him incapable of supporting himself above the water, which was only four feet deep".

David Poyner

■ IN BRIEF

A research team from The University of Bristol have recently collaborated with the Church of All Saint's, Claverley to produce a trail of 8 churches in south-east Shropshire – details can be found here:

<https://www.charlemagne-icon.ac.uk/trail/claverley-church-trail/>

The British Film Institute have recently released a substantial archive of moving images from their "Britain on Film" series, which may be of interest to members- see <https://player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film/map>

➤ **NB The Council is not responsible for any statement made, or opinion expressed in the *Newsletter* of the Society.**