



# Landscape History Today: the Bulletin of CSLH

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Research Day - St Mary's Centre, October 2015



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Please make sure all contributions for the September edition of the Bulletin are with the editor by **31 July 2016**.

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# Chair's Message

A very happy New Year to you all! And what a busy year it promises to be.

This edition of the Bulletin contains all those important dates for your diary: lectures, field visits, a Discovery Day, details of our residential to Derbyshire and our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebratory events.

Following on from our really successful Research Day in October 2015, at which members were able to talk about their current research projects, the Planning Team are pleased to announce the outline details of a Conference we are hosting on Saturday 15 October 2016. You can read more about this exciting event on p.26.

As you will be aware, I am stepping down from the Planning Team at the AGM in February. It is a pleasure to have been Chairman of a society with so many supportive and appreciative members, and I have to say, it is a role which I have enjoyed, for it has allowed me to get to know many more of you. I have to confess, however, that I am looking forward to taking more of a back seat over the coming months. I am hoping that I will be able to devote more time to publishing my research and am particularly looking forward to joining fellow members 'in-the-ranks' rather than sitting on my own in the front row at our monthly lectures!

I look forward to seeing you all on Monday 25 January for Mark Baker's talk on 'The Houses of North Wales'. I feel sure we are in for a most enjoyable evening.

Sharon Varey

# Ribble Valley Residential 2015

Chipping was the first destination for our September residential visit, a very thoughtful choice, since it encapsulated the essence of Lancashire's history and its role in the Industrial Revolution.

After a thoroughly twenty-first century motorway drive, it was a great pleasure to find the village, quietly nestling in rich agricultural land between the Bowland Fells and Longridge Fell – but what a full and fascinating history it has to tell, one which was so very ably unfolded for us by local historian Colin Drinkwater. An ancient local market (OE *ceapen*) alongside the Chipping Brook, with origins pre Doomsday, it thrived particularly well during the Industrial Revolution when the brook and subsequently steam power supported, amazingly, seven mills. We visited one of the last survivors, Kirk Mill, sadly no longer in use, but, together with its surviving mill dam, it illustrated the history and the practical aspects of the use of power in the village from the first water-powered Norman Manor corn mill (where hard millstones had to be imported

from France to grind barley), through flax and wool spinning (woven into fustians) to cotton spinning. Other local manufacturing industries included nail making, hatting (local rabbits!), lime burning, paper, spindle and chair making – the latter surviving until 2010.



**Millstone - Chipping**

In the evening, after a very illuminating introduction to the history of Alston Hall, (a magnificent Victorian Gothic mansion built by colliery owner John Mercer in the 1870s, now a much-loved residential College and our home for the visit), Colin put the afternoon’s history into a wider context. He shared a wealth of information with us, with much enthusiasm and a treasure-trove of slides illustrating the development of the textile industry in mid-Lancashire, from cottages to the vast and almost innumerable factories built from the late eighteenth century onwards, with their exports around the world. In passing too there were many other nuggets of social and landscape history, from the enforcement by the Norman Earls of the 3-mile rule for milling grain, and the tithe system up to the introduction of gas lighting at nearby Stoneyhurst. All whetting the appetite perfectly for the following two days’ visits!

Breta Lloyd

Our second day began with a visit to Sawley Abbey, the remains of a Cistercian foundation of 1148, set along the banks of the River Ribble amid dramatic hills. The surprise for us was to find it just off the A59, the age-old route from Preston to Skipton and Harrogate. In his introduction to the site, Mike Headon elaborated on the consequences of this choice of position by the Cistercians: the monks had to offer more hospitality to pilgrims and travellers than other religious houses probably did; they were especially subject to raids and ‘cruel and inhuman spoliation’ by the Scots. In addition to this the ground was low-lying and damp. Sawley or Salley means woodland clearing where willow trees grow, and willows like wet ground so the Abbey was founded ‘in the



**Sawley Abbey Church**

mistiest and wettest land'. No wonder it is recorded that the monks had to buy in extra grain and the Abbey was never wealthy despite over a hundred benefactions.

The site itself gave evidence of all the usual monastic buildings and services, including a full sized cloister, but then there was the oddity of the foreshortened nave and the extensive presbytery. It seemed that by 1350 the nave had been partly demolished, the lay brothers frater and dorter had been replaced by 1390 by the Abbots House and the presbytery added to at the same time. It left us to wonder what happened to the lay brothers and how the monks managed.

Keeping to our timetable, we set off on the A59 again and ten minutes brought us to Downham, a managed estate village on a ridge-slope with views of Pendle and other hills. The manor house and the church sit on the crest of the ridge and the houses border Main Street as it meanders down the hill to the Green and the Village Hall (the old Wesleyan Methodist Chapel) at the bottom. The estate has been in the ownership of the Assheton family since 1558. A fascinating link with Sawley Abbey is that the last Abbot there, one William Trafford, who was hanged in 1537 following his involvement with the ill-fated Pilgrimage of Grace, was an ancestor of the present Lord Clitheroe.



**Downham Estate Village**

His son, the Hon. Ralph Assheton, gave our group a resume of his family's history and the management of the estate. It consists of 3,000 acres, 100 of which are mixed woodland and the rest is farmland all let to farm tenants. The village itself has 100 inhabitants, most of whom work locally,

occupying 30 houses, half of which are listed; the oldest dating from 1580. The policy is to let any vacant property to young people to maintain an age balance. The rules regarding the appearance of the village are very strict as it is a planning conservation area: minimum road signs, no overhead wires, no yellow lines, no street furniture (apart from a red telephone box) and no plastic bus shelter – a wooden covered one instead. Unsurprisingly Downham has attracted film crews, from ‘Whistle down the Wind’ to ‘Born and Bred’.

The Hon. Ralph described how modernity was being embraced: small businesses, such as a wood chip company providing for wood burning stoves had been set up and an old barn converted for offices; visitors were welcomed, even some coach parties, and besides the Assherton Arms at the top of the village, there was a coffee shop selling snacks and ice-cream at the bottom together with a car park – barely signposted, of course.

It was a fascinating visit offering a glimpse into a way of life completely different from the urban world most of us inhabit.

Gillian Langrick

On Wednesday afternoon, the excellent local guide David Johns took us on a walk around Clitheroe, at a cracking pace! Starting from the rejuvenated railway station at the end of King Street, named for local boy Captain King of Darwin’s ‘Beagle’ expedition, we headed for the first of the three town wells that would frame our walk, St Mary’s Well – like the other two, now dry, but a substantial structure. We continued past the eighteenth-century Clitheroe Grammar School old building in York Street, dwarfed by the adjacent modern building; together they now make up the sixth form section, with younger pupils banished elsewhere. The Civic Hall, later a cinema and now an arts and entertainments centre, is a peculiarly eclectic mixture of old and new, not to everyone’s taste.

The parish church of St Mary Magdalene has a fifteenth-century tower, but was rebuilt in the 1820s following a fire; sadly, another fire damaged it in the 1970s, but it was restored and rededicated in 1981. The church was locked, so we contented ourselves with noting that many important buildings in Clitheroe stand on eminences; and with discussing the origins of a stray tomb-slab used as a seat outside the churchyard walls. Had it simply slipped down the slope, or

was something more sinister implied? On via the Market Place (painted by Lowry) to the second well, the Town or Healing Well, in Well Street and then into Duck Street, where the ducking-stool stood.

We continued past Clitheroe Farm, one of the oldest extant buildings in the town, now a Roman Catholic social centre, and up the steps to the courtyard of the Swan and Royal Hotel. Pevsner thought this ‘the nicest individual building’ in Clitheroe, and Gandhi, Sir Frank Whittle and Churchill have been among the guests. We were told that the courtyard had seen dark days: in 1878, during a cotton workers’ strike, five workers were shot dead by soldiers of the 24th Regiment of Foot (who themselves died at Isandlwana sixteen weeks later).

Finally, it was an easy stroll up Castle Street to the Castle itself, where the Castle Well completed the trio. The keep is supposedly the second smallest Norman keep in the country after Goodrich. The main attraction for most of the

members was the panoramic viewing platform constructed on top of the curtain wall surrounding the keep, from which the Ribble Valley could be surveyed for miles in all directions. Second place went to the Atrium Café in the castle grounds!



**View from Clitheroe Castle**

Mike Headon

On Thursday morning we met in Burnley at the former Wharfmaster’s House and Canal Toll house. This building now houses the Triangle Visitor Centre alongside the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Our guide explained the name was only some 20 years old and defined the centre of Burnley’s textile industry of the nineteenth century.



The canal was the longest single canal being 127¼ miles long; building started in 1770, and was completed in 1816. The route had been wrangled over by a Lancashire Committee and a Yorkshire one: the latter favoured a more direct route bypassing many of the Lancashire towns, but in this case Lancashire prevailed, and as a result Burnley developed into a major cotton spinning and weaving centre.

There are two major engineering features of the canal locally, the first being the embankment which carries it ¾ mile straight across the Calder valley, at up to 60ft above the town. Much of the embankment was built using material dug from the second, the Gannow tunnel, which, although not long by canal tunnel standards at 557 yards, took some five years to dig through unstable clays and rocks riddled by mine shafts that had disturbed the water table.

The Toll office was built in 1801 when the canal reached Burnley, and the Wharfmaster's House above it in 1878. As well as textile materials the canal also transported limestone for building purposes and coal from local pits to fire the increasingly common steam engines used to power the mills. The last commercial traffic was in 1963.

There are two types of mill: the multi-storey spinning mills, which are the earliest, and the single storey weaving mills. The latter are characterised by north facing roof lights to limit the heat gain from the sun, as weaving needed a cool damp atmosphere. Spinning machines became common in the late eighteenth century with the invention of the spinning jenny and spinning mule, but weaving mills did not take off until the 1840s with the invention of the mechanised loom, spelling the end of the home based handloom weaver.



**Weaver's Triangle**



**Former warehouses with cottages above**

The coming of the steam engine also enabled large factories to be built, close to the canal with easy access to raw materials, but also to a reasonably clean source of water for cooling condensers and fire fighting. No longer were they dependent on the relatively small horse power available for water powered

mill wheels. The large water tanks at the top of the characteristic tall mill towers were for fire fighting using a gravity sprinkler system activated by melting wax bulbs.

The walk along the canal side took us past mills of both types and then to view Slater's Terrace, which was an unusual row of 11 two up two down houses built above a warehouse by George Slater for his workers in the late 1840s. They were slightly better quality than the typical housing of the time but rapidly became overcrowded, the 1861 census showing 71 people living in them. These are now undergoing development to offices and small business premises.

The coming of the mills spawned other local industry to support the mills. These included iron foundries and fabrication workshops.

The Oak Mount Mill began in 1830 as a spinning mill and about ten years later a weaving shed was added. Over the years it became a large scale weaving mill, finally closing in 1979. It now houses a number of shops, warehouses and industrial units. The Steam driven cross-compound engine was installed in 1887, built by Burnley Iron works and modified several times to increase its power (to 450 HP) and efficiency. The high and low pressure cylinders drove a gear wheel via connecting rods and crankshafts, with a large flywheel to

smooth out the reciprocating motion. The gear wheel then drove a shaft that powered the looms in one shed, while the looms in a second shed were driven by a second belt driven shaft.

At a later date a generator was coupled to the system to produce

electricity for lighting. With the closure of the mill, the boiler house was demolished and today the engine is run for demonstration purposes by an electric motor.

Returning along the tow path to the Wharfmaster's House we could see where a set of stop gates had been located by the toll house. These were planks that could be installed in slots so that they would form a gate across the canal to reduce the loss of water from the canal in case of a breach in a bank further downstream.

The House acts as a museum and visitor centre with a large collection of items relevant to the spinning and weaving industry and Burnley's industrial past. We were also treated to a welcome cup of tea and biscuits by a number of local lady volunteers.



**Oak Mount Engine**

David George

## Landscapes Past and Present: Cheshire and Beyond

Building upon the success of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference held at Ness Gardens in 2011, around 90 delegates gathered in the suitably historic environs of St Mary's Centre in Chester for the Society's 2015 Research Day. The theme for the event was 'Landscapes Past and Present: Cheshire and Beyond' and the range of papers reflected the research interests of Society members which help us to gain a more detailed picture of the many influences which have shaped the landscape in Cheshire and its surrounding counties.



The President of the Society, Graeme White, began proceedings with his illustrated exploration of the process of enclosure in Mid- and East Cheshire which expanded the scope of his previous CSLH conference paper on enclosure on the western side of the

county. The way in which Mid- and East Cheshire were comparatively sparsely populated in the medieval and early-modern periods was discussed and case studies used to show the different ways that enclosure affected the landscape, before rapid industrialisation in East Cheshire from the late eighteenth century onwards.

'Medieval Moated Sites in the Cheshire and North Wales Borderland' was the topic for Ray Jones and he gave a short definition of a moated site followed by an outline of their distribution and chronology in England and Wales. Using illustrated examples from Cheshire and North Wales, Ray described the factors

which affected both their location and form.

Vanessa Greatorex concentrated on the medieval city of Chester and the way in which the location of crimes committed can be plotted on to a map of misdemeanours. In 'The Geography of Crime: Misbehaviour in Medieval Chester', she used evidence from legal and civic records to identify the hotspots for crime and where defendants were dealt with in the Middle Ages. Thus, the paper gave an overview into the impact of Chester's geographic location on the nature of its civic ordinances.

The eastern side of Cheshire was the location for Tom Swailes to explore 'Ways and Meres: Pre-Turnpike Roads, Tracks, Boundaries and Their Markers in the Cheshire Peak District'. Drawing on evidence from the mapping of commons and wastes on the western Peak District in the seventeenth century, historic routeways were identified that ran through the East Cheshire hills and into the adjacent counties of Derbyshire and Staffordshire. The original maps held at the National Archives, together with other evidence, also allowed some new historical interpretations for old dry stone walls, standing stones and stone cross remains in this area.

Mike Taylor's paper on 'Tracing the Eighteenth-Century Landscape of Thelwall, Cheshire' gave an insight into the lifestyle of the inhabitants of this small township with a focus on the eighteenth century. Surviving records show that its inhabitants tended to stay within an 8 km radius of the village and Mike demonstrated how much evidence from the eighteenth century still survives in the area. Work is still ongoing on this project and it is hoped that his approach to the



settlement of Thelwall will encourage similar studies in the future.

'Cheshire's Airfields: A Legacy in the Landscape' gave the opportunity for Tony Barratt to trace the impact of wartime airfields in the county. Comparing evidence of land use in 1945 to the present day, Tony showed how their layout can be traced in the modern landscape.



Julie Smalley gave the last paper of the day on 'Landscape as History: Probing its Public Interface' which explored the genre of historic landscape as an avenue to the past. She traced the roots and growth of this approach before moving on to outline findings from practitioner research on a learning project across six communities in Mid-Cheshire. She concluded by framing the subject in market terms to allow the analysis of this niche area as a competitive product.

These papers all gave a valuable overview on the ways in which the local landscape has been visibly affected by human interaction over the centuries. They will form the basis of the next CSLH book *Landscapes Past and Present: Cheshire and Beyond*, to be edited by Sharon M. Varey and Graeme J. White, and published by the University of Chester Press in time for the celebration of the Society's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The launch will take place during a boat cruise on the River Dee on 9 October 2016.

Many thanks are due to all the people who worked so hard to make this Research Day possible. The Planning Team Sub-committee of Sharon Varey, Graeme White, Mike Headon and Julie Smalley were responsible for the organisation and smooth running of the day. The speakers gave us the benefit of their carefully researched knowledge on a range of varied and interesting

topics. Thanks are also due to Heather White, Pamela Headon, Gillian Forgrave, Paul Varey and Mark Smalley.

After such a pleasant and thought-provoking day, we look forward to next year's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, to seeing the resulting book in print and to the continuing strength and success of the Society.



**Front left clockwise:**

**Ray Jones, Tom Swales, Mike Taylor, Julie Smalley, Graeme White, Vanessa Greatorex, Tony Barratt, Sharon Varey**

Sarah Griffiths

# St Columba's Church

After the lecture and afternoon tea held in St Columba's Hall, Plas Newton, Chester, on 7 November the opportunity arose to have a look at the inside of the church, and a fair number took that opportunity.

The church is a striking, tall building topped with a slender spire and has become a local landmark during its fifty years. It is described by Pevsner (1971) as '... by L.A.G. Pritchard Son and Partners. Five sides of an octagon, only the back flat with a steep pyramid steeple, and the jabbing roof, Church Architects at present like so much. ... good abstract glass by Hans Unger and E. Schulze'.



St. Columba, after whom the church is named, was a sixth century Irish monk and missionary who founded the monastery on Iona, an island of the Inner Hebrides, and established a Celtic mission there in about 563 A.D.

Architectural work on this church began in 1962 and the brief took into consideration the new liturgical arrangements which were then beginning to emerge. The foundation stone was laid in September 1964 by the then parish priest, the bishop being away in Rome at the Second Vatican Council. The foundation stone records its laying, in Latin of course. The first Mass was celebrated late in 1965.

The building has three elements, first a one-room nave with an entrance porch, a choir and organ loft and a single storey sacristy block with an internal courtyard. This courtyard has recently been roofed in to become the 'Iona Chapel' which seats up to forty people and is where weekday services are held.

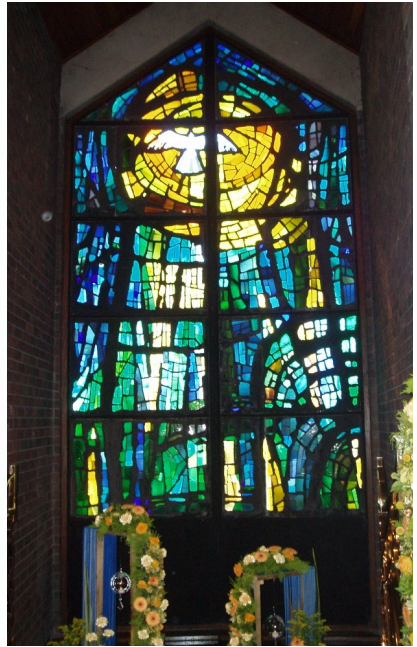
Second, a porch on the south-east side [liturgical west] provides access into a



narthex and on into the church itself.

Third, the Baptistry which leads off the narthex and is illuminated by a noteworthy mosaic glass window 17ft high and 8ft wide by Unger and Schulze depicting the Holy Spirit descending. This the only part of the original glass that survives. Recent changes in liturgical practice mean that the font has been removed from this area and now occupies its own separate space within the nave.

The building is formed from structural laminated timber portal frames with a lightweight timber folded roof rising to 41ft above the sanctuary area, surmounted by a pyramidal spire 52ft high. At the rear of the sanctuary area is a flat altar wall pierced with small triangular openings glazed in deep reds, blues and purples.



The nave is 59ft by 105ft and it can seat a congregation in excess of five hundred, none of whom are more than five or six rows from the front.

There were originally two large panels of glass by Unger and Schulze on opposing sides of the nave. A technique known as ‘Epoxy Resin Appliqué’ was used, developed from an earlier process developed in the twenties and designed to eliminate the use of lead. These panels regrettably fell foul of the weather and were replaced in the 1980s by rather less ambitious coloured glass which, none the less, provide interesting colour as the sun shines in.

Today, the church forms the focus of an active Roman Catholic parish covering, more or less, the triangular area between Liverpool Road and the cycleway and stretching out as far as the old City boundary with Ellesmere Port.

David Savage

Reference:

# The Year Ahead ...

## Lecture Programme

**26 January 2016**

**The Houses of North Wales**

**Mark Baker**

Mark Baker is an architectural historian and something of a prodigy. Born and educated in Wales, he has a passion for the buildings of Wales, especially the neglected gentry houses of north Wales such as Gwrych Castle, Hafodunos and Plas Teg. He has published extensively; his first publication on Gwrych Castle was written when he was just 14! Members might remember that Mark spoke to the Society about Gwrych Castle in 2014. Since then he has been involved with various TV programmes and is just completing his PhD. He is a tireless campaigner for the old houses of north Wales – and he just turned thirty this year!

**29 February 2016**

**Industrial Housing in Cheshire**

**Elizabeth Davey**

Elizabeth Davey developed her interest in landscape history while studying at St Anne's College, Oxford. She has been passionate about the history of this area since she first came to the Wirral in 1970, and she was one of Graeme White's first students on the landscape history course at Chester. Among her publications are a history of Birkenhead High School and a history of Birkenhead itself (a new edition was published by the History Press in October 2013).

Elizabeth has a particular interest in the built environment. Industrial housing is a subject that is frequently overlooked and often little understood, but its background, development, architecture, social history and regional differences

are as interesting and exciting as those of the vernacular houses of the countryside or of the great houses of the county.

**21 March 2016**  
**The Leeds-Liverpool Canal**  
**Mike Clarke**

Mike Clarke has been involved with canal heritage for over forty years. He is best known for his research into the history of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, having lived on a former commercial boat on the canal in the 1970s. His definitive history of the canal was published in 1990, and he is currently finalising a new extended edition in time for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canal's opening in 2016. With a background in engineering and experience in the restoration and conservation of many industrial processes, he is well able to interpret the significance the canal had upon the economies of the areas it passed through.

Mike has written several other books on canal history, and has travelled extensively across Europe researching waterway history. He has also visited China where he was able to visit some of the historic canals in the Nanjing and Yangzhou area with local waterway historians. With his wide knowledge of canal history, he is sometimes asked to advise ICOMOS on canal-related World Heritage applications.

**25 April 2016**  
**Land Use in Upper Glenalmond**  
**Richard Oram**

Richard Oram is Professor of Medieval and Environmental History and Head of the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Stirling. His research focuses on historic land-use and climate-related environmental change in the North Atlantic region, principally on issues of resilience, cultural, social and economic change from the mid-thirteenth to seventeenth centuries.

The landscape of upper Glenalmond in central Perthshire is a multi-layered record of over 5000 years of human settlement and land-use. From the monumental Neolithic chambered tomb at Clach na Tiompain to the 1930s

micro-hydro scheme serving the shooting-lodge at Achnafree, successive transitions in modes of exploitation and settlement form, reflecting profound changes in climate or in global economic systems, are reflected in the glen's historic environment.

**26 September 2016**

**Forging a Liberty in the Landscape:**

**Whitby Abbey, the Liberty of Whitby Strand and the Cult of St Hild, 1078-1250**

**Tom Pickles**

Tom Pickles studied for a BA, MA, and D. Phil. at the University of Oxford, and held a fellowship in Oxford and lectureships at the University of York and Birkbeck, before taking up a post at the University of Chester in 2013. His research currently focuses on the medieval Church and its place in the landscape, combining textual sources with archaeological sites, material culture and place-names.

The monastery at Whitby, North Yorkshire, was re-founded c.1078 and acquired an impressive portfolio of properties as well as a valuable jurisdictional immunity that became known as the Liberty of Whitby Strand - effectively a private hundred in which the monastery claimed the jurisdiction usually exercised by royal officials. The monastery claimed that this Liberty was granted by the early Norman kings: William I, William II and Henry I. In this talk, Tom will suggest that the Liberty was actually invented in the period between 1180 and 1250. The lecture will explore how the community used the cult of St Hild to lay claim to the Liberty and its landscape.

**31 October 2016**

**The Slate Industry of North Wales**

**David Gwyn**

David is an archaeologist, historian and conservationist, based in North Wales but with global interests. Particularly interested in industrial archaeology, his papers include topics such as: 'Artists, Chartist, Railways and Riots'; 'Landscape, Economy and Identity: A Case Study in the Archaeology of Industrialisation'; 'The Industrial Town in Gwynedd: a Comparative Study' and 'The Welsh Slate Industry'.

**28 November 2016**  
**Underground Wirral**  
**Gavin Hunter**

Gavin is a well-known local historian, lecturer, broadcaster, and author on Wirral history. He spent nearly 30 years working for Unilever as a Chartered Engineer and is a Fellow of the Institution of Chemical Engineers. He was a former Design Office Manager and Senior Project Engineer for Lever Brothers at Port Sunlight. Gavin obtained a Masters Degree in Landscape History from Liverpool University. He is now an Honorary archivist and historian to the Leverhulme family.

From smugglers to railways, from mining to motoring, this lavishly illustrated talk will reveal some of the amazing relics of history that still lie below the surface of this picturesque peninsular.

## Field Visits Programme

Our first visit will be on **Thursday 21 April** when Gavin Hunter will guide us around **Thornton Hough** on the Wirral. This is a follow-up to our trip to Port Sunlight this year. Thornton Hough was largely re-built by Viscount Leverhulme to provide accommodation both for local farm labourers and for Leverhulme's family to create an attractive estate village.

On **Saturday 14 May** we will visit the **Blackden Trust**, near Holmes Chapel. The original property on the site is Toad Hall, an open hall house of the sixteenth century. The owners extended Toad Hall in 1970 by relocating the sixteenth century Old Medicine House brought from Staffordshire. We will hear about the history of the site, the process of relocating the Old Medicine House and about the artefacts discovered when it was being dismantled.

**Saturday 4 June** will see a coach trip to **Aston Hall** in Birmingham. The Hall is a magnificent Grade 1 listed Jacobean house surrounded by formal gardens and parkland. On the way home we will call at the **Wall Roman Site**, near Lichfield.

The President's visit will be on **Saturday 18 June**. Entitled '**Defining and Defending the Welsh Border**', the intention is to begin near the border west of Shrewsbury at Shrawardine and Alberbury, where there are motte and bailey castles. We will then make our way north to visit the dispersed border settlement of Threapwood, the isolated Norman church of Shocklach, the castle with planned medieval town at Holt and finally the motte and bailey at Aldford.

Our programme ends with a visit to **Denbigh** on **Saturday 16 July**. We will visit the castle, the town walls and Leicester's Church, noteworthy for being the only large new church built in the reign of Elizabeth I. In addition we hope to arrange a brief visit to one of the Vale of Clwyd churches.

If you would like to join us on one or more of the visits please use the Field Visits application form to register your interest. These should be returned to Gwilym Hughes, 17 Fairacres Road, Bebington, Wirral CH63 3HA by **Saturday 6 February 2016**.

## Residential Visit

Derbyshire: The power and people of the 'Peak'

**Friday 16 to Sunday 18 September 2016**

Leaders: Diane and Mike Johnson, Maggie and Mike Taylor



'Derbyshire is a county of contrasts' says the opening line of Pevsner's *The Building of England* and it is our intention to explore some of those contrasts.

Our visit is based in Willersley Castle, a spectacular site on a rocky eminence

looking southwards down on the World Heritage Site of the Derwent Valley. Willersley Castle was commissioned by Sir Richard Arkwright the industrialist, as his family home, but sadly Arkwright died before its completion so it became the home of his son and subsequent generations from 1796 to 1922.



Our theme includes an overview of the establishment of the industrial landscape in the southern end of the Derwent Valley as well as embracing other periods of this part of Derbyshire's archaeology and history. Amongst other sites we hope to visit the finest Stone Age 'henge' monument in the north of England, a nineteenth century lead mine, a church dating back to 1100 and the sole surviving engine house on the local cable hauled railway.

The majority of places chosen have good access and do not entail a great deal of walking although some will be unavoidable. However, we do intend to include a guided walk around Cromford for those who wish to participate, but it is possible to visit the majority of the town sites by car if required.

The cost is £180.00 per person for the visit which includes two nights dinner bed and breakfast along with some entrance fees and guides at selected sites. The Hotel has a lift which provides access to most of the bedrooms.

If you are interested in joining us please complete the enclosed/attached booking form and include a deposit of **£50 per person (non-refundable)** by the **21 February 2016**, with the balance being payable by 30 June 2016.

These payments should be sent direct to:

Diane & Mike Johnson, Ty Pedwar, Leete Park, Rhydymwyn, Mold CH7 5JJ.

# Discovery Day 2016

## Tales of the Unexpected

Where in Cheshire's landscape squats a manic motorway junction and Services – but whose trim town of the same name gleams with gentler historic gems? It has to be Sandbach.

Sandbach is definitely worth the short trip from Chester for this year's Discovery Day because there is so much for us to tackle – all within several easy walks. In fact, a transportation theme quickly emerges. Pre-dating the internationally known Foden and ERF truck manufacturers, and nearby Trent and Mersey Canal, the London stage coach had a changing post during the 1820s at the George Inn, still refreshing as the local Wetherspoons. In keeping with this centuries-old 'supply function', hostelry is amply reflected. A wide range of new eateries has sprung up too, so not quite as innovative as owners might think. Elsewhere the coach and horse pairing is still evident for one pub still hangs on to its old mounting block.

Street names are quite often instant sources of intrigue and 'suspicion'. Sandbach has its inevitable High Street and indicative Front Street. 'Well Bank' is not misleading and the pump is informative. Old Middlewich Road makes obvious declarations about realigning town centres. Yet what is the reason the large car park is called Scotch Common? Documentary sources will assist Discoverers on this unpleasant matter. Meanwhile, the immediate topography helps determine how Sandbach was shaped. Dingle Lake is approached via Bath Street. But should we take this literally?

Architecturally, much can be differentiated within a prosperous mix of types. Elements of red brick late nineteenth century Gothic Revival pack in beside black and white half-timber and thatch. From Town Hall ... to Old Hall. Sandbach's standout feature is a magnificent mid-seventeenth century manorial edifice - open to view. Ornamental close-studding and 'period beer gardens' gracefully face St Mary's parish church across the hillside. The largesse of a later Lord however was unfortunate. A grand communal drinking fountain, all canopied and Classical in style, stands isolated within a busy roundabout!





**Old Hall, Sandbach**

The landscape of belief is immensely well represented, by possibly one of the longest visible spans of Christian worship to be seen in the region. Sandbach was a Saxon Minster. Precious remains of ninth century carved sandstone crosses punctuate the market square. Compared to their original multi-coloured glory they are sombre and skeletal – but as a testament to early medieval Christianity they are an enduring presence. And this is despite vigorous Puritan meddling. In the seventeenth century the image-laden crosses were broken and scattered. However, 1816 - two hundred years ago exactly - saw their re-assembly in the centre of town. Lucky for us they are directly visible from our cafe base for the day.

One final tale of the unexpected. The church tower is unusual in that a public right of way marches straight through its base. No doubt this option will be put to good use by those exploring ‘Surprising Sandbach’ on our Discovery Day 2016.

Plans are in progress for **Saturday 7 May**. We’ll be based in our own upstairs room at the attractive Casa Mia restaurant right on the famed Cobbles - very descriptive of Sandbach’s stony town square.

Booking forms and more information will be sent out a little later in the New Year. Save the date!

Julie Elizabeth Smalley



# 30th Anniversary ...

At CSLH we plan to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in style and there are two dates for your diary.

Our first celebratory event takes place on **Sunday 9 October** where we hope you will join us for a two-hour cruise on the River Dee on board the Lady Diana. Members will be able to enjoy a buffet lunch followed by the official CSLH launch of our latest publication containing the papers presented at our recent Research Day, whilst enjoying the delights of the Cheshire countryside. Why not take this opportunity to purchase a copy signed by the contributors?

Our second event is a one-day conference which will be a joint venture with the Society for Landscape Studies (SLS). The SLS was founded in 1979 to promote the study of landscape in all its aspects. Members may be familiar with the Society's journal, *Landscape History*, which forms part of our library collection. CSLH was approached in September 2015 and asked if it would be interested in hosting a joint conference. We believe this is a wonderful opportunity to promote our own Society whilst at the same time enabling us to celebrate our 30 years in a fitting manner by embracing research taking place within Cheshire.

The conference will take place on **Saturday 15 October** at the St Mary's Centre in Chester. Speakers will include our CSLH President, Graeme White and Chairman Sharon Varey. There will also be contributions from Barbara Wright (Cheshire Gardens Trust), Chris Lewis (formerly VCH Cheshire), John Prag (Alderley Edge Project, Manchester Museum) and Richard Chiverrell (Liverpool University). This will be followed by a day/weekend of field visits in Spring 2017.

Further details of both events will be available in the Spring.

# Residential Visit 2017

In 1576 Christopher Saxton, the Tudor cartographer, depicted it as a series of pudding like shapes representing the uplands of the west which then diminish when the wriggling line marking the course of the River Nene is reached.

In 1974 John Steane suggested that the traveller along the M1 was hardly conscious that he was passing over the main watershed of Midland England.

These descriptions refer to Northamptonshire, which is the destination for our residential field visit in September 2017. Accommodation has been provisionally booked at Knuston Hall, a house whose history according to Pevsner is not clear but which despite that is Grade II listed and run by Northamptonshire County Council as an Adult Residential College and Conference Centre.

What we need now is someone who has some local knowledge of the best places to visit in the area. Perhaps you might have a relative or friend who lives in Northamptonshire who is familiar with the local landscape and might be able to help the Planning Team sort out a programme of visits. Plenty of experience and advice is available. If you feel you might be able to help us progress our proposed 2017 visit, then please contact a member of the Planning Team.



# Snippets

A big thank you to everybody who purchased tickets for our Christmas Hamper Raffle. We raised over £150 towards our 30th Anniversary Celebrations. The winning ticket was purchased at our November lecture.



As newsletter editor I would like to thank everybody who has contributed to our bulletin over the years. I am pleased to announce that Julie Smalley will be taking over the role from February 2016.



The Planning Team is constantly trying to think of new offerings for the membership. We would really like your views on these possible ideas so that we can incorporate them into our 2017 programme:

- Afternoon lectures during November and January
- Coach visits to more distant sites
- Social events (Type of event and whether you would like to participate)
- Research Days

We would be grateful for your responses by the end of February 2016. Please speak to, or telephone, a member of the Planning Team or email [editor@chesterlandscapehistory.org.uk](mailto:editor@chesterlandscapehistory.org.uk)



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