



St Helen's Church
Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Heritage Project eNews

No. 5 July 2018



Awards Success

On Thursday 19th July members of our Heritage team attended the Leicestershire and Rutland Heritage Awards evening at the Century Theatre, Coalville.

We received a 'highly commended' certificate in the 'Attracting New Audiences' category with our 'Finding the Vaults' project. St Helen's burial records showed many burials in the vaults but we had no idea of just how many vaults we had, or even where the entrance might be. The project sought to answer these questions by the use of ground penetrating radar. In the summer of 2017, experts from Mercian Archaeology led interested locals through the process and reported their findings to a packed audience in the church later in the year...we found the vaults!



Our entry in the 'Best Heritage Project over £750' brought us even greater success, winning the top award for our project to create a new multi-purpose centre to fit the needs of the church, local community, heritage visitors and hirers.

We were particularly delighted to scoop the top award, 'Heritage Group of the Year'.

Our Chair, Susan Boardman-Weston, was interviewed by Dave Andrews of BBC Radio Leicester for his Sunday programme, which will be on air between 12 noon and 3 pm on Sunday 22nd July.

Heritage Project Chair, Susan Boardman-Weston, with the trophy for 'Heritage Group of the Year'



Above: Llynda & Susan on stage with the plaque for Best Project over £750.



Left: Members of the team on stage with the trophy for Heritage Group of the Year.

Our new season of Heritage Talks 2018 – 2019

After a highly successful first season last winter, we're very happy to announce our new season of Heritage Talks, which will take place at 7.30pm on the first Monday of each month in St Helen's Community Heritage Centre. We have a fantastic line up for those winter Monday evenings. Don't forget to put the dates in your diary to avoid disappointment.

Entry to each talk costs just £3 and includes light refreshments.

October 1st Peter Rose Fiddle or Not!

In the seventeenth century, a gallery was erected at the west end of the church, where musicians played for services. With this in mind, Peter Rose talks about the history of the violin with musical examples. Peter has over 50 years experience of playing and teaching the violin. He now runs a successful violin shop in Melbourne

November 5th Wendy Freer The Grace Dieu Priory Heritage drama project

Local historian and film maker, Wendy Freer, has worked with our Heritage Officer to create a film about the historic characters of St Helen's. Tonight she talks about another local project. The evening will include a showing of her film, 'The Unquiet Grave'.

December 3rd Rebecca Gregory Layers of Leicestershire: uncovering the past through a thousand years of place-names

Dr Gregory is a lecturer in English Language and Linguistics at Glasgow University, who is coming to talk to us about the fascinating history of local place names.

January 7th Peter Liddle The Archaeology of the English Civil War in Leicestershire

Recent archaeological work has revealed evidence of the Civil War sieges at Leicester and Ashby de la Zouch. Peter Liddle returns to St Helen's to talk about these in the context of the history of the Civil War in the East Midlands. Peter has worked in Leicestershire Archaeology for over 45 years as an excavator, survey officer, museum curator, community archaeologist and head of the County's archaeological team.

February 4th Moira Ackers Richard Parker and the Burton Alabaster Men

Moira Ackers is a member of the Church Monuments Society. Moira's talk focuses on our fine sixteenth century alabaster monuments and the people who designed and made them.

March 4th St Helen's Research Team Hot off the press!

Over the past few years a dedicated team of researchers has been working to discover more about St Helen's, its people represented in the monuments, and the history of the site on which it stands. As our Heritage Lottery-funded project reaches its conclusion, members of the Research Team bring us up to date with their findings.

The next meeting of the Research Group is **Tuesday 21st August at 10.30 am**, in the Hildersham Room. If you are interested in joining us, either come along on the day or contact Julie Starkey (details on final page)

Heritage Project News, from our Heritage Officer, Llynda Baugh

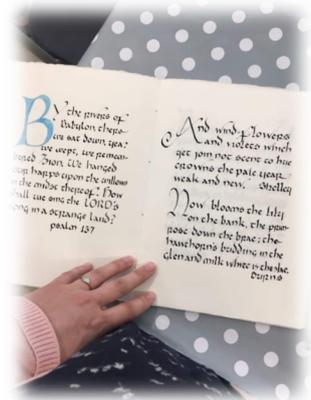
Arts Festival events

We always take part in the Ashby Arts Festival and this year, we thought we would do something a little different and hold workshops. Our choices were based around the crafts that people who attended the church would have practised many years ago - and probably still do!



We began with hand-sewn patchwork, which was led by Rev Mary, herself a fantastic quilt maker.

Next was Calligraphy, which was taught by Sheila who is currently updating our Peal book, followed by mono-printing with Mo Clark, who is a keen printer. Not leaving the children out, we held a session of photography for children which took



place inside and outside the church.

A week later, Sheila came back and showed us how to create a letter using gold leaf and colouring - our own little piece of Peal Book.



The First Fifty exhibition , set against the backdrop of the magnificent table tomb in our Hastings Chapel

In the church, we had the wonderful First Fifty Exhibition of the first volunteer soldiers to arrive in France in 1914. This has been created by the Hero Project and each soldier has been made by an artist or a school. Llynda had made Sam Boot - the youngest soldier (aged just 17) and first to be killed.

Family Archaeology Day

On 18th July, we welcomed children and their parents and carers to the Heritage Centre for the first of our summer holiday activities. They took part in mini archaeological digs and decorated our woolly mammoth, which was cleverly designed and created by Llynda and Jill and enthusiastically finished off by our young visitors.



Events coming up

Monday 23rd July - Understanding the Anglo-Saxon and Romanesque carvings of Leicestershire and Rutland, featuring Breedon Church.

This year's Festival of Archaeology is taking place between 14th-29th July, with events happening all over Leicestershire. As part of it, Bob Trubshaw will be coming to the Heritage Centre to give a Festival of Archaeology Talk on 23rd July at 7.30 pm

Bob will be looking at a selection of the sculptures in Leicestershire and Rutland from the early ninth to late twelfth centuries. These carvings offer surprising insights into the life and times - including possible puns on words used in the liturgy - and include two of the earliest so-called 'Green Men' in England.

Pay on the door. Just £3 per person.



Saturday 28th July - Medieval Graffiti Day

A joint event with Ashby Castle. The day includes a talk on medieval graffiti, recording graffiti in the church and finding graffiti at the castle. Lunch is included in the day, which runs from 10.30am until 4.00pm and costs £20. Booking is essential, via our website or in person at the office in the Heritage Centre. www.sthelensheritage.co.uk

Tuesday 31st July - Volunteer visit to Polesworth Abbey

Llynda has organised an afternoon out for our Heritage volunteers. Polesworth Abbey has a Gatehouse dating from 1370 and a fascinating church building which includes the 12th century shrine of St Editha. We aim to arrive at the Abbey at 1.30 pm for a tour, followed by tea and cake. Contact Llynda if you are a Heritage Project volunteer, would like to go and haven't signed up yet.



Polesworth Abbey Gatehouse

School holiday family events - every Wednesday

We also have lots of fun family events planned for Wednesdays throughout the school holiday.

Events are from 10.30am-3.30pm and are FREE! Just turn up!

25th July	Weaving Day	Create your own woven wonders
1st August	Clay Day	Sculpt and shape your own clay artefact
8th August	Printing Day	Potato, paint and paper masterpieces
15th August	Bell Day	Make your own bells to take home
22nd August	More Archaeology	Find and record real artefacts

A plea to our volunteers: we still need people to help on the activity days, both in the kitchen and hands on with activities. No prior knowledge necessary.

Wednesday 15th August - an Open Evening of Bells - 7-9 pm

Come see and hear our 10 church bells rung. Hear our hand bells, see our stunning Peal Book and have a go at ringing!



Research update

Ian Scruton has been researching the stories behind the monuments in the Hastings Chapel. Here are three pieces from him, bringing to life the people behind the monuments.

THE HASTINGS FAMILY ARCHIVES

The story of the Hastings family has been interwoven with that of St Helen's since the 1st Lord Hastings rebuilt the church in the 1470s. The family's archives are therefore a valuable source for researching the history of St Helen's but they were sold off with the rest of the Hastings family's assets and are now in California. However, it is still possible to refer to some of the material nearer to hand.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission published four volumes of extracts from the Hastings archives. These include a letter written by Lord Burghley to the Puritan Earl's brother after the Earl's death in York in 1595: "The Queen commanded me to understand of the Countess your sister how she intended to proceed for the burial of your brother or the administration of his goods. I find her no way disposed to intermeddle herewith, so the burial is deferred, to the dishonour of the house and discomfort of all his friends".

Also included are extracts from 17th century Churchwardens' and Overseers of the Poor's accounts, which contain a wealth of local information. Generally speaking, however, there is little about St Helen's in the four volumes.

In the 1980s the complete correspondence section of the archives for the period 1477 to 1828 was copied on to 39 reels of microfilm. These cover the whole range of the life of the Hastings family and range from letters from monarchs from Henry VIII onwards to domestic matters.



Coat of Arms from the monument to the 7th Earl

At the moment I am looking at the letters of the 7th Earl of Huntingdon. In the late 17th century he carried out major works in the Chancel of St Helen's. He then renovated the alabaster chest tomb in the Hastings Chapel, moved it against the wall (it was moved back to a central position in the late 19th century) and mounted a monument on the wall above it with the coats of arms of Francis Hastings and his wife, Katherine Pole, (the people on the chest tomb). Finally, he commissioned Grinling Gibbons to carve his own monument, which is now also in the Hastings Chapel.

The epitaph on the monument lists the public offices given to the Earl by Charles II and James II but fails to mention that they were taken away by William of Orange after the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. The Hastings family found themselves in almost perpetual poverty; the 7th Earl's father even spent time in the Fleet debtors' prison. It was only after his marriage to the daughter of a rich merchant that the 7th Earl had money to spend on St Helen's.

THE HUNTINGDON MONUMENTS - the fate of the Poles

The Hastings family were created Earls of Huntingdon by Henry VIII in 1529 and St Helen's contains a number of their memorials. But what are the stories of the people who are commemorated?



The oldest monument in the Hastings Chapel is the chest tomb of Francis Hastings, 2nd Earl of Huntingdon, and his wife, Katherine Pole. They were married in 1532. Katherine was a member of the Plantagenet royal family defeated by Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth. Margaret Pole, daughter of the Duke of Clarence (Edward IV's and Richard III's brother) was Katherine's grandmother. The Pole family were to be directly affected by the religious turmoil of the Tudor period.

In 1533 Henry VIII divorced Katherine of Aragon. The following year he broke away from the Catholic Church and set up the Church of England with himself at its head. Reginald Pole, Katherine's uncle, was a prominent theologian who was studying in Italy at the time. He wrote a book, "Defence of the Unity of the Church", which he sent to King Henry in May 1536. This not only deplored the break from Rome but was also personally critical of Henry. The first the Pole family in England knew about it was when Margaret Pole was summoned to hear Henry read her extracts from the book.

In December 1536 the Pope made Reginald Pole a Cardinal and, shortly afterwards, Papal Legate to England with the aim of restoring the country to the Catholic faith. Henry VIII attempted unsuccessfully to have Reginald assassinated but the rest of the Pole family were within his reach. In November 1538 Henry Pole (Katherine's brother), her father, Lord Montague, together with Margaret Pole, were imprisoned in the Tower of London. Lord Montague was soon tried and executed but Margaret was detained in the Tower until May 1541 when, at the age of 67, she was executed without trial.

Cardinal Pole remained in exile and in 1549 failed by only two votes to be elected Pope. In 1553 the Catholic Mary (daughter of Katherine of Aragon) became Queen and Katherine was able to make contact with her uncle again. Cardinal Pole returned to England and became godfather to Walter Hastings, Francis' and Katherine's youngest son. In 1555 Cardinal Pole became Queen Mary's Archbishop of Canterbury. He was to die in 1558, only a few hours after Mary herself. Elizabeth then became Queen and England was Protestant again.

Francis Hastings died on 20th June 1560 (not 1561 as shown on his tomb) and was succeeded by his son, Henry, the "Puritan Earl". The chest tomb was carved by Richard Parker of Burton on Trent, one of the leading alabaster carvers of the time. Parker died in 1570 and the date of Katherine's death, 23rd September 1576, was subsequently added to the tomb.

THE HUNTINGDON MONUMENTS - the story of the 'nine days Queen'

The man on the alabaster chest tomb in the Hastings Chapel is Francis Hastings, 2nd Earl of Huntingdon. He was a leading figure in the plot to put Lady Jane Grey (the "nine days' Queen") on the throne.



When Henry VIII died in 1547, he was succeeded by his son, Edward VI. As Edward was only 9, a Royal Council was set up to govern the country. John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland, eventually became its leader and Francis Hastings was a close ally of his.

Towards the end of 1552, Edward VI's health started to deteriorate and it became clear that he would not live long. In accordance with Henry VIII's will he would be succeeded by Princess Mary, who was

still a Catholic.

In an attempt to retain his role as the power behind the throne the Duke of Northumberland arranged a triple wedding to forge an alliance of leading Protestant families. On 25th May 1553 his son, Guilford Dudley, married Lady Jane Grey, his daughter, Katherine Dudley married Francis's son, Henry Hastings, and Katherine Grey married Lord Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke's heir. By then Edward VI was too ill to attend the wedding.

The Duke of Northumberland then persuaded Edward VI to exclude his half-sisters, Princess Mary and Princess Elizabeth, from the succession - their mothers Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn were considered to be illegitimate. This made the Greys, the family of Henry VIII's sister Mary, next in line to the throne.

Edward VI died on 6th July and the Duke of Northumberland proclaimed the young Lady Jane Grey as Queen. The Duke of Northumberland and the Earl of Huntingdon set off to detain Princess Mary but there was little support for their cause and many of their troops deserted. They then transferred their allegiance to Mary and proclaimed that they had returned to the Catholic faith. Both were imprisoned in the Tower of London. As the ringleader, the Duke of Northumberland was executed but the Earl of Huntingdon was eventually released.

Trent Valley Church Heritage Trail

As part of Church Tourism Week, six local churches - including St Helen's - are opening their doors on **Saturday 28th July from 1pm to 4.30pm**, for the Trent Valley Church Heritage Trail.

Drive, cycle or walk the ten-mile circuit between each church – or simply visit one or two that you've never seen before.

Prayer, protest and power

The Trent Valley, situated between Derbyshire and Leicestershire, was dominated by the local landed gentry until the nineteenth century. Local families such as the Hastings, Shirleys, Beaumonts and Harpurs established their estates, including Calke Abbey, Coleorton and Staunton Harold, and were the patrons of their local churches.

Through their patronage, these families shaped local churches to display their power, to reflect their religious views, and to be a place of worship. Stepping into each church, you'll see evidence of prayer, protest and power as you discover the history and heritage of local churches.

Churches taking part are: St Michael & St Mary's, Melbourne; St Mary & St Hardulphs, Breedon; Holy Trinity, Staunton Harold; St Helen's, Ashby; St George's, Ticknall; St Giles, Calke Abbey.

All the churches will be open and manned during the afternoon and many, including St Helen's, will be serving refreshments.

This is a joint event in partnership with The Churches Conservation Trust, St Helen's Heritage Project and The National Trust.



New Leaflets in Church

To complement our Vizbox tours, Llynda and her team have produced a series of three full colour leaflets, which are available from the Welcome Desk just inside the church door. The leaflets are FREE and are a useful guide to the Church, its monuments and windows.



Fancy a guided tour of St Helen's?

Two new tour guides have been training recently, so we now have four church tour guides, keen to give you fascinating insights into our lovely building.

If you are part of a group which would like a guided tour of St Helen's, please contact Llynda.

Find out about our Project

We have a wonderful website:

www.sthelensheritage.co.uk

and a Facebook page:

St Helen's Heritage Ashby de la Zouch

Where you can keep up to date with all our news & events

Children's costumes

An exciting recent development has been the creation of wonderful dressing up clothes for children by Mary Tuckey.



Children can come into the Heritage Centre and step back in time as they put on these lovely outfits.



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Heritage e-news - next issue

The next Heritage e-news will be published on Thursday 27th September. All contributions to Julie Starkey by Monday 24th September please.