



# NEWSLETTER

Issue 6: September 2009

<http://fotsm.org.uk>

I am happy to report that both The Friends and the Salt Museum are thriving with membership and attendances numbers up. Neither Matt and the museum staff nor The Friends take this success for granted though, so we will continue to work together to keep this local treasure for future generations to enjoy.

I would like to welcome ex-councillor Nora Dolphin to The Friends and as a co-opted member of the committee. Nora expressed an interest in joining The Friends and getting involved in a pro-active way when she was a guest at our tenth anniversary event. Nora joins Barrie Jones, who was co-opted last November after volunteering to help and has already served us well by taking over the printing of the newsletter.

Katie Percival will be standing down from the committee, see the News and Notices section on page 3. Barrie and Nora will both be standing for election to the committee at the A.G.M. in October. If anyone else is interested in joining the committee please let us know before the A.G.M. Contact details are at the end of the newsletter.

Robert Marshall, Editor.

## Forthcoming Events

**September 10** is the launch night for the exhibition **'Above us the clouds - Mallory & Irvine & The Quest for Everest.'** To fit in with this exhibition there will be a **Tea & Talk on September 23** and, on **October 20**, a talk, after our A.G.M. **by Julie Summers**, great niece of Sandy Irvine and author of 'Fearless on Everest.' Julie has given talks and lectures to a wide audience, such as the National Geographic, Washington and the Imperial War Museum, as well as appearing on radio. This is a night not to be missed, so make that booking now! You can find out more about Julie at <http://www.juliesummers.co.uk/>

Then on Thursday **24 September**, **'Poor Man's Heritage'** is an evening of drama, poetry and songs from the Victorian Workhouse. Life in a workhouse was hard, but not quite as Charles Dickens portrayed in *Oliver Twist!* Come to this evening event, see and hear for yourself and get a feel for what life was really like.

**November 12** sees the launch of the next exhibition **'Northwich Shops.'** You probably go to them or pass by them without a second thought. Some have been around it seems, forever, and some you thought would last your lifetime have gone. Come to the exhibition and maybe reflect on what was, is, and might yet be at the heart of Northwich.

The behind the scenes **trip around Sainsbury's** at Northwich, on Monday **16 November**, was mentioned in the last newsletter and before a flyer was produced had already proved to be popular. If interest remains high and it is over subscribed then we will look to book another date for a second trip.

The last event of the year for The Friends is on **December 9** **'Christmas Social' and a talk by Sid Bailey** on his experiences of life in a workhouse.

Previous Christmas socials have been popular as family events, they are relaxed, informal and friendly. Just what you need before the panic sets in!

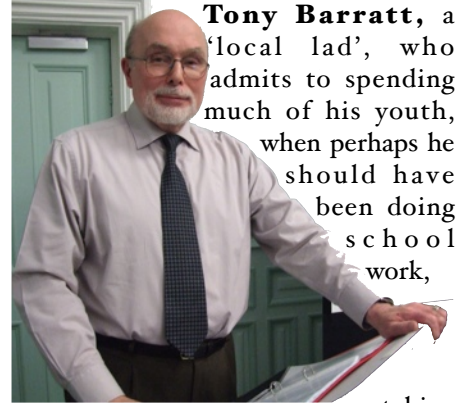
The Tea & Talk and Film Shows, arranged by the museum, are gaining a regular following. These and all the other events at the museum are listed in chronological order on the last page of the newsletter, details are also available from our website: <http://fotsm.org.uk> or the museum's site: <http://www.saltmuseum.org.uk/>

## Previous Events

**Shipbuilding on the River Weaver** May 19. Report by Mary Curry.

The talk at this meeting was by Mr

**Tony Barratt**, a 'local lad', who admits to spending much of his youth, when perhaps he should have been doing school work,



watching the workers at Pimlott's and Yarwood's ship yards in Northwich. This then led to a lifetime's study of the ships that were built along the Weaver, and what has subsequently happened to them.

He took us on a fascinating journey along the river starting with Cross's boat yard in Winsford, where the marina now stands, and from there we moved along to other shipyards, both large and small. When we look at the river today it is hard to believe that such a thriving industry existed as there is little left in evidence.

During a 250 year period, starting in 1728, Tony believes that there were in excess of 3,028 vessels built along the Weaver of all shapes and sizes. There were 62 shipyards along its length; 23 at Winsford, 34 at Northwich and 5 at Frodsham. Some were small yards and others rented spaces where perhaps only one vessel was ever built. By the late 1800s most of the yards went over to the Salt Union and Deakin's in Winsford became their repair yard. Tony gave us some fascinating facts and figures about the yards and the ships that were built when the industry was at its peak.

The largest ship built was the *Monarch*, built at Deakin's and then returned to be altered when it could

not fit under the stone bridge at Hartford! Herman Falk built the first steam-powered ship on the Weaver and one of the very first motor driven vessels was built at Yarwood's yard.

From flat boats for salt transportation to small aircraft carriers, the vessels built on the Weaver were many and varied. They were put to use all over the world and, since the quality was good, many still survive today. The meeting was very well attended and many local people with stories to tell and souvenirs to show were present. It was a very enjoyable evening.



### **Ray Milne and Cheshire's Lowland Search and Rescue Unit.**

Report by Jenny Tyson.

On June 11 thirty-one Friends enjoyed a really informative talk about the Cheshire Lowland Search and Rescue Unit. This unit is led by Ray Milne, who is also their training and equipment officer. Ray, who was a police officer for twenty-six years and in the RAF for seven years before that, explained how the unit was formed and how it operated. His expertise and commitment to the unit was totally clear.

Ray walked into the Salt Museum carrying a huge backpack, which is used on rescues. From this backpack emerged an amazing amount of specialised equipment. He treated one of our friends to a demonstration of the warming properties of a stretcher come sleeping bag, come thermal



blanket in case he was suffering from hypothermia! He looked very snug and cosy, but clearly the equipment has a very serious purpose.

Ray demonstrated the latest climbing equipment and talked about the

training sessions the unit has every Tuesday evening. The unit has access to the latest training manuals and vital research, which helps them keep up to date. One piece of global research has recognised certain patterns of behaviour of different types of 'lost' individuals. This gives Ray and his team some clues as to where possibly to start their search for a missing person when called out.

Ray answered a barrage of interesting questions, because many of us had heard of mountain rescue organisations, but few of us knew of the Cheshire Lowland Search and Rescue Unit. The unit is run by volunteers and has to be self financing. Our donation on behalf of the Friends might go a little way towards a new piece of equipment. Ray certainly succeeded in his mission to raise awareness of the Cheshire Lowland Search and Rescue Unit. A thoroughly fascinating evening, with a 'thank you' to Betty Knight who organised the talk.

### **Meadow Bank Farm visit July 7.** Report by Tom Tyson.

It was in May 2008 that Keith Siddorn, of Meadow Bank Farm, Broxton, gave us a talk about how he had changed the nature of the farm, since he took over the tenancy from his father. He has changed from intensive dairying to a much more environmentally friendly system. He now breeds pure bred Hereford cattle for beef, but also has 1,300 pigs as a 'stable' income stream. Many changes had also been made to encourage wildlife, including barn owls, one of which accompanied him at his talk.

Many of the Friends were so impressed that Jenny arranged for us to visit and tour the farm on July 7 – was it really over a year since his talk? About twenty-five of us met on a beautiful summer's evening, following many thunderstorms across Cheshire, so we were really fortunate! We started with a 'high tea' prepared by Keith's mother and her friend, who do a couple of these a week – the farm attracts about 20,000 visitors a year. And what a high tea! A big vote of thanks due there!



Keith then gave us a short talk, expanding on what he had said last year, about the 200 acre farm, which has been tenanted by his family for over 100 years, he being the fourth generation. He decided early on that he didn't want to get up early in the morning to milk the cows, so decided to change tack. He now has about 100 pure bred Hereford cattle, which are reared from calves until they are about twelve years old (if heifers), during which time they will have had about seven calves each. The bull calves are not so fortunate as the heifers, being slaughtered quite early in their lives, and after being butchered on the Wirral, are sold through the farm shop and other outlets.

We then had a short walk through the cattle, then a longer tractor ride



round the rest of the farm, which features many habitats created solely for wildlife. Wild bird seed mixtures are used to provide a winter food source for small birds such as the tree sparrow, finch and linnets; pollen and nectar mixes to provide a nectar source particularly for butterflies and bees. Fallow plots provide habitat for nesting lapwing, which later in the year are used by nesting skylark; and raised water levels in one field that attracts over-wintering waders.

As we know, Keith has worked with the Broxton Barn Owl group to put up large nest boxes for barn owls. The boxes are equipped with cameras, linked by a 'wi-fi' network to a display monitor in the Hayloft visitor barn.

Sadly, the barn owls have not nested this year, their boxes being inhabited by pigeons instead! There are also more than 200 boxes for tree sparrow. Meanwhile, in every 150 metres of fence line there is a 'mammal gate' which allows the easy passage of foxes and badgers across the farm.

Meadow Bank farm now has about 8 miles of permissive access routes for walkers, bird watchers, and wildlife enthusiasts, and many hedges which Keith's father was paid to grub up have been replanted, again with government grants! How things have changed in one lifetime! The new hedges are managed on a five-year rotational cutting programme that allows them to grow tall and bushy, blossom in the spring, then the berries in the winter also benefit wildlife. There are six-metre grass margins in the fields and 13 ponds across the farm. The largest of these is used to collect rainwater from all the farm buildings, and the water is then pumped out, filtered, treated with UV light, and chlorinated, for use for all the animals. This gives a saving of some £15,000 per year on water rates, according to Keith, who was very open and frank with his views and information.

Keith said that he is passionate about farming in a socially acceptable and sustainable manner. One of his aims is to help educate people about the environment and where their food comes from. He also wants to demonstrate to the general public that farmers help to create and preserve the wonderful countryside in which we live. In this aim, he is being very successful, and indeed one of our group said that this was the best trip he had ever been on in his life!

Obviously, this article has only been able to give you a flavour of what we saw – you should go and look for yourself!

**Jumelage/Amitie (Twinning & Friendship)** exhibition launch 16 July. Report by Iris Isserlis (Chairman, Hartford-Mornant Twinning Committee.)

A twinning group which has been in existence for twenty-two years, had its

origins in a casual remark made to someone in Mornant who was looking for a 'twin' village in England. It was suggested that he should look for a village in Cheshire 'because the people there are so friendly.' We hope that we have lived up to that promise.



Mrs Iris Isserlis, Chairman and Mrs Dorothy Craven, Secretary of the Twinning Association

Mornant is a village with a population of five thousand, making it about the same size as Hartford. However, there are not many similarities in administration and infrastructure. The French village has a mayor, with powers invested by the state. These include the right to conduct marriages and the responsibility for a large budget which covers everything from road repairs to education.

It is a very attractive village, with a 'place' at its centre. On Friday mornings this is the setting for a bustling market but, once that is over, it reverts to being one of the village car parks. It is surrounded by small shops, cafés, banks and an hotel.

When the twinning began, in 1987, it coincided with the opening of the Maison du Pays, a beautiful mediaeval building which has been sympathetically restored and which now houses exhibitions, some permanent and some temporary. In 2007, when a group from Hartford was in Mornant for the biennial visit, the Maison du Pays was the venue for an exhibition of paintings and photographs by residents of Hartford. (The exhibition held recently in the Salt Museum was the 'return match'.)

Maurice Chaize, a member of the Mornant twinning committee, who came on this visit, has kindly donated a painting entitled 'Destination Jumelage' to the Hartford twinning committee. As well as the artworks on show at the Salt Museum, there was a

display of gifts which have been presented to the people of Hartford during the twenty-two years of twinning. Among these was a patchwork wall hanging, depicting a view of Mornant, which had been sewn by four ladies who took part in this visit.



'Destination Jumelage' one of the paintings on show.

The Hartford twinning committee has about fifteen members, many of whom are founder members. Much the same is true of the Mornant group. Every two years, a visit is made in one direction or the other. In 2011 it will be the turn of the Hartford group to go to Mornant.

Contrary to recent articles in the local press, we are self financing, apart from a small sum received every two years from Hartford Parish Council. We would welcome some new and younger members. When the twinning began, there were several exchanges between Hartford High School and the College Ronsard in Mornant. Several lasting friendships were formed then and it would be good to have a 'young' element again.

Find out more about Hartford's twinning association at: <http://www.hartford-twinning.org.uk/> (Ed.)

**Northwich Photographic Society's (NPS) exhibition 'Art By Chips.'** Report by Robert Marshall.

Launched on August 19 to a packed house, the exhibition was introduced by Geoff Noxon, Chairman of the society and officially opened by Norman Thompson DPAGB LBIPP, President of the Lancashire and Cheshire Photographic Union (LCU).

The LCU Centenary Exhibition was also held in the museum early last year, as reported in issue one of this publication.



Norman Thompson, Geoff Noxon and curator Matt Wheeler opening the exhibition

'Art by Chips' is a reference to the fact that the images on display were all the result of the use of digital cameras and or computers. The photographers dark room, chemicals, papers and other paraphernalia being replaced with electronic 'dark rooms' such as Photoshop™. The result though still relies on the skill of the photographer.

Nearly ninety prints were on display along with many more images being digitally projected.

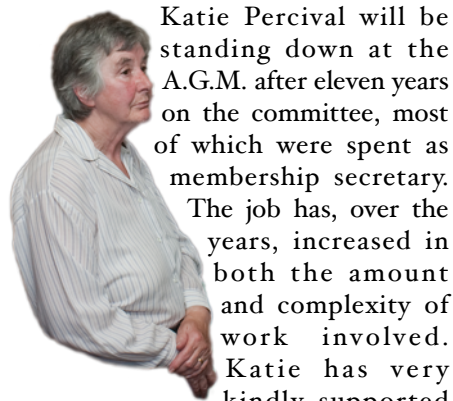


The NPS currently has around twenty-five members and a history going back more than twenty-five years. It has been based in various locations, as its fortunes have changed over the years. There is a link to the Salt Museum, in that it has held many exhibitions in Northwich Library - one time home of the Salt Museum.

You can find out more about both societies by going to:  
<http://www3.clikpic.com/northwichphotosoc/index.html>  
and  
<http://www.lcpu.org/>

## News & Notices

### Museum/Friends News



Katie Percival will be standing down at the A.G.M. after eleven years on the committee, most of which were spent as membership secretary. The job has, over the years, increased in both the amount and complexity of work involved. Katie has very kindly supported

Mary Curry, our new membership secretary, over the last year, making it a very smooth and problem free transition.

On behalf of all Friends and the museum staff we would like to thank Katie for her support and dedication over the years.

It is only at an A.G.M. that members can be elected to serve on the Friends committee. If you are interested in standing for election you have to let us know before the actual meeting. There are several ways of informing us:

Let any committee member know at one of our events.

Write in to the address at the end of the newsletter.

Send an email to the editor.

### Reporters Wanted!

Do you think you could write a small article on one of the Friends future events? Have you heard something that you think would make for interesting reading to our community? As well as reporters we are also looking for photographers to get involved. Photos could be used to accompany an article or to add to the website. It doesn't matter what type of camera you have as long as it is a digital one.

Future newsletters will be going out in January, May and September each year. You can volunteer for a single piece or become a regular contributor.

Both roles will help to promote the Friends to existing members who maybe can't make it to specific events, and to potential members, who will be better able to see what we do and have

to offer. If you are interested then email the editor.

### BAfM News

<http://www.bafm.org.uk/>

British Association of Friends of Museums has announced that Bernard Rostron is the prospective BAFM North West Co-ordinator. Bernard is the Chairman of the Friends of Helmshore Textile Museum, Rossendale. He will shadow David Shipway until, if elected, succeeding him at the next BAFM AGM and Conference to be held between 24 & 26 September 2010 at Douglas, Isle of Man, with the Friends of Manx National Heritage.

The BAfM Handbook for Heritage Volunteer Managers & Administrators has been updated to issue two by Peter Walton, the BAFM Project Manager who wrote the 1999 Handbook.

BAfM was delighted to host the World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM) Council and General Assembly meeting this May and were pleased to welcome 54 Friends from 16 countries to Glasgow.

Don't forget that copies of BAFM's latest journal are kept in the museum for Friends and visitors to read. It has articles submitted by fellow members as well as their own.

### Miscellaneous

Kenneth Chang, of the [New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com), wrote on July 6 about 'The Silly Putty Properties of Table Salt.' Curious? Read more at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/science/07obsalt.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/science/07obsalt.html?_r=1)

Want to join the Friends? Call in at the museum, download an application form from our website, or write to us at the address at the end of the newsletter.

When you have read your newsletter think about passing it on rather than deleting it! You could pass it to a friend or relative who may be interested in joining us.

## Curator's Corner



### 'Above the Clouds'

On Thursday 10 September 2009, we launch our next exhibition, 'Above the Clouds

- Mallory & Irvine's Quest for Everest.'

On 8 June 1924, George Mallory and Andrew 'Sandy' Irvine were spotted



during a clearing in the mist 'going strong for the top' of Mount Everest. The intrepid mountaineers were never seen alive again. Did

they succeed in reaching the summit nearly 30 years before Edmund Hillary? This exhibition reflects on the lives and achievements of these two remarkable men who were both born in Cheshire.

I have wanted to tackle this subject for some time but it has taken us around two years to plan the exhibition. That's mainly because I was determined to include three key elements:-Sandy Irvine's ice axe, which was found by an expedition in 1933 and is now owned by the Alpine Club; a set of 1924 replica clothing, researched by various universities, owned by and displayed at the Mountain Heritage Centre; and a selection of the items found when Mallory's body was discovered in 1999 now in the possession of the Royal Geographical Society. It proved quite a lengthy process to organise a mutually convenient period of time when all these items would be available. In fact, you could say we've had a mountain to climb!

We subsequently realised that there were other interesting artefacts held by various organisations and individuals. So, we've clocked up a few miles travelling to Kent, Cambridge, Oxford, Penrith, Shrewsbury and Winchester on the trail of Mallory and Irvine. Sadly, council expenses did not permit a trip to Everest!

As far as I'm aware this is the first time that such an exhibition (i.e. looking at the lives of both men) has ever been undertaken in the county of their birth. It is also my understanding that it represents one of the most comprehensive exhibitions ever tackled on the subject, with some artefacts never exhibited before in public. There will be over sixty artefacts on display plus original film footage from the 1922 and 1924 expeditions running continuously. I would like to express my thanks to Sandra Noel, the daughter of the cinematographer, Captain John Noel, for allowing me to edit this unique footage.

Because both men had a connection with Birkenhead, we have worked in partnership on the project with our colleagues at Wirral Museums Service. The exhibition will move on to the Williamson Art Gallery from 14 November until 31 January.

I am excited at the prospect of bringing personal possessions of both men 'back home' to Cheshire albeit for a temporary period. I am delighted that Sandy's great niece, Julie Summers, will be travelling up to formally open the exhibition and will return for the Friends' AGM to give an illustrated talk about her ancestor and the Everest expedition. We also look forward to welcoming to the museum a few of the children of some of the 1920s expedition members.

To accompany the exhibition we will be showing two climbing related films in 'The Regalette.' On Thursday 29 October at 2 p.m. we will be showing 'Blindsight', a gripping documentary about six blind Tibetan teenagers who set out to climb the 23,000 foot Lhakpa Ri on the north side of Mount Everest. Then in the evening we will be showing 'North Face', the acclaimed film from last year about the attempt by two Germans to scale the north face of the Eiger in the 1930s. Please note, this film is in German with subtitles and is ticket only in advance from the museum.

We hope you enjoy our Everest extravaganza!

Matt Wheeler, Curator

### Calendar of Events

#### Friends Events in bold

**Sept. 10 Exhibition Launch 'Mallory & Irvine'**

Sept. 23 Tea & Talk 'Mallory & Irvine'

**Sept. 24 Evening Talk - Poor Man's Heritage**

Sept. 24 Evening Film show - The Grocer's Son

**Oct. 20 AGM & talk on 'Mallory and Irvine' by Julie Summers**

Oct. 28 Activity day: Soul Caking Characters

Oct. 28 Tea & Talk 'Cheshire's Hillforts Project,' presented by archaeologist Dan Garner

Oct. 29 Afternoon Film show - Blindsight

Oct. 29 Evening Film show - North Face

**Nov. 12 Exhibition Launch 'Northwich Shops'**

**Nov. 16 Trip around Sainsbury's at Northwich**

Nov. 25 Tea & Talk 'A Tudor Christmas' presented by Tom Hughes

**Dec. 9 Christmas Social and a talk by Sid Bailey on his experiences of life in a workhouse**

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