



NEWSLETTER

Issue 4: Jan 2009

Editor: Robert Marshall

Welcome to the Friends of the Salt Museum's newsletter. Whether you are a Friend or casual visitor to the Salt Museum we hope you will find something of interest.

We have some really interesting events lined up for 2009, a summary of the first half of the year can be found under the 'Calendar Of Events' on the back page. Also included is a review of the events held since the last newsletter.

At the AGM in October we asked members to fill in a short questionnaire. We wanted to find out what interested our members, what dates, etc., best suited them. The results are on page 3.

The Friends Committee says a reluctant good bye to Bob Percival who stepped down at the AGM and hello to two new members Mary Curry and Barrie Jones. There is still room on the committee for another member, anyone interested should contact a current member or the Curator, Matt.

Hopefully our members will find enough of interest for them to renew their membership in April. If you haven't yet joined 'The Friends' then you can do so in to the museum, by downloading an application form from the museum's or our website or write to the address at the end of this newsletter.

Forthcoming Events

We start 2009 with the launch of the exhibition '**Image & Identity - Faces of Romans and Britons in the North West**' on **Friday 16 January**. Come along for the preview and enjoy a chat and a drink with fellow members.

On **Tuesday 3 February** the Friends of the Salt Museum will be 10 years old and we will be having a special event to celebrate the occasion. Committee member John Hulme has arranged for Cheshire FM to have a feature on the museum running on air over the week.

We will be giving away **free**

membership to the first two visitors each day during that week. If you know someone who might be interested tell them to get there early!

In the evening we will have a special show in the 'Regalette,' a talk in the Boardroom and guided tour, to places usually unseen, by Matt. All served with a slice of cake and a drink to wash it down. David Shipway, North West BAfM (see page 4 for more on BAfM) Co-ordinator and several local Councillors will be amongst our guests.

On **Thursday, February 12** we have an **Evening of drama, poetry and songs** from the Victorian Workhouse. Then on **Thursday 19 March** David Hayns will be giving a talk on '**Cheshire's Changing Boundaries.**' A topic that is quite topical given the current changes in local government within Cheshire.

At **11 a.m. on Wednesday 15 April** **Stretton Watermill** will be



open, free of charge, just for Friends with millers Tom Jones and David Andrews to be our guides. We will have a couple of hours to look at the mill and at the wildlife in and around the pond. Mills are dusty places and so following the tour we invite you to join us for an optional lunch at the Cock O' Barton (unfortunately not free to Friends!). Why there?

Well, on **Tuesday 7 July** at 5 p.m. we will be visiting **Meadow Bank Farm**, who supply meat to the Cock O'Barton. Meadow Bank Farm is run Keith Siddorn, who gave a talk last year about how much of his land is managed to help wildlife.

This was a popular and well received talk and we thought a visit to the farm



Keith Siddorn of Meadow Bank Farm

to see things firsthand would be nice. Keith will provide some light refreshment (£5 per person, payable in advance and nonrefundable) at 5 p.m. and then at 6 p.m. he will take us on a tour of his land, which should last around two hours.

Thursday 30 April sees the launch of the next exhibition which is on '**Northwich Home Front.**' Then on **Tuesday 19 May** we have an evening talk by Tony Barrett on 'Shipbuilding on the River Weaver.' It may well be a surprise to our young folk that Northwich, being so far from the sea, had a shipbuilding industry at all! Another surprise for many I'm sure will be the fact that Cheshire has a lowland search and rescue team. Curious to learn more? Come along on **Tuesday 19 May** to find out more from our guest speaker, Ray Milne.

The museum's third exhibition of the year has its preview launch for Friends on **Thursday 16 July**. Titled '**Mornant Paintings**' it is of course about Hartford's twin town of Mornant.

Evening events are 7 for 7:30 p.m. start and need to be booked in advance. See separate flyer for details on the visit to Stretton Watermill, details on Meadow Bank Farm visit will be made available nearer the time.

Previous Events

The Friends 'Christmas Social' event was held on Tuesday 9 December and involved a double dose of quizzes! Mary Curry's Christmas quiz on Cheshire got everyone chatting at the start.



Matt and Tom entitled their quiz 'Fiendish' and they were correct! 100 questions sending us into all the galleries, up and down the stairs, and



into every nook and cranny of the displays and exhibitions of the museum. Everyone rose to the challenge, one team got nearly every answer correct! Perhaps the mulled wine, mince pies and tit-bits helped. Images and words by Jenny Tyson

The last evening talk of 2008, 'A Trip Down the History of the River Weaver - Winsford to Witton' was by local historian and fellow Friend Colin Edmondson on 25 November.



Committee members Mary Curry & John Hulme with Colin Edmondson

It was very well illustrated with many pictures showing how places have changed over the years. In some cases all that is left to identify a site is a stone, post or partly submerged wall.

Surprisingly what we now see in many places around Winsford and Northwich are not places of natural beauty, as they appear to be. Colin's pictures show how filthy, smoky industrial sites, where even grass would not grow have been replaced by places of peace and tranquillity.

11 November evening talk by

Major John Ellis.

John gave a very interesting talk on diary entries of soldiers in the **Cheshire Regiments during WW1**. The main theme was of how many of those who



Major John Ellis

served kept a sense of humour despite the circumstances of fighting a new type of warfare.

One of the Cheshire's most famous soldiers was Thomas Alfred Jones VC DCM, known as Todger, he was born 25 December 1880 and died 30 January 1956. He was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1916 during the battle of the Somme, when at the village of Morval in France he single-handedly captured over 100 German prisoners. In the process he was shot at by snipers, one bullet struck his helmet and several others ripped through his uniform but somehow he came back unscathed.

At the **A.G.M.** on **23 October** Bob Percival stepped down



as a committee member, his contribution over many years has been very valuable and he was thanked by Jenny on behalf of all the Friends. Katy Percival also stands down as membership secretary but has said she will stay on and serve for at least another year before retiring. Thanks were given to Katy for all the hard work she has done in keeping the expanding membership organised.

Betty Knight, Rita Lamb, Lorna Simm and Katy Percival were re-elected and we welcomed new member Mary Curry. Following the AGM Barrie Jones offered his services and he was subsequently appointed as a committee member. One position on the committee remains vacant.

The talk was by Alison Taylor, Marketing Manager and Mark Beabo,



Matt, Alison and Mark

Production Director, representatives of Joseph Heler Ltd. This was by popular demand as at a previous event samples of their cheese went down so well.

The talk was both interesting and humorous with details on the company and cheese production. Joseph Heler have been making cheese in Cheshire for over 50 years, whilst Cheshire is thought to be the home of cheese production in Britain. It is the unique geology of Cheshire, with its salt beds, that imparts a flavour which is almost impossible to replicate and is one of the reasons why Cheshire cheese has such a widespread appeal.

Questionnaire Results

At the A.G.M. a short questionnaire was handed out, the objective being to further improve the Friends for both its members and the Salt Museum. The main results from that exercise are detailed below:

38 questionnaires were handed out and 16 subsequently emailed to those for whom we had email addresses. 34 and 5 respectively were completed, our thanks go to all those provided feedback.

88% said that they found events held during 2008 either very or quite interesting. We hope we can continue hitting the mark in 2009.

For future events Thursday (77%) was the most popular, followed by Wednesday (44%), Tuesday (38%) and Monday (32%). Whenever possible we will try to arrange for future events to be on a Thursday or one of the other more popular days.

Talks remain the most popular type of event with 97% interest, local trips out was next with 56% and then days out 44% and social meetings 38%.

Most people want to get their copy of the newsletter through the post although we do have a growing list who have signed up for electronic versions. If you have an email address and haven't already signed up please do

consider it. It is a full colour PDF and should be under 1MB in size. Just send an email to fotsm@mac.com with Newsletter in the subject. If you just want an alert so you can download it from the website at your leisure then put Download in the subject.

When it comes to the committee we have a split with half not knowing who is serving on it. We will be wearing badges at future events so that members will be able to identify us more easily. The current members of the committee are:

Matt Wheeler - Curator
Jenny Tyson - Chair
Betty Knight - Vice Chair
Lorna Simm - Treasurer
Rita Lamb - Secretary
Mary Curry - Membership Secretary
Robert Marshall - Newsletter & Website Editor
John Hulme
Katy Percival
Barrie Jones

10% of Friends don't know other Friends, most of these were new members. If you are a new member or don't know other Friends please do say hello to a committee member and we will introduce you to other Friends.

We asked if anyone would be interested in getting more involved with the Friends by helping out,

suggesting events, etc. It was nice to see such a positive response and we now have a list of people who we can draw on for help. If anyone else is interested then please speak to a committee member the next time you come to a Friends event.

For 2009 we gave a few suggestions for trips out and we have definite interest in visits to other local museums or sites (62%), 10th anniversary celebrations (56%), Stretton Watermill (47%), Meadow Bank Farm (41%) and good levels of interest in other events too.

Tea & talks and film shows have a core set of supporters whilst many may be tempted to come along in the future.

68% think membership of the Friends is excellent value for money with the remainder saying it was good value.

The majority of Friends appear to be retired, this may be a skewed result as this age group has more free time and so come to meetings more often.

Finally, without you the Friends would not be able to support the Salt Museum as we do, thank you.

News & Notices

The Salt Museum was well promoted over the weekend of 18/19 October 2008. Matt was at the Vale Royal Food & Drink Festival in Little Budworth, Tom was storytelling for the Chester Literature Festival and committee members attended the 'Tales of Wych and Water' event in Middlewich, which celebrated the heritage of the local canals and salt industry.

In addition Rita helped museum staff with a stall, on the following Monday, at Victoria Road Primary School's annual community afternoon. Matt has again featured on Cheshire FM and will make another appearance early in 2009.

On 20 January the Salt

Museum will once more play host to the Cheshire Best Kept Station Competition. All these events keep the Salt Museum well promoted not just locally but across the whole of Cheshire.

Emma Chaplin, Heritage and Museums Officer, leaves at the end of this year and is going to work freelance, we wish her well for the future.

Thanks to all of our Friends that are using the booking procedure for Friends' Talks and Exhibition Launches, it really does help. The earlier you can book the better as it assists Matt and the museum staff with

planning and arrangements.

On 4 April 2009 the BAfM North West Area Conference will be hosted by the Friends of the Whitworth, at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.

The thirty-sixth AGM & National Conference will take place between 2nd - 4th October 2009 at York, with the Friends of York Art Gallery and The National Railway Museum.

If anyone one is interested in these events please contact a committee member.

Curator's Corner

If you are new to the Friends you may not have heard of BAfM, The [British Association of Friends of Museums](#), of which we are members. BAfM represents over 200,000 Friends and volunteers, so although we may be a small group we are part of a very large association that supports local museums and galleries.

BAfM negotiates insurance at group rates for its members and, when needed, provides advice on a range of things. We also receive their newsletter, a copy of which is left in the museum for members and visitors to look through. Our website is listed on their site, along with 33 other groups of Friends. Next time you are thinking of visiting a museum have a look at the BAfM members site page <http://www.bafm.org.uk/pages/bafm-members-websites.htm> You can see what others are doing and maybe even pass on a little information about us too. If you do visit a fellow BAfM member site let us know, send us a picture and we will include your article in the next available edition of our newsletter.

If you have enjoyed any visit to the museum or a visit organised by the Friends please write in and share your experience with other Friends who might not have been able to come along themselves.



Image and Identity: Face to face with our Roman ancestors.

On Friday 16 January 2009 we will be launching a new exhibition about our Roman ancestors. We will have "real" Romans wandering about, and wine and Roman-style nibbles. There will be demonstrations of Roman coin striking, to make replicas of some of the coins in the exhibition.

The exhibition brings together important Roman items from various museums across the North West, including some of our own Roman items, some not seen for a while. These include a folded lead salt pan with Latin inscriptions, fragments of a Roman face pot, pottery stamped with the name of the local potter in Condate, MACO, and of course the Northwich Roman helmet will be on display.

Carved stones reveal the faces of native Britons, figurines show the form of the gods, coins and helmets offer portraits of power, whilst brooches, pins and mirrors give a vision of beauty in the eyes of our Roman ancestors. Also on show are two fascinating Roman cremation urns discovered in Winnington and returned to Northwich on a permanent basis after being in the stores of the Grosvenor Museum for 40 years.

This special exhibition is supported by Renaissance, a national scheme to transform England's regional museums. In addition it is accompanied by special workshops for schools and on 18 & 19 February family activity days.

Tom Hughes
Community & Education Officer

Calendar of Events

Friends Events in bold

Jan 16 Exhibition Launch 'Image & Identity - Faces of Romans & Britons in the North West'

Jan 28 Tea & Talk - Cheshire Writers by Tom Hughes

Jan 22 Film Night - Couscous cert 15

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

Feb 12 An Evening of drama, poetry and songs from the Victorian Workhouse

Feb 25 Tea & Talk - Curiosities from the Museum's Collections by Tom Hughes

Mar 19 Evening Talk David Hayns - 'Cheshire's Changing Boundaries'

Mar 25 Tea & Talk - Chemicals from Salt, the Story of Muspratt's of Merseyside by Arthur Townsend

Apr 15 Exclusive visit to Stretton Watermill followed by a pub lunch

Apr 30 Exhibition Launch 'Northwich Home Front'

May 19 Evening Talk 'Shipbuilding on the River Weaver' by Tony Barrett

May 23/24 Museum Open Weekend

June 11 Evening Talk 'Cheshire Lowland Search and Rescue' by Ray Milne

July 7 Visit to Meadow Bank Farm

July 16 Exhibition Launch 'Mornant Paintings'