



NEWSLETTER

Issue 2: June 2008

Editor: Robert Marshall

Welcome to issue 2 of our newsletter. In this issue we will let you know how recent events have gone, should you have missed any, give you the opportunity to get involved with future issues, provide the latest news we have regarding the Museum and remind you about the trips planned for this year.

Recent Events

The Changing Face of Farming in Cheshire.

Keith Siddorn, of Meadow Bank Farm, Broxton gave a presentation 13 May on how things have changed from the perspective of a working farmer. We were given a fascinating insight into the issues in farming during Keith's excellent talk. His ancestors have been farming the land around Broxton since the 1740s and he was able to quote from a diary of the time about such things as the number of visits to market; jobs done on the farm and for the community; number of workers, and the costs of land to compare with his own family's farm.

Keith has a pure bred herd of Hereford cattle, now classified as a rare breed, and he is farming in a way more in harmony with the natural environment. He is allowing his hedgerows to grow to their full height with a wild 'buffer zone' between them and the crops in the fields. He has created 8 miles of footpaths on the farm and reinstated ponds, some deep, some shallow to give a variety of differing habitats. Keith showed us slides of his farm and a plan of how he has made changes. All these actions have allowed numbers of endangered species of birds to nest and colonise the farm's woodland and hedgerows, which is one of Keith's special interests.

To demonstrate the success of the farm, Keith's colleague, Jimmi Hill, brought in a special guest, a most beautiful barn owl, to show us. Jimmy explained to us that barn owl's feathers are not waterproof, which is why in their natural habitat of inside barns, they were still able to hunt for mice and voles even when it is raining. As well as excellent eyesight, the barn owl has excellent hearing as their ears are asymmetrical. (you do learn something new every day!) Keith has barn owl nesting boxes on his farm to encourage the growth in their numbers. Keith made some very sobering comments about the possible changes of government policies and subsidies as the need for food increases to feed the world's population, which has now outstripped food supply! The success of Keith's talk and the appearance of the barn owl with Jimmi was totally obvious from the number of questions that were asked. Jude, pictured with his handler Jim, Friends Secretary Rita and Keith. Jimmi and his birds of prey can be seen

at Cheshire Farm Ice Cream, Tattenhall, Chester. Tel, 01829 770995. Details can also be found at

<http://www.cheshirefarmicecream.co.uk/atthefarm.html>

If you would like to see some barn owls nesting at Meadow Bank Farm then try the webcam site at www.owlwatch.co.uk and enter test for the user name and steven for the password.

Friends Website Launched.



Sunday 10 May the Friends Of The Salt Museum website was opened. If you have not yet visited it the url is <http://fotsm.org.uk> . Pictured is Jenny receiving a drawing, of the Salt Museum, from local artist and Friend Patricia Kelsall. The drawing is shown on the home page and used throughout the site. The website has sections on Friends events, news, a calendar summary, newsletter downloads, Museum news and more. It will be regularly updated and it is hoped will be an ideal reference for Friends to check on what's on, coming up or even been on several years ago! If you have any suggestions for additional content, any photos from visits you might like to share then please feel free to email them to fotsm@mac.com

Farming in Cheshire 2007-8.

The 'tea and talks' at the Salt Museum are becoming famous! A large group of farmers from Shropshire joined us this time to hear Matt's talk on 30 April. Matt explained to us how he started the process of putting together the special exhibition on Farming. He demonstrated his various strands of research by showing clips of archive films, including himself on a tractor at a very early age, and linking them to his newly recorded clips. He explained that he was a proactive curator. This means he liked to go out and record present day material, as well as collecting archive material to save for future generations to see. He has done a great job of recording onto 3 DVDs all the material he collected, using the camcorder and tripod, bought by The Friends, for his research for the farming exhibition. The DVD is still on sale at the Salt Museum, priced at £9.99p, which is remarkable value for the huge variety of farming extracts included, and all of them taking place today in Cheshire.



100 Years of Farming in Cheshire



29 April Michael Mulliner, a retired local farmer, gave a talk on farming life with many old family photographs used to illustrate how life used to be. Michael's talk was based on his own family experiences, the changes he heard about as a youngster and then experienced first hand in running his own farm. It was fascinating to both see and hear how life was 100 years ago and how much has changed in just a few generations. This was a talk that would captivate anyone who has an interest in local history, farming or even genealogy. Pictured with Michael is Matt, the Curator and Jenny, Chair of The Friends just before the talk started.

The Quality of Mersey!

A talk by Hugh Beggs, retired schoolmaster, on March 11. Did you know that although the Mersey is World famous it is only 20 miles long? Using slides, maps and diagrams, Hugh demonstrated that the fast flowing streams of the Rivers Tame, Etheroe, and Goyt were ideal water to power the mills in the upper reaches of the Mersey river basin. Thus giving rise to the industrial revolution. The actual Mersey apparently starts at the junction of these three rivers, in the concrete channels of Stockport. The Mersey then meanders and winds across its floodplain and Hugh demonstrated how quickly the river can flood. Along its banks there is a golf club where the Groundsman has amongst his mowers and aerators a rowing boat, ready for when it floods! It was amazing to listen to the facts and figures he gave as to the number of boats and 80 feet barges that were making the journey from the Mersey estuary to Manchester in the 19th and early 20th century. There were even 3 ways of making this journey. The River Mersey itself with its straightened-out meanders, the Bridgewater Canal, and the newly cut Manchester Ship canal. In the last part of his talk, Hugh considered the tides and the estuary of the Mersey. Building a wall across an inlet of the Mersey, near the centre of Liverpool, which apparently became the first dock ever built – despite what Bristol might say! Hugh's talk was amusing, informative and we can understand why he is already booked up to 2010 for his talks. If you missed him this time round I would highly recommend that you book a seat for the next time he gives a talk.



Saxon Life in Cheshire.

Have you ever smelled salted bacon that is 3 months old or felt the weight of a Saxon shield? Do you know the true meaning of 'Northwich' in Saxon times? Do you know what other towns in Cheshire are of Saxon origin? Well - you should have been at the tea and talk given by Tom and Colin, members of staff at the museum, on Wednesday 26th March. Tom started in the Regalette with some very interesting slides that gave us the feel of Saxon life. This is actually quite difficult because there is not a huge amount of archaeological evidence. However, the sandstone crosses, such as in Sandbach, gave us a feel of their life style. We were to experience this closer to hand when we followed Colin to his Saxon lair! Here we found food, weapons, tools, pottery and other objects that gave us an insight as to how the Saxons would live. It was as though we were taken into a Saxon living room. They were clearly skilled craftsmen and women using natural things such as wood, bone and leather which gently decay, thus leaving very little trace. Clearly they were true environmentalists! A really fascinating tea and talk – thank you – Colin and Tom.



Farming In Cheshire, Past & Present

The exhibition was, as mentioned in our previous newsletter, launched on April 9/10 and attracted over 80 people. John Platt, OBE and Cllr. David Rowlands, Deputy Leader of Cheshire County Council were guests of honour. David's



farm at Mickle Trafford is featured in one of Matt's films. Also attending were John Lea, Walter Wright, members of the Jones and Siddorn families and a representative of Joseph Heler, all of whom are featured in one or other of the 21 films being shown. The exhibition contains all sorts of fascinating material, which now collected, will remain in the archives at the Salt



Museum for posterity. The display boards for the exhibition have been sponsored by Joseph Heler, manufacturer of excellent cheese, as we all know since we tasted some of them at the launch evening. There were leaflets available on Salt and Cheese, and several with rather tempting looking recipes. So many people within the farming community have given freely and generously of their time that the committee would like to thank them all for their help and for supporting the Salt Museum.

Film Nights. These are proving to be very popular, so if you haven't booked for a film you would like to see don't delay any longer!



Trips Out

National Arboretum & Lichfield. At the closing date for booking, June 12, we have 30 places confirmed. Anyone who has not booked but is interested in the trip should contact a committee member.

News & Notices

Congratulations and well done to Matt and his team!

The Salt Museum was, for the second year in a row, short listed for a national award at the prestigious 'Museums & Heritage Awards for Excellence'. Sadly the museum did not win, that honour went to The National Trust. The museum entered its 2007 'Underneath the Arches: An Exhibition of Mid Cheshire Railways' in the 'Best Project on a Limited Budget' category. 'Underneath the Arches' celebrated the area's rich railway heritage and also brought things up-to-date by looking at the impact of railways today. Matt said, 'The exhibition was successful in terms of bringing together a number of partner organisations including Northern Rail, British Transport Police, the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership and the 8E Association. It was also our most popular exhibition with record numbers attending both the displays and the supporting events. It's great to receive national recognition from our peers.'

Hopefully you have all enjoyed being kept up to date with the first edition of our newsletter. Obviously this newsletter is aimed at keeping Friends informed, but the committee also sees it as a chance for Friends to get more involved. Are there any comments you'd like to make? Would you like different speakers or different times of day for trips and meetings? Have you got a short article in you, a memory of a meeting or something about the Salt Museum? Get in touch and let us know.

If you would like to receive future copies of the Newsletter by email (which would be a full colour pdf, expected to be less than 1MB file size) rather than through the post please let me know. Or maybe you would like an email saying when it is on our website so you can read it there or download it yourself?

For any of the above contact our Editor, via the Salt Museum or by email to fotsm@mac.com

Curator's Corner



Beyond the Museum Walls

Most of what we do here at the museum relates to the interior of the building – changing round the galleries, holding events and activities etc. But over the past couple of months our attention has been diverted to consider the external fabric of our Grade 2 listed building, built in 1839 as the Northwich Workhouse.

The building today is, in a sense, a 'shadow of its former self' as the original complex of buildings included three storey blocks at the rear of the museum. It was in these buildings that the inmates were housed and spent much of their time. The building the museum occupies was used for offices, staff accommodation, some daily functions and, of course, the Board of Guardians' meeting room.



The external fabric of the building has over the past couple of months been completely redecorated and is looking in fine fettle. The project included some restoration work to the clock tower - some timbers were found to be rotten, the weather vane was very weather beaten and the face of the clock itself was in need of a

face-lift. I took advantage of the scaffolding to view the clock close up and friends committee member, Rita Lamb and I also went up to inspect the internal workings of the clock. These days, it has an electric device fitted so that the twice yearly changing of the hour is altered automatically. Whilst up there

we took a few photos and even spotted a bit of graffiti – the initials 'RS' scratched into the woodwork. We have a suspect in mind!



Last year, we grassed over the flag-stones at the rear of the building as tree roots were continually pushing them up and creating trip-hazards. The grass is now well established and we have ordered a couple of picnic benches to encourage our visitors to make more use of the attractive grounds. The benches have won awards for their accessibility and are the same as those used by our friends at Chester Zoo.

By the way, the weather vane is now back in position. We hope that not too many people in Northwich got lost whilst it was out of action.

Matt Wheeler

Friends Of The Salt Museum
c/o The Salt Museum
162 London Road
Northwich
Cheshire
CW9 8AB
Email: fotsm@mac.com
<http://fotsm.org.uk>

Calendar of Events

July 1 Evening Talk

The Cheshire Show Then & Now.

July 10 Launch night for Boxed In – an Art in Gardens exhibition.

July 31 Film Shows 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep and at 7 p.m. Charlie Wilson's War

July 30 Tea & Talk - Condate: Roman Northwich by Tom Hughes

August 21 Film Shows 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. Azur and Asmar: The Princes' Quest and at 7 p.m. The Diving Bell and the Butterfly

Aug 27 Tea & Talk - Tatton Park & the Egertons by Roz Gorton

Sept 11 Launch of the exhibition on 'Sketches From the Front'.

Sept 16 Visit to NMA and Lichfield.

Sept 24 Tea & Talk - Moulton: Something of its Origins & History by Tony Bostock

September 25 Film Show 7 p.m. The Kite Runner,

Sept 30 Evening Talk - The Restoration of the Lion Salt Works.

Oct 23 AGM, 7 p.m. followed by a talk on 'Cheese Made in Cheshire' by Alison Taylor, of Joseph Heler Ltd.

Oct 29 Tea & Talk - Cheshire Ghosts by Tom Hughes

October 30 Film Shows 11 a.m. TBC, at 2 p.m. Oliver Twist and 7 p.m TBC

Nov 11 Evening Talk - First World War Readings from the Cheshire Regiment Archives.

November 20 Film Show 7 p.m. TBC

Nov 25 Evening Talk - A Trip Down the History of the River Weaver by Colin Edmondson. Part one: Winsford to Witton

Nov 26 Tea & Talk - Battlefields of France by Helen Green

Dec 9 Friends' Christmas Social Evening with a Quiz & treasure hunt.

2009 CALENDAR

Feb 3 10th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the Friends