

Get-together for Learning

Can you remember a school trip that you went on and what made it special?

Would you like to help make great memories for children and young people visiting St Helen's?

If so, we would welcome friendly volunteers who are willing to share their enthusiasm and knowledge, encourage others and learn more.



Our **Get-together for Learning** at the Heritage Centre on **Tuesday March 5th at 7pm** is an opportunity for you to get some practical experience of planned learning activities, try something new or refresh your skills, meet other volunteers, find out more about local schools and how we can engage them, give feedback and help shape future learning experiences.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Upcoming visits

Some budding young poets from Ivanhoe College will be visiting to find out about the archaeological dig and get creative with 'Found' words in the church on **14th March at 11am**

A class of talented creatives and archaeologists-in-the-making from Packington Primary will also be joining us on **March 26th at 9.30am**

We would welcome you to get involved in any way you can; help with setting up, take part in the activities or just come along to watch the fun. Previous experience of working with children is an advantage but not essential.

For further information please speak to Sharn at the Heritage Centre or come along to our **Get-together for Learning** event on **March 5th**.

Rachel Grevatte

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How to find out about our Project

Our website: www.ssthelesheritage.co.uk Our Facebook page: **St Helen's Heritage Ashby de la Zouch**

Since our last newsletter ...

Woolly Workshop!



Our February half term activity proved to be extremely popular, with over 60 people attending our 'Woolly Workshop.'

We spent a very enjoyable morning weaving and making friendship bracelets to take home.



February Heritage Talk - the Alabaster Men of Burton on Trent

At the beginning of February, a large audience welcomed Moira Ackers from the Church Monuments Society, who came to talk about the 'Alabastermen of Burton on Trent', and in particular about Richard Parker, who carved our beautiful 16th Century Hastings Tomb.

After Moira's talk, we adjourned with our coffee to the Hastings Chapel, to take a close look at Richard Parker's work.



March Heritage Talks - Hot off the Press!

Our talk on March 4th is the last one this winter and will involve our own research volunteers, talking about our discoveries over the last two years of the Heritage Project.

Topics include Royal Connections, an Archaeology Update, from Parish Rooms to Theatre and the Victorian Church Extension. Come and learn some new and exciting things about St Helen's and its people.

Our Medieval Bell may be even older than we thought

George Dawson, the Diocesan adviser on bells, writes:

Ashby's 8th bell is one of a small group of bells which have a very fine set of decorated letters on them, and from the distribution can be said to have been cast at Leicester. An accurate date for the group can be deduced from the Coventry St John bell which was donated by Henry Dodden-hale who was Mayor of Coventry in 1350.

The founder working in Leicester at that time was John Hose whose earliest and latest dates (from documentary sources) are 1352 to 1366, so we must suppose the bells are by him.

Other bells in the series are at:

- Syston & Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire
- Mancetter & Coventry St John in Warwickshire
- Taddington, Newton Solney & Bretby in Derbyshire
- Deane in Northamptonshire

The article below is from a recent issue of '**The Ringing World**', a publication for bell ringers

1048 – *The Ringing World*

October 26, 2018



A major find for the Taylor Bellfoundry Museum



The Mancetter bell

(Photo courtesy of the executors of the late Christopher Dalton)

A chance observation on an internet site which deals with live auctions revealed an item labelled as 'of typography interest' in a country house sale near to Cannock Chase, supposedly from the Charles Carr bellfoundry. Needless to say, interest was aroused, and the picture on the site revealed a set of 20 bronze bellfounders' stamps, 17 of which turned out to be copies of those used by John Hose of Leicester circa 1355.

So where had they come from, and what were they used for?

A documentary search revealed that there were only a few bells known, intact and recast, with this lettering. They are known as the



Photo courtesy of the John Taylor Bellfoundry Museum.

'Mancetter set', after one of the first bells noted with the lettering. Evidence from the Coventry, St John bell, one of the group, suggests an approximate date of c.1355 for the casting, and as the letters were later used by other Leicester founders it is assumed that it was cast there. The founder was probably one John Hose. Interestingly the one at Taddington, Derbyshire, which was recast by the bellfounder William Blews & Sons in 1876, has this lettering on it, but no indication it had been recast, and this must have been the source because when they stopped trading their material was acquired by Charles Carr. How the stamps got from Carrs to the next owner is unknown.

Anyway come the day of the auction, the stamps were bought for the Taylor Bellfoundry Museum at about ten times their pre-sale estimate.

As can be seen, these highly decorated letters are magnificent and will soon be placed on exhibition in the Museum.

Clients of the John Taylor Bellfoundry will be able to specify their use in the future for new bells, a fine complement to the Foundry's already well-known set of the South Somercotes lettering.

GEORGE DAWSON
Taylor's Archivist

Heritage Centre Wednesdays and Saturdays

St Helen's Community Heritage Centre is very much still be 'the place to be' on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

Displays

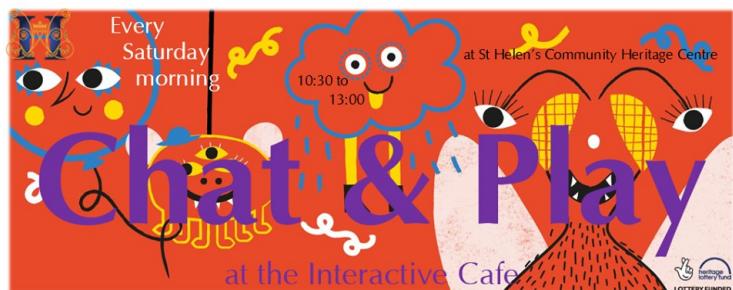


Our brand new exhibition on **pilgrimage** is now in the Heritage Centre. You may be aware of our unique pilgrim monument in church. This new exhibition explores the ideas behind pilgrimage through the ages.

We've been fortunate enough to borrow some fascinating pilgrim memorabilia to display. The exhibition will be in place until the middle of April.

Chat and Play

Every Saturday morning you are invited to '**Chat and Play**' at the interactive cafe'. Our heritage toy box is full of traditional toys and games; you might like to join in the community jigsaw; or try your hand at some crafts - there will always be plenty to do for the young and young at heart and there will be cake!



Knit-stitch-play



On Wednesday mornings from 10.30-12.30 we have a '**knit-stitch-play**' session. Bring along your current craft project or play one of our board games.

Church Tours

Come along at 11 am on the first Saturday of each month for a guided tour of our fascinating church, led by someone who knows and loves it. £3 per adult. No need to book. The next tours will be on Saturdays 6th April and 4th May.

If you would like to book a tour exclusively for your group, then please contact Sharn in the office and we will be happy to arrange a mutually convenient time - and home made cake, of course!

Can you guess where this photograph was taken?



'Discover' - Article on the Ashby Parish Library in Nottingham University Publication

You may be aware that St Helen's owns a Parish Library, begun by Rev Thomas Bate some time between 1707 and 1712. The books were stored for many years in far from ideal conditions in an outbuilding at the Old Rectory, but they are now in the care of the Manuscripts and Special Collections Department of Nottingham University, where they are being well cared for, conserved and documented.

In the January issue of their 'Discover' magazine, there was an article about Parish Libraries, with particular reference to ours!



Spotlight

A parish library is a collection of books formed to support the theological and pastoral work of English parish churches. Manuscripts and Special Collections has a collection of books of Cletonon, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Oakham, Elston and Longborough.

Dates about the future of public libraries have regularly referenced the legal basis upon which this well-established discipline was originated. The 1850 Public Libraries Act required all local authorities to establish free public libraries and to provide a room in which society could gather for information. The groundbreaking liberal thinking behind the Act was to offer free access to the public for the first time. However, the 1850 Act was not the first legislation to promote the creation of public libraries. That first Act, the 1705 Act for the Better Preservation of Parochial Libraries, England, came from a desire to protect the valuable books held in the church. The libraries remained under the control of the parochial church until the 1850 Act was passed.

The promoter of the legislation was Dr Thomas Bray (1666-1730) on behalf of the Church of England, who believed that this was the best way to establish its authority by investing in the commonweal education of its clergy.

Libraries in parish churches existed before 1705, though even earlier, in the years following the Reformation, there were injunctions and penalties against them. In 1662, the new parish churches should keep copies of Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the King James Version of the Bible (King James's Defence of the Apology – in addition to an English Bible). The efforts of Bray were apt at the beginning of the 18th century, when the majority of sermons in richly and poorly beneficed parishes in rural England – at the beginning of the 18th century, whether in the Catholic or Protestant faith, had died out. The changes in society, the growth of literacy, empirical science and industrialisation were casting doubt on the very existence of God. The Church of England, however, still insisted on its right to teach and represent the Church's authority to the emerging middle class.

Rich parochial libraries in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Oakham, Elston and Longborough came to their book collections by way of gift from individual benefactors, such as the bequests in the Will of All Saints' Church, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and Anne Harrington, widow of John, Baron Harrington of Fawley, who died in 1707. Anne Harrington was recently buried of her son John, and it is believed that the books were his. John was a student at Jesus College in Cambridge and had brought books accompanying the body of William on his travels to Europe. Some of the books were printed in Paris and Basel. The contents hint at an inclination towards pre-reformation theology. (Quack

Parish libraries: an 18th-century cultural phenomenon

Rich history of parochial footnotes

and Latin Church fathers and medieval scholars, mostly bound early folios featuring three incunabula. The Harrington donation to All Saints' Church in Ashby-de-la-Zouch included a copy of the *Book of Common Prayer* in leather decorated with a gold-tooled trellis design derived from the Harrington coat of arms. The book was bound in 1662 and is inscribed: *Ad domino dicens Amissus Harringtonus Berensensis, 1662*. The book is now part of the Special Collections' collection. It shows the extent to which affluent clerics memorialised their identities in the gift of books to their local parish church, and the need for being the year of Shakespeare's death.

For St Helen's Church in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, the main benefactor was a clergyman called Robert Bate, whose will was proved in the Court of Probate in 1727, who in the course of his short life created a large library while serving as chaplain to the Earl of Huntingdon. Robert Bate was born in 1662 and baptised in St Helen's and baptised and educated at the school of the Earl of Huntingdon, and he served the parishioners as benefactor. This extension of privileges to the local laity was not the norm of the time. Robert Bate's father, Revd Dr Thomas Bate's father, from whom he had inherited many of the books that made up his library, Bob Bate, was a learned man, a student of law, a collector of books, and a prominent enough member of the community to be buried in the church in St Helen's. His will, unfortunately, helps to date the beginning of this parish library. The will of Robert Bate, dated 1727, states that he wished well none of his books to a parochial library, as he had done with his father's, so a book makes it out "to the library in the church of Ashby-de-la-Zouch". The only reason why the father of Rev Bate would not give books to the library must be that in 1707 no parish had no library.

The date is significant because, in the first

NEXT ISSUE: The Life and Opinions of a Parish Library: St Helen's, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Research meetings

Meetings are informal and are a chance to share our research findings and ideas.

As a research group, we have access to the online research resource, 'Find My Past' and to two laptop computers.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact Julie Starkey via email or phone. (Details on first page)

Coming soon ...

Look out for our new Activity Programme leaflet covering April-September 2019. We have lots of exciting events planned for all the family.

Out shortly!

