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Annual Archive Day School Success



County Archivist Thea Randall addressing the start of this year's Annual Archive Study Day

This year's Annual Archive Day School, the 11th such event, was based upon the theme of the Staffordshire Landscape. Held at the Kingston Centre in Stafford, the day was very well received and we had an excellent turnout with over 70 attendees.

The first speaker of the day was Debbie Langley, a Landscape Archaeologist from the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record, who gave us an overview of the county and its historic landscapes. She was followed by Dr Paul Everson, formerly of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England and English Heritage, who raised issues around landscape and archaeology, with a particular emphasis on parks. Complementing this paper was Dr Dianne Barr, who formerly worked at the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Birmingham, and who examined the use of water in a number of the parks and gardens of Staffordshire (1500-2008).

Dr Tony Phillips, Reader in Historical Geography at Keele University, then discussed agriculture and rural change in Staffordshire (1700-1900). To round off an excellent day, Dr Chris Wakeling, lecturer at Keele University, showed how Staffordshire's landscape has been represented through paintings, prints and photographs, ending with a plea that the ever-changing landscape continues to be recorded pictorially.

The Archive Service produced a new themed exhibition to support the day, using illustrations of landscape from the William Salt Library's Staffordshire Views series and this too attracted a great deal of interest.

Lichfield and Leonardo

It's admittedly a fairly tenuous link and it's da Vinci not di Caprio.

From the end of January to the end of May 2009, a will and inventory from the Lichfield Record Office will be on display in Sheffield at the Millennium Gallery alongside objects from the V&A, including a codex by Leonardo da Vinci. The exhibition, "Treasures from the V&A: 400-1600AD" has recently been on tour in North America and this is its UK outing.

For the Sheffield exhibition, material has been added reflecting four surviving buildings from Sheffield over that broad time period. One of them, Bishop's House in Norton on the southern fringes of Sheffield (then in Derbyshire, in the far north-east corner of Lichfield diocese) dates from the sixteenth century. For this building, a will of 1632 for William Blythe, the then owner, and a detailed room by room inventory survive among the diocesan probate records at Lichfield Record Office.

The will itself, a single sheet of paper, has recently undergone conservation treatment. The parchment inventory presented different problems for the exhibition designers as it is roughly 6 inches wide by 60 inches long!

STAFFING THE ARCHIVE SERVICE

We have had a number of changes in personnel in our frontline service posts, the people who readers see on their regular visits to the Archive Service. We are very grateful to those members of staff, who have now left us, for their contribution to the Archive Service and we welcome the new members of staff who have joined the Service in their place.

Wendy Tolley left the Staffordshire Record Office at the end of June 2008 after six years' service as an archive assistant. Susan Lynch joined us last summer in this post. Jenny Cook moved across from the Staffordshire Record Office to take up an archive assistant's post at Lichfield Record Office in September. Bob Vaughan, well known to Lichfield Record Office readers, retired in September after seven years' service. His successor is Kevin Briggs. To replace Jenny at Stafford, we now have Esme Hookway, who also works as one of our evening archive assistants. Amy Craddock, a Saturday assistant at Staffordshire Record Office, resigned at the end of the summer to move into full-time teaching. Nicola Crews left the Lichfield Record Office at the beginning of January to take up an archivist's post with Birmingham Archives. This post has now been filled by Susan Bates-Hird. At the William Salt Library, Margaret Heath left

in July after six years' service. Julie Jackson was appointed to this post, joining the Library staff in September.

The four Sutherland Papers Project staff, Helen Smith, Val Gannon, Louise Ferriday and Andrew Dawson have all now left the service on the completion of the Sutherland Papers Project.

The gaps created by these vacancies, as well as the time which has had to be devoted to the training of new members of staff, have placed a considerable amount of pressure on our staffing levels during recent months. Wherever possible we have tried to ensure that there have been no dips in the quality of service delivery to the public and this has meant asking other members of staff to work a great many extra hours in order to plug gaps. It is a tribute to the real commitment and flexibility of our staff that they have taken on this extra work willingly and without complaint. As a result we have been able to maintain good performance against our service delivery targets and to ensure that the service in the reading rooms has been delivered as seamlessly as possible.

RECENT ONLINE DEVELOPMENTS

Featured document - Anna Seward, "the Swan of Lichfield" (1742-1809)

23rd March 2009 marks the 200th anniversary of the death of the poet, Anna Seward "the Swan of Lichfield". The annotated draft of a letter she wrote to Dr John Jebb in October 1785 is one of a number held in the Lichfield Record Office.

Other recent featured documents include the marriage entry of Charles Darwin and Emma Wedgwood in Maer parish register in 1839, and a series of documents illustrating health care in the county over the centuries to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the National Health Service in 2008. All are still available on our website.

Guide to Sources No.8 - Transport Records

This newly-available online guide to sources brings together two previous publications out of print for some time - Canal Records and Railway Records. Both have been revised and in addition there is a new section on the records of Roads. The guide is available as a free download in PDF document format on the Publications - Guides to Sources page. It will be invaluable to the historian of any one of these transport networks or to the local historian investigating their own local highway, canal or railway line.

STAFFORDSHIRE AND THE ZULU WAR



Speaker Ben Cunliffe with a member of the 80th Regiment Re-enactment Group posing for the press

To mark the 130th anniversary of the Zulu War, the Archive Service ran a special afternoon event focusing on the links between Staffordshire and the 6-month conflict.

Fought in South Africa against the Zulu nation, the conflict involved men of the 80th Regiment (South Staffordshire Volunteers), who saw action in several battles, including the disastrous battles of Isandlwana and the Ntombe River.

The feature of the afternoon was the photograph album of William Littleton, who was personal secretary to the British High Commissioner to South Africa, Sir Henry Bartle Frere. Littleton's album, now held at Staffordshire Record Office, features images of many of the people and places associated with the war.

The event, held on 22 January 2009 (the 130th anniversary of the Battle of Isandlwana), featured an audio-visual presentation, a short talk about the uniforms of the period and a re-enactor in the full Victorian uniform of the South Staffordshire Volunteers, as well as an opportunity to examine Littleton's album in more detail.

Results of Recent Surveys

We have been very busy in the last few months, collecting your views on our services through three customer surveys.

During November and December 2008 we asked users of our Research Services to rate the service and to say whether they would use the service again. We operate this service for those people who cannot visit us in person and it is available from all three of our offices. Over 48% of the people surveyed responded to us and 96% of the respondents said that they would use the service again. What was particularly useful was the large number of comments made such as:

- *Very useful service if you cannot get to Staffordshire, please continue the service*
- *Although I think your research fee is too high, it is a very good service.*
- *I was pleased with the service provided. All I asked for on my research form was completed. Also information on any further research that could be done was very useful. I shall be using the service again. I would like to thank all the staff at the record office for their dedication to we family history researchers.*

We are using the results of the survey to review the service and make improvements where we can.

During January we carried out our own local customer survey where

we asked you to rate our services, the helpfulness of staff, and your satisfaction overall. In this survey we focussed particularly on our provision of ICT services. Over 70% of those approached completed a survey. 98% of people rated our service as good or very good overall, showing a consistently high rating in this area. The helpfulness and friendliness of staff was rated at 99% and the quality and appropriateness of advice at a very pleasing 100%. These results show that our service is achieving a consistently high rating in key areas. We rely on the quality of our staff to deliver the service and it is very satisfying to see their hard work acknowledged in our survey results.

Again we received a lot of useful comments:

- *Don't let PCs take over.*
- *Improve microfiche copier facilities*
- *Visitor facilities/ rest areas/ somewhere more suitable for visitors to each lunches*
- *The current service suits my needs*

In February we ran a survey of users who were visiting us for the first time. We find this survey particularly helpful as it shows us how good we are at giving advance information to people and helping them to plan their visit effectively. First impressions

count and we hope that our service makes a good one. We are still processing the results of this survey but we received a good response rate. Some of the comments that we received showed that again our staff are working hard to make people feel welcome and to help people start their research:

- *Very helpful*
- *Clear instructions and location*
- *Excellent online records*
- *Relatively well sign posted once we found the right street*
- *The best run office I have been to*
- *The staff have been brilliant*

We will be producing a public information leaflet with detailed results of all these surveys. We would like to thank all of you who took the time to complete one of our surveys. It is very much appreciated. The results are invaluable in helping us to improve our services and we do use them as part of our service planning process.

The new leaflet will be available shortly from our reading rooms and our website:

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives/publications/InformationLeaflets/

STAFFORDSHIRE PLACES

www.places.staffspasttrack.org.uk

Staffordshire Places is one of the Archive Service's growing web sites. Its purpose is to introduce people to standard archive sources for their locality. Staffordshire Places began in 2003 as a grant-aided project which enabled us to develop the site with 24 places. Since then we aim to add more places to the site annually and it now includes 76 localities throughout Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

The range of content is the same for each place: an example of a census page from the 1871 census return; a will and inventory; the relevant extract from White's Directory for Staffordshire, 1851; an extract from the tithe map and apportionment; a photograph; and an original 'Staffordshire View' of the place concerned. Transcripts are provided for the documents and there is always a short introduction to the particular place. Explanatory information about the sources used is also available. More recently we have added a Teacher's Content Guide to show how the site can be used in the primary school classroom to provide a creative way to deliver history and geography local study units.

Recent consultation about the site asked if we should deepen the range of sources provided for the places already there or continue to extend the number of places. The clear response was that we should increase the number of places to give a wider coverage geographically across the County and the City. We also had some really positive comments about Staffordshire Places. If you haven't visited the site yet, then do see if your locality is included. If it isn't and you would like to see it included, please let us know.

Recent Accessions

Staffordshire Record Office

A significant recent family collection has been the records of the Fletchers of South Staffordshire, an ancient family with inter-connections by marriage to many other notable families in the county. As well as a number of early land documents dating from the early 16th century, the collection includes a large quantity of pedigree, heraldic and other genealogical material, compiled and collected by members of the family across the years. There are also a number of personal letter books and albums. Among these are: an album for the coronation of Queen Victoria, attended by Thomas William Fletcher; letter books of Col. Fletcher FRS, 1830-1886 and Lieut. Fletcher 1858-1868; a "war diary" of Major WG Fletcher at Naples, 1943-1944; and an album of Kathleen Walton, later Mrs THG Fletcher, who spent time in Eastern Europe after the Second World War working with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency.

We have also received the records of the Barton-under-Needwood Charities. There were originally several separate charities in the parish, based upon land holdings generating income for charitable payments, and which have since been amalgamated. The records deposited date from about 1910. The log books for Walsall St Paul parish schools, dating from the 1870s, were included with a large deposit of records from the parish church. We have also continued to receive many additional deposits of records from other Anglican churches

The most decorative item has been an illuminated parchment recording the resolution by Stafford Borough to adopt the Stafford Battery, Royal Artillery (Territorial Army) in 1952.

Comments or Suggestions...

If you have any comments or suggestions on the contents of Time 2 Time please send them to: Matthew Blake, Staffordshire Record Office, Eastgate Street, Stafford. ST16 2LZ
E-mail: matthew.blake@staffordshire.gov.uk

Lichfield Record Office

Recent accessions at Lichfield Record Office have included additional files of the Lichfield International Arts Festival, 1998 to 2002, and quinquennial reports for churches in the Diocese, 2007 to 2008. Some early nineteenth century letters from the Flowers family, resident at different times in Lichfield and Malta, along with later transcripts, have also been deposited.

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Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service
website: <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/archives/>

STAFFORDSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LZ
Mon, Tues, Thurs 9-5, Wed 9-8, Fri 9.30-4.30, Sat 9-1
Tel. (01785) 278373

E-mail: staffordshire.record.office@staffordshire.gov.uk
Appointments essential

WILLIAM SALT LIBRARY

19 Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LZ
Tues-Thurs 9-1 and 2-5, Fri 9.30-1 and 2-4.30
1st Saturday in each calendar month 9-1
Tel. (01785) 278372

E-mail: william.salt.library@staffordshire.gov.uk

LICHFIELD RECORD OFFICE

The Friary, Lichfield WS13 6QG
Mon, Tues, Wed and Fri 9.30-5 Thurs 11.30-7
2nd Saturday in each calendar month 9.30-12.30
Tel. (01543) 510720

E-mail: lichfield.record.office@staffordshire.gov.uk
Appointments essential

STOKE ON TRENT CITY ARCHIVES

City Central Library, Bethesda Street, Hanley,
Stoke on Trent ST1 3RS
Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.30-5.00, Wed, 9.30-7, Sat 9.30-4
Tel. (01782) 238420

E-mail: stoke.archives@stoke.gov.uk
Appointment essential

BURTON UPON TRENT FAMILY & LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE

Burton Library, Riverside, High Street
Burton upon Trent DE14 1AH
Mon, Wed, Fri 9-6 Tues 10-6 Thurs 9-8 Sat 9-4.30
Tel. (01283) 239556

E-mail: burton.library@staffordshire.gov.uk
Appointments essential