

Friends of Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies Newsletter

September 2016

Update from Heidi

I am delighted to be back from my maternity leave and providing an update to the Friends newsletter once again. We are always indebted to you for your overwhelming support for our service, so it is nice that I am able to give something back.

One of the key areas of support that we have received from the Friends over the past few months is a very generous donation of £2500 towards the service. This money will be used to purchase some digital photographic equipment, which we will be able to use at events and for producing reproductions of documents. This equipment has now been ordered so we will hopefully be able to benefit from the purchase very soon.

On Tuesday 19 July we were formally presented with our Accreditation certificate by the National Archives. Presented by National Archives Director of Research and Collections Valerie Johnson, this award recognises that Wolverhampton City Archives provides an excellent standard of customer service, preserves collections in line with national standards and is a robust, sustainable service which plans and delivers ongoing improvement. There are, however, areas for improvement highlighted in the report, and I will be perusing it in greater detail in order to highlight areas where we can develop further.



In my absence cataloguing seems to have been put on hold somewhat, so I am not really able to highlight any major new collections that are now available. However, we did recently receive two letters written by a man who is still the UK's longest-serving MP, Charles Pelham Villiers, and those are now available on the catalogue at reference DX-151.

There is currently a consultation underway to review our opening hours. The reason for the further change is an attempt to increase the number of hours the service is open to the public outside normal office hours. I should stress, however, that this is not a reduction in our opening hours, simply a rearrangement of the existing 21 hours. The proposed opening hours are as follows:

- Wednesday 4pm – 7pm
- Thursday – Saturday 10.30am – 4.30 pm

For those of you who are volunteers of the service, you are more than welcome to come and volunteer outside these opening hours, provided there is staff supervision. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding these proposals, please get in touch with me and I will forward them to the appropriate channels.

Since my last update, we now have some new sources of income. We have started to provide Dudley Archives service with Conservation expertise and support, and our Collections Officer, Jon Everall, visits their offices once a month to review their requirements. In addition, it won't have escaped your notice that we now have a collection of second hand books in the Reception, which have proved hugely popular. Thank you all very much for your donations to this cause – we were even able to add some of the material to our own collection as they filled in some gaps that we had.

Following the release of the Wolves' fixture list, we have now booked in dates for both the Local History Fair (29th October) and the Local History Symposium (18th February 2017), so please put these dates in your diary!

Last, and by no means least, we are working hard on the HLF-funded project with the Express & Star photographs. A sample set of about 2000 photographs has now been digitised and catalogued. Once we have ironed out some of the teething problems I hope to be in a position to show you what this collection might look like on the screen. I am very grateful for all the work that many of you have contributed as volunteers on this project so far. If anybody else would like to get involved with this project there are a number of other areas of work that need addressing so please do get in touch with me.

Accreditation award presentation

From Heidi's update you have learned that Valerie Johnson, from the National Archives, presented the Accreditation Award. The following is what Valerie said about the Wolverhampton Archives and the award.....

Thank you for inviting me here today – it's a real pleasure to be here.

For those of you who are less familiar with Archives Service Accreditation, I wanted briefly to explain what I'm here for!

Accreditation is the UK wide standard for archive services, developed in partnership with the archives sector and its stakeholders. Accredited archive services provide a high level of service to their users, preserve their collections in line with national standards, and are robust, sustainable services which plan and deliver ongoing improvement. So it is a real and genuine achievement.

We all know the context for local authority archives is tough. But here at Wolverhampton, the service has met challenges and adapted through periods of change – responding creatively and energetically to the demands placed upon it.

Wolverhampton Archive has at its core a strong foundation of good practice and is increasingly being seen as a key element of the city's cultural and community offer. I know that the service is recognised as a valuable asset within Wolverhampton Arts and Heritage and the city's wider cultural offer, with an important role to play in civic pride, cultural and economic growth, skills and learning, and inclusion. A great example of this is the ongoing project to digitise and catalogue the photographic collection of the Express and Star newspaper, which has seen the archive service working in partnership with local businesses, schools and universities, as well as with community groups and volunteers.

Wolverhampton Archives has also worked collaboratively with other Black Country archive services (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall) on projects such as Documenting the Workshop of the World – HLF funded – which saw more than 10,000 historic images charting the development of the Industrial Revolution in the Black Country digitised and made available. In this way it contributes to a greater understanding of the city's past and its important role regionally, nationally and internationally.

The archive's home, the Molineux Building, is a landmark building in the city. Recently restored and updated, it provides an excellent place to safeguard the city's important archival collections well into the future.

So, to the accreditation itself. When looking at Wolverhampton's application, the Accreditation assessors and panel praised the strong, resilient service and its committed staff and award-winning volunteers - for those of you who aren't aware, the service was awarded the Archives & Records Association Volunteering Award in 2012. The Accreditation assessors highlighted the very strong service setup and a bedrock of solid best practice and skills underpinning the care of the collections. They also highlighted the strength of the preservation and conservation work at the service, and the huge amount of work done to ensure the collection remains stable, packaged and stored appropriately.

Work to catalogue and describe the many varied collections has opened them up and made them available to a wide range of audiences, meeting a wide range of needs, near and far. As well as the critically important local Council records, the collections include the records of many prominent local businesses – such as Chubb Locks, Goodyear Tyres, Mander Brothers, Tarmac (now Carillion), Bilston Steelworks, Joseph Sankey and Sons, James Beattie Ltd and chartered accountants Smith, Son and Wilkie. As part of the Weller family collection the archives has one of the few surviving First World War white feather letters. The collections also reflect the diversity of the city, including material from the Wolverhampton Inter-Faith Group and the Wolverhampton LGBT History Project.

The service excels at both innovative and traditional activities and events. While digitisation and cataloguing projects have increased online access, regular events - such as today's - are held onsite, involving key stakeholders such as the Friends group, volunteers and depositors.

Indeed, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Friends and volunteers of Wolverhampton City Archives on behalf of the service, for all their hard work and support.

So, in conclusion, I'd like to stress how pleased The National Archives is to be able to recognise the dedication, expertise and hard work of all at Wolverhampton City Archives and I am delighted to be here to present the service with this certificate to mark its status as an Accredited archive service.

Well done and congratulations.

Valerie Johnson.

On behalf of all the Friends, thank you Heidi and all Archives staff, both past and present, and to all the volunteers who have helped to achieve this prestigious award.

Monthly Talks

Ann Eales gave Members two contrasting and thought-provoking talks in June and July.

June 2nd 2016 – Mrs Thomas Graham and the Suffrage Movement in Wolverhampton

Mrs Graham was the Vice-President of the Wolverhampton branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). The branch opened in 1904. The national President was Millicent Fawcett who was a moderate but tireless campaigner for human rights. Although not entitled to vote for the governance of her country, she was nevertheless appointed by the British Government to lead a Commission to South Africa to investigate conditions in the concentration camps created in the wake of the second Boer War. Following her hard-hitting report, conditions improved and by 1902 the death rate had dropped from 34% to 7%. Although the movement was firmly anti-war, once WW1 was embarked upon, the movement threw its energies into supporting the war effort and suspended its normal campaigning activities in the hope that women would be seen as worthy of enfranchisement, whether they achieved it or not.

Mrs Thomas Graham, like all the women of the NUWSS, was law-abiding, non-party and non-militant (so, not to be confused with members of the Suffragette movement) and the membership was mainly middle-class. Their annual reports from 1909 to 1915 (excepting 1911) are held at Wolverhampton City Archives. They cover items such as:

- Petitions
- Public Rights
- Asquith's Reform Bill (this was supposed to include a section relating to women's suffrage but the section was dropped on the advice of the Speaker of the House of Commons because it altered the original intent of the rest of the Bill)
- The White Slave Bill

Mrs Graham was the second wife of the co-founder of the Wolverhampton-based Express & Star newspaper, Thomas Graham, and Ann had to dig deep to trace her origins. She was born (1843) Clara Winifrede Gregory, the daughter of a master fishmonger in Streatham. In 1870, she married John Jones in Southwark. Sometime between then and 1878 she was widowed and went on to marry Arthur Digby in 1879 a man some 30 years older than herself. Arthur died in 1881 and Clara remained a widow until she married Thomas Graham in 1893, twelve months after the death of his first wife Margaret Bantock. Mrs Graham herself passed away in 1923 in Hampstead at the age of 80. She lived to see the right of suffrage extended to women aged 30 plus (and with a property qualification) in 1918, which put 8½ million more voters into the system. Sadly, her death came five years before the right was extended, in 1928, to all women aged 21 and over at which time the property qualification was also dropped. This gave 15 million women the vote.

George Barnsby, the well-known and deeply radical local historian, said of the NUWSS that it was the unspectacular slogging work of the movement that made the victory possible.

July 7th 2016 – Harry Nicholas Grove and Sergeant Freeman

Harry Nicholas Grove lived in Walsall and was the son of a dental practitioner. He was a dental practitioner himself but also appears to have been an early pioneer of prosthetics for facial disfigurement. He had a practice in Queen Square, Wolverhampton and came to Ann's attention for his role in the treatment of a terrible facial injury suffered by Sergeant Gilbert Freeman of the 21st Lancers during the famous 1898 military charge at the Battle of Omdurman in the Sudan.

Sergeant Freeman was born in Somerset and joined the 21st Lancers in 1886 and so was a veteran of twelve years service by the time of his injury at Omdurman. Newspaper articles, a little after the event, reported that a Dervish had sliced down Sergeant Freeman's face with a sword and severed most of his nose. There was also a lot of damage to the surrounding tissue. Freeman was invalided home to the Netley Royal Victoria Hospital in Southampton and whilst there, the Colonel who had commanded the Regiment during the charge, heard of a surgeon in Wolverhampton who was skilled in the treatment of facial disfigurements. This of course was Harry Nicholas Grove and he was duly commissioned to provide Sergeant Freeman with a prosthetic nose. The nose was made from vulcanite, a type of hardened rubber, and according to the newspapers, in spite of exceptional difficulties the disfigurement was completely concealed.

In February 1899, Sergeant Freeman set sail to rejoin his regiment in Cairo and remained with them until he was discharged in 1906, being deemed unfit for further active service.

A fellow 21st Lancers soldier, a young Lieutenant Winston Churchill, who was acting as a war correspondent during the battle of Omdurman, wrote that surely if anyone deserved a special medal it was Sergeant Freeman. A special medal was not forthcoming but he was presented with a gold watch by the people of his locality after his military discharge. He died in 1915, aged 51, of influenza and heart failure, an Army Pensioner.

Harry Nicholas Grove appears to have given up his work on restoring facial features: references to him after this time only cite his dentistry skills. As well as his other practices, he had also been a chemist but sold his chemist's practice in 1899. This seems to tie in with the time when he decided to concentrate on dentistry. Perhaps there were financial considerations to his decision or perhaps different pioneering techniques were coming into play. Amongst other work, he was involved in a scheme to provide dental care for school children at St Mary's Grammar School in Walsall. He died in 1924, aged 69, and was buried in the family grave at St Michael's Church in Rushall. His obituary is glowing but does not mention the skills and processes that gave Sergeant Gilbert Freeman a better life for his remaining years following the battle of Omdurman.

Thank you Jackie, for the very detailed write up on Ann's talks. I am sure all those who were unable to attend the meetings will appreciate this.

August 4th, 2016 - Friends Visit to St Peter's Church

The Friends group met at 11 o'clock inside the Church where Joyce Perry had coffee and some very nice biscuits waiting for us. Once we had refreshed ourselves, Tony Perry took us outside to see the Anglo Saxon High Cross, and Charles Wheeler's statue of Lady Wulfruna, holding her charter, on the church steps, of great interest to as you can see from the pictures.



We paused to look at the tablet commemorating Wulfrun's bequest in the south porch. Wulfrun apparently granted lands in or around Upper Arley, Eswich (probably Ashwood, Staffordshire, which was Haswic in Domesday), Bilston, Willenhall, Pelsall, Ogley Hay, Hatherton (near Cannock), Kinvaston (near Penkridge) Featherstone, and two villages called Hilton—one near Ogley and the other by Featherstone.

Tony explained that the church was originally dedicated to St Mary and this was still the dedication at the Domesday survey of 1086. It was switched to St Peter in the mid-12th century.

Tony pointed out that the font has panels and explained that two of these recall St Peter's union with Windsor. One shows St Anthony, the patron Saint of Windsor and one shows King Edward IV who united the deaneries of Wolverhampton and Windsor.



We were interested by the medieval pulpit in the nave of the church. It is one of the best preserved of its period, we learned, with a full set of stone steps, and an intact carved lion on the balustrade of the pulpit. Tony told us the story of a sermon interruption. The preacher descended from the pulpit and went up to the Gallery to stop a schoolboy sliding along a bench, returned and carried on where he had left off.



St. Peter's church suffered considerable damage at the hands of Parliamentary soldiers in 1642. Much worse was the attack on the chapter house by royalist soldiers under Colonel Leveson, which, very sadly, resulted in the loss of all its records.

We admired the statue by Hubert le Sueur (the statue of Charles I in Trafalgar Square is by him) of Vice Admiral Sir Richard Leveson (1570-1605) of Lilleshall, who served in the Spanish Armada campaign. It had formed part of an elaborate memorial, but when the chancel was destroyed by Cromwell's troops in 1645, the statue was to be melted down for cannon. Lady Leveson is said to have bribed the officer in charge of the troops with £40, and the statue was hidden until the Restoration, then returned.

In the Memorial Chapel we inspected the large monument to Colonel John Lane who helped Charles II in his escape to France after the Battle of Worcester.

Among many interesting items we also noted the three Bromsgrove Guild windows and the plaque listing the Deans. We note that there was a link with Christopher Wren, of St Pauls fame and the Wrens who were Deans and lived at The Deanery House, sadly demolished in the 1920s.

Penny Smith organised a collection, and handed the monies to Tony. Members seem to have found the visit interesting and we are very grateful to Tony and Joyce.

Thank you Ann for your report on our visit to St. Peter's. If any Friends have not previously visited this jewel in Wolverhampton's crown perhaps you will now be inspired to do so. You would not be disappointed.

Could you write a few words about a forthcoming talk for inclusion in a future newsletter? Here is your chance to get involved and do a little more for the Friends who may have missed a talk. Offers please, to Penny. Thanks in advance. I will leave your name out of the newsletter if you prefer to remain anonymous.

Penn Local History Fair

You will recall from the last newsletter that a display board has been purchased to promote FWA and the first outing was to be at Penn Local History Fair on 10th/11th June. The event was a great success with the most exhibitors and greatest number of visitors since the fair began. Many exhibitors were new to the event and if you have never been before or it is some time since you last attended, please look out for the Fair in 2017.



AGM Notice

Our AGM will be held on Thursday 6th October at 11.00. Please try to attend. The formal part of the AGM business will be dealt with first including election of Committee members and various reports. This will be followed by a updates on the Queen Street project and the Express and Star Photographic project, a short film based on Isaac Taylor's Map of Wolverhampton and a presentation by Jon Elliott from ARA.

Committee Nominations

Many of this year's committee members have expressed a willingness to continue for the forthcoming year however there will be a couple of vacancies on the committee. Would you be interested in joining the committee and taking a more active role within the Friends?

Committee meetings are held approximately six times each year (alternate months) and usually straight after a normal monthly meeting. Not all committee members have responsibilities within the group but you might consider joining with a view to assisting later.

Membership Renewals

Our Friends membership year runs from the 1st September each year and renewal forms will be sent out shortly by email. The annual fee remains unchanged at £8. We do hope you will renew and support your Archives.

Programme News for the remainder of 2016

1st September

Thomas Clarke: a short and troubled life. The story of a 1st World War 'boy soldier' - presented by Chris Twiggs (winner of the 2016 Local History Symposium)

6th October

A.G.M. followed by "Show & Tell" – please bring something along

3rd November

Unseen Victorian Wolverhampton: the townscape of 140 years ago - presented by Norman Keech

1st December

"What was this for?" – an entertaining quiz to identify the purpose of some unusual objects from the past conducted by Robert McFall

Speakers for the Future

We are always keen to hear of new speakers so if you attend any other groups and hear talks that you think may be of interest to our Friends, please obtain contact details for our Programme Planners to consider. Email details please to m.bailey1234@btinternet.com

Local History Fair

Wolverhampton Archives Local History Fair is back again on 29th October. Friends will be providing refreshments for sale and your help would be appreciated. Can you make a cake for the event? Are you able to help serve in our “tea room”?

If you can help would you kindly please contact Ann Eales who will be organising a timetable for helpers. Even if you can only help for a couple of hours this would be appreciated.

Local History Symposium 2017

The date has now been set as 18th February 2017 and details of some interesting planned additions will follow in due course. Watch this space!

Share Your Discoveries

Other members of the Friends would like to learn about your research or interests. Would you like to write one or two paragraphs regarding your research to share discoveries?

Please email Penny with any article you would like to include in a future newsletter. (pennyannsmith@aol.com).

Staffordshire 1916 – 1918 Appeals Touring Exhibition

Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive and Heritage Service, along with a dedicated group of volunteers have opened access to one of its hidden gems, the Mid-Staffordshire Military Appeal Tribunal records.

In the centenary since the creation of this rare collection, this touring exhibition offers the opportunity to learn more about the War in Staffordshire and its communities, helping us to understand the stresses and strains on work and family life during the “Great War”.

To find out more visit <https://staffsappeals1918.wordpress.com> or visit the touring exhibition when it visits two places local to Wolverhampton: Monday 12th to Friday 30th September at Perton Library or Monday 5th to Friday 30th December at Codsall Library.

250th Anniversary

An exhibition has been put together to mark the 250th anniversary of work starting on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal and the 300th anniversary of the birth of the canal’s engineer/supervisor James Brindley. The Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre, based in the former goods shed at the former Tettenhall Station, Meadow View, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, have it on display on Sundays 10am-4pm. The centre is also close to the canal which links the Trent and Mersey Canal (started in Stoke-on-Trent in the same year – 1766) at Great Haywood, near Stafford, to the River Severn at Stourport.

As well as the exhibition the centre is also thinking of organising an event to mark the ‘official’ start of the canal.



Compton Lock

Like most building projects, work actually started long before any 'official' start or sod-cutting etc with thinking about the route to be taken (very similar to one suggested by Wolverhampton doctor Thomas Congreve half a century earlier).

Brindley usually did this on horseback, kept the details in his head, and then relayed them to his assistants.

The levelling book of the under clerk of works shows a "levelling survey from a stake at Autherley Moores towards the Trent began 16th July, 1766" and he "did levelling at Tettenhall with Samuel Simcock 22nd July."

However, details of any official first sod cutting ceremony are absent unlike for the Trent and Mersey where Josiah Wedgwood cut the first sod, Brindley another and local dignitaries joined in with more and wheeled barrows of them away. This was followed by roasting a whole sheep in Burslem Market Place to distribute to the poor Potters and a bonfire in front of Josiah Wedgwood's Burslem House.

Quite a few later accounts suggest that the 'real' start was on the lock at Compton on September 1, 1766 – and that this became the template lock for the rest of Brindley's locks on the canal system.

The Birmingham Gazette of the following week (September 8) carries notice of a meeting to be held that month "as work on the canal has begun" but was there a sod-cutting ceremony/event – or did they just get on with it?

However, another mystery is where the water for the canal came from as the mill owners along the Smestow Brook wanted to be sure 'their' water – needed to power about 30 mills along its length – would not be 'stolen'.

Any possible answers would be gratefully received by Jim Barrow (email- jimdrudge@aol.com telephone 01902 831199 (home) or 07970 463434 (mobile) or by mail to 266, Henwood Road, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, WV6 8NZ.

Lean Times and Hidden Gold: By Royal Appointment

Hands up all who remember milk being delivered to your residence by Pony and Trap, in a churn, to be measured out into your own jug at the doorstep!

I guess that the last dairymaid/woman to do this in Wolverhampton was Miss "Poppy" Pope. She lived and farmed alongside her bachelor brother, Fred Pope, at their farm at the corner of Wergs Road and Keepers Lane. She was still doing this at the end of the War (1945).

I was fortunate enough to live near and to keep my pony on the farm as companion to their trap pony and thus I had free range over the farm and its fields. It was mixed farming. Very mixed! Very subsistent! - potatoes, swedes, corn, about twenty cows, two Shire horses to plough, and a steam traction engine, with big wheels and a tall chimney, which was fired up at harvest time to power the belt driven threshing machine.

They had a Pasteurising plant for the milk which was operated by a huge Coke/Coal fired boiler outside in the yard. Bliss during the winter, and to be avoided in summer. Some milk enjoyed the luxury of being put into bottles! The daily milk round was very local but did extend into Danescourt Road where lived, as I discovered after the end of the war, a very prestigious customer. Whether "She" had her milk out of the churn or by bottle I do not know.

There were also four pigs [this was a joint venture in which we participated with Fred and Poppy Pope in a "Pig Club" (A wartime government scheme whereby, if you kept and tended your own pig/s on a daily basis you were allowed to keep the proceeds of your labours)]. Our "club" invested in a new piglet every three months. – Result – by rotation, one mature pig went to slaughter each quarter year and half of it arrived at each household, thus we enjoyed extra Pork, Bacon and Lard in excess of our rations!

The farm extended towards Tettenhall as far as the golf course (now Cemetery Lane) from where it was possible to see across more grassland to Danescourt Road and Danescourt House with its neat garden and, on occasional summer days, I would see an old lady sitting out on the lawn in a deckchair.

Also, at the Wergs, just beyond Wergs Hall Road and opposite to the post office and either side of the entrance to Yew Tree Lane was on the far side, the forge and the farrier who shod the horses, and on the Tettenhall side were some riding stables kept by Miss Ann Simkin and Miss Anne Parker. In the little triangle of land at the mouth of the lane was the standing remains of the animal pound. All now gone.

I would often ride out with these two much older girls and one of our favourite sorties was as far as Wrottesley "Army Camp". And then onwards to the airfield which is now Perton estate and Sainsbury's.

The main Guardhouse entrance to the Camp was where the Nursing home now stands just inside the wall when, now days, you have turned off the main road at the traffic lights towards Perton. There did not seem to be any security and we kids were just waved through and made thoroughly welcome.

This route had several attractions; the long gallop around the perimeter of the airfield (it had two long runways), the tank ramps within the army camp which were used to service the underside of the tanks because we could make the ponies walk up and then jump off the end, and also (for the girls) the soldiers.

Not just ordinary soldiers, these were friendly foreign soldiers. As Germany advanced across Europe some escaping remnants of both the Polish and the Dutch Armies were accommodated at Wroottesley. I later came to own a very good Polish horse which was foaled at Wroottesley and had his army number branded on his neck.

I do not know the names or status of the Polish regiment/s or even if they were a regiment; however the Dutch contingent were definitely a select group. The Dutch equivalent of our Guards/ Household Cavalry.

Why were they here in this particular part of England?

Let me give you a few more clues. Why were there so many small airfields around this area (Perton, Pendeford, Halfpenny Green, Penkridge, Cosford etc.)? They could not all be to service Boulton & Paul's production. Why was there an Ack Ack battery of three guns at the far end of Pope's Lane – less than 800 yards from Danescourt Road? What were they guarding? Was the stick of bombs which fell across the playing fields between the Cricket Club and Wergs Road (one crater still can be seen) just a happenchance?

One summer day after the War's end, Father, who was one of the three Section Commanders for the NFS in Wolverhampton, telephoned home and told my mother to take me onto Wergs Road at a particular time and to watch the passing vehicles.

She did. I did. We saw a convoy of three heavily laden Dutch Army Lorries pass slowly by heading towards Wolverhampton. Escort vehicles back and front. Each lorry had two soldiers sitting on top. Each held a Machine Gun at the ready.

On his return Father told us that he had been put on standby alert in case of an incident because the lorries were carrying the Dutch Gold Reserves on their return home. They had been buried at Wroottesley during the war. The crack Dutch Troops had been guarding them and that the little old lady in the deckchair was Queen Wilhelmina, the Dutch Queen, who had been sitting on top of Her Nation's Gold from the vantage point of the Court of the Danes - and she seemingly thrived on "Poppy" Pope's milk even if it was not 'Gold Top'.

Peter Hudson

Thank you, Jim and Peter, for these very interesting items.

Do you have a story or research to share with our members?

Thank you everyone who has contributed to this newsletter. Without your contributions this newsletter would not be of as much interest to our members.

The next newsletter will be published towards the end of November with a closing date for contributions of 10th November. Can you make a contribution towards the next one? Please email Penny at pennyannsmith@aol.com – thanks in advance.

Friends of Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies Newsletter

June 2016

Meeting on 5th May

Stuart Williams, an Egyptologist, who has worked at the Art Gallery and is currently involved with the Queen Street Project as Community Engagement Officer, presented a talk entitled "Egypt Through Victorian Eyes". Stuart is clearly very passionate and extremely knowledgeable about his subject; he gave us an entertaining and informative talk explaining how Victorian artists had painted their interpretation of Egypt. It was interesting to learn that many did not visit Egypt but the British Museum from where they obtained their idea of the country. We heard about the iconology included in the paintings and how they have, in many cases misled the uninitiated. It was an excellent talk.

Look out for Stuart on next year's programme as he has promised to come back. One for the diary!

Could you write a few words about a forthcoming talk for inclusion in a future newsletter? Here is your chance to get involved and do a little more for the Friends who may have missed a talk. Offers please, to Penny. Thanks in advance. I will leave your name out of the newsletter if you prefer to remain anonymous.

Forthcoming Meetings

2nd June – This is a change to the published programme: Ann Eales is to speak to us about Mrs Thomas Graham and the Suffrage Movement in Wolverhampton. This promises to be an extremely interesting talk. Please come along, support Ann and your Friends group, and learn about what Mrs Graham got up to!

7th July – Ann Eales will entertain us with her talk on Harry Nicholas & Sergeant Freeman. Do not forget that your friends are most welcome to join us at any meeting for a small charge of £2 each.

4th August – Join the Friends for a tour of St. Peter's Church. Meet 11 a.m. at the Lych Gate outside the church. Our guides are Tony & Joyce Perry. A suggested donation of £2 per person (more if you wish) to St. Peter's Church please.

Programme News for 2016/2017

Another exciting programme of talks is planned with the booking of speakers currently in progress. We can promise the return of several very popular speakers, together with a few new ones who have been very highly recommended. Watch this space!

Speakers for the Future

We are always keen to hear of new speakers so if you attend any other groups and hear talks that you think may be of interest to our Friends, please obtain contact details for our Programme Planners to consider. Email details please to m.bailey1234@btinternet.com

Express & Star Photo Archive Project - Update

Scanning trial

In April the photographs in the Industry Folder were sent to City Archives where staff are beginning cataloguing ahead of a digitisation trial. There are more than 2,600 images, which Steph, a trusted history student at Wolverhampton University, is beginning to catalogue.

Once this work is completed, the images will be passed to a specialist firm to scan. The resulting images will be the first to go into the database for the archive.

The digital images will be useful for the IT experts to plan the technical part of the project. All aspects of the process have also been tested now for the first time – the planning needed by the editorial dept. at the Express & Star, understanding how the photos need to be prepared, etc.

The Project

These are the main points:

The stage 2 bid for the full funding for the project will be submitted in late August.

The panel has a meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund in June

The volunteer group is focussing on photographs in the three main areas to be digitised, based on 700 public surveys: landscape, industry and the war years.

Tricolor is completing their community work report for the HLF bid. As stated before, their findings will ensure as many local people as possible are able to make use of the collection. Tricolor successfully bid for a separate tender to do marketing and promotion planning for the project. This is a smaller piece of work, which will be helpful for the HLF to understand how local people will be informed about the archive.

IT consultants: Orange Leaf were appointed earlier this year and will put together a blueprint for how the photos will be stored digitally and presented via the website.

Queen Street Project – Update

There is now a formal, HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) approved steering group in respect of the project – The Queen Street Gateway Townscape Heritage Partnership. This comprises groups representing

- architecture,
- the regeneration and preservation of historic buildings,
- cultural and heritage interests (the Friends group being among them),
- the improvement of business districts,
- further and higher education (the City of Wolverhampton College and the University of Wolverhampton) and
- the City Council.

The life of the project is expected to be about five years.

The project is now fully funded and moving into the stage where owners commission independent professionals to draw up a schedule of required work. The professionals appointed must fulfil HLF expectations regarding the knowledge and skill sets needed to restore and repair buildings of historical nature and interest. From the point of view of the City Archives and its Friends, the main work on the history of the street was completed about 12 months ago and since then several presentations have taken place around the City to share the research with the Community. The original research has been broadened out into 2 further areas of interest:

- University of Wolverhampton Students working towards degrees in ‘Architecture and the Built Environment’ have designed and constructed an excellent model of Queen Street and have agreed to provide flat-pack versions of the buildings for youngsters to reconstruct on a special event at the Art Gallery;
- The Council’s Community Engagement Officer attached to the Project is currently gathering volunteers to dig a little deeper into some aspects of the original historical research.

The City Council, on behalf of the Partnership group, has published a Queen Street booklet detailing the intent and expectations of the project plus a brief history pulled together from the original research by the Friends of the Archives. These booklets are free and available from the City Archives, the Art Gallery and several other venues around the town.

Local History Symposium 2017

The Friends are pleased to report that the planning for next year’s Symposium is well under way and we are hopeful that it will return to the Archives with several exciting new additions. Hopefully further details will be included in the next newsletter.

Share Your Discoveries

Other members of the Friends would like to learn about your research or interests. Would you like to write one or two paragraphs regarding your research to share discoveries?

Perhaps you would like others to look out for a certain item or topic as they research records that may help you. Maybe you are researching Guy Motors or Wightwick Manor: if another person notices a reference to your interest they could let you know. Would this help you?

Please email Penny with any article you would like to include in a future newsletter. (pennyannsmith@aol.com). To start this off

A Friends' Interest

I am also a member of Birmingham & Midland Society of Genealogy & Heraldry (BMSGH). At a meeting of BMSGH about four years ago another member, Viv Turner, gave a talk about her lifelong friendship with a children's author. During her talk Viv mentioned that this particular author had been born in my home town of Hastings and the author's father had a book shop there. To cut a long story very short, this led to my discovery of a Missionary Family which has, in turn, led to further research on missionaries and in particular, those connected with The London Missionary Society. I hope to share the details of this research with you all in the future but, in the meantime, if anyone comes across any reference to missionaries in Wolverhampton, or the wider area, I would be pleased if you would make a note of where I can follow up on this. Please email me – pennyannsmith@aol.com Thank you.

Do you have a story to share with our members?

Penn Local History Fair

At the last Committee meeting it was agreed to purchase a display board for the promoting of FWA. The first outing for the board will be to the Penn Local History Fair to be held at the United Reform Church, Penn Road, on Friday and Saturday 10th/11th June. Opening hours: Friday 10.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Saturday 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Please come and see FWA there if you can. Other displays will include the Black Country Living Museum, Guy Motors, Chubb, Sedgley Local History Society, BMSGH, Old Time Cinema, Schools, Hospitals, Industry & Archaeology, and much, much more.

The board will be on display at our next meeting at the Archives on Thursday 2nd June.