

Welcome to what may be the penultimate edition of the Friends of The Salt Museum's Newsletter! The changes to our constitution, to reflect the change in name of the museum and to bring it up to date, are progressing well. The final version will be presented at the A.G.M. in October and offered for adoption by the Friends. If anyone would like a copy of the draft version before the A.G.M. please email me or ask to see a copy at one of the Friends events held at the museum

Membership continues to rise and we now number just over 300, double that of just three years ago. With the AGM coming up in October there is plenty of time for members to consider standing for election to the committee. If you are interested, would like more information of what is involved, or maybe sit in and observe a committee meeting, then email me, speak to any of the current committee members or write in to the address at the end of the newsletter.

Robert Marshall, Editor.

Previous Events Lost Buildings of West Cheshire.

Report by Robert Marshall

The launch of this exhibition took place on 14 January and, as the name indicates, was aptly timed as 'Cheshire' itself starts to disappear. It was formally opened by Tom Hughes who said how difficult it is to put on an exhibition about things that mostly no longer exist!



to some of the lost sites and buildings.

Eddisbury Hillfort, dating back to around 1000 b.c., was the oldest site to feature. This particular site was fortified as an Anglo-Saxon burh by Aethelfeada (Lady of

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the Mercians) in 914 a.d. What remains of the site is a scheduled ancient monument. That does not stop nature from continuing to erode the site so one day it may truly have gone for good.

Next time you visit Frodsham, and you go into the Castle Park Arts Centre, you are on the site of a castle destroyed by fire in 1654. The then owner, John Savage, died that year and within hours of his death the building was destroyed, very mysterious!

Another example of buildings being lost is the clearance of slums in Chester, from the mid eighteen hundreds through to the nineteen thirties. Small, packed together and overcrowded houses just off Prince's Street. Imagine, if you can, seven families living in one small house - 39 people in all. If that was not bad enough, then consider that several houses shared an outside toilet!

Also gone are a Roman Villa in Eaton, near Tarporley, although the remains of the hypocaust (heating) system can still be seen. More obvious and recent were the losses of shops and houses in Northwich due to subsidence; Railway Stations, such as in small villages like Mickle Trafford; cottages throughout the county and, of course, many of the buildings that used to be part of the site the museum sits on!

Vale Royal Abbey - A Failed

Enterprise? \ Report by Jenny Tyson The evening of 4 February saw the Friends following the timeline for Vale Royal Abbey, ably guided by Tony Bostock, Chair of Northwich Heritage Society. We were told that the Cistercian monks were given a charter and a considerable endowment of

However, by 1276 the Abbot decided that a site near Over was better situated, and he moved the 50 or so monks, and thus it became known as Vale Royal Abbey. Tony amazed us by showing us the plans for the abbey. It was equal to the size of

lands and churches by Edward 1st in 1270

to build an abbey near Darnhall.

http://fotsm.org.uk

Westminster Abbey, with the best architect of his day, Walter of Hereford, in charge of the construction. Tony told us about the lives of the monks and all the jobs at which they were adept, such as glassmaking, beekeeping, quarrying, looking after sheep and even engineering works to manage water, together with presumably their religious duties. Despite all these talents and all the monies received from the Black Prince in 1350s, the abbey was still not finished.

Disaster struck in 1360 when the building collapsed! Tony wasn't sure what had caused the collapse, but there is a suggestion on a website, (www.vra.co.uk) that there had been a hurricane across Cheshire! The Abbey was finished by Richard II on a much reduced scale.

Tony went on to summarise why he felt that Vale Royal Abbey was a failed enterprise quoting evidence such as scandals, intrigue; mismanagement of funds, poor relationships with local people, local gentry, local churches; riots and an abbot was even murdered in 1437. A sorry tale for the 'whiter than white' Cistercian monks.

An interesting talk by Tony, taking us to the end of the medieval period. There is more information, up to the present day, on the above website and, of course, Tony's own book "Vale Royal Abbey and the Cistercians 1277 - 1538", if you want to continue your interest. This can be bought from the museum or from the Northwich Heritage Society's own website: www.northwich-heritage.org.uk for the price of £4.

All The Fun Of The Orbit.

Report by Robert Marshall

Hugh Beggs, the speaker for this talk, is one of our regulars and he always gives a good talk. So popular is he that he is now



booked up to 2012!

Hugh started by putting us in our place, in the universe that is, three quarters of the way out from our <u>Galaxy's</u> core, in one of countless galaxies. Then it was down to Earth with a bump as Hugh explained how we orbit the Sun, with gravity and inertia in balance.

After that it was 'back to school' drawings to explain the phases of the Moon, how eclipses happen and the thorny problem of the tides. How the Moon, not the Sun has the greatest influence on tides, because being closer is more important than being massive. There is a technical term for this, but if I write it down he warned that you may not read much more!

Hugh continued with an explanation of why the tides are 52 minutes later each day and why there is also a high tide on the opposite side (not facing the Moon) of the Earth. Then it was onto the Four Seasons no, not Vivaldi! This was all to do with why winter is so much colder than summer, i.e. the angle of inclination (currently 23.4°C) changing the surface area that a given amount of sunlight falls on, and increased cloud cover preventing more of it reaching the ground.

Hugh finished off the talk on the subject of tidal bores, Britain having the second largest one, on the River Severn - reaching a wave height of some seven feet, in the World. The variation in tidal heights between inshore and offshore locations, which means that you can row up and down hill on the ocean!

This was a thoroughly enjoyable night and showed that learning can be fun.

Not So Solid Ground

Report by Jenny Tyson

What a treat we had on Sunday 28th March! Weather fine, a pleasant stroll, lovely countryside, convivial company and expert local historian, Colin Edmondson as our guide.



We started our walk in Marston and walked along the Trent and Mersey canal towards the Anderton Boat Lift. We had no idea, until Colin showed us the old photographs as proof, where the old salt works were, or where the canal had collapsed and disgorged thousands of litres of water. The evidence of a canal dock and the canal diversion were more obvious, but only after being pointed out by Colin!

At Marbury Lane we made our meandering way through salt marshes, and reclaimed land, and passed flashes, none of which were actually natural. Colin quoted us some mind boggling figure as to the volumes of water that disappeared down the big hole which formed with the collapse of Ashton Mine in 1880. There are miles of footpaths to explore in this area, all with a hidden history to unlock.

We had the added privilege of the Lion Salt Works being especially opened for us by David Roberts, Chair of the <u>Lion Salt Works Trust</u>.



This enabled us to see the extent of the work being carried out using the Heritage Lottery funding. It also enabled us to view the exhibition in the Colin Edmondson Gallery. This had especially excellent maps of the area we had walked through. Some of us then repaired across the road to the Salt Barge pub for lunch. This was an excellent follow up to Colin's talk and presentation at the Friends' evening talk in the museum in March.

Colin has written up the research for this walk and others in booklets on sale at the museum or from Colin. If you missed the opportunity to join this walk, they will be repeated in the Northwich Heritage week, May 31st to June 6th. This is when the museum celebrates its name change to Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse and the opening of a new gallery.

Report by Jenny Tyson

Salt Of The Earth/You've Never Had It So Good

Report by Robert Marshall

18 March was a double launch night with the 1950s exhibition and in the coffee shop area artwork

from the over 50s art group. It was good to see so many people attend, over one hundred! The art



exhibition was all the work of local artists and showed a variety of media and subject. Salt, in one form or another featuring throughout, and I heard many people comment on which was their own favourite piece.

The exhibition room housed 'You've never had it so good', a review of the 1950s. The title of this exhibition refers, of course, to the speech made by Harold Macmillan - in 1957 - to fellow Conservatives in which he said 'most of our people have never had it so good.' So, what were some of the memorable events of the 50s?

On 25 December 1950 The 'Stone of Destiny' was removed from Westminster Abbey by Scottish Nationalists.



The Festival

Of Britain was launched in 1951 and John Wyndham's The Day of the Triffids was published.

In 1952 over two thousand people died in London's smog and Britain tested an atomic bomb. In 53 Elizabeth II was crowned Queen and Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay conquered Everest.

The four minute mile barrier was broken and Tolkien published The Fellowship of the Ring in 1954. Ruth Ellis was the last woman to be hanged, in 1955 and in 56 the Suez Crisis developed. Then, in 57, we had the Macmillan speech.

The Munich air crash of 1958 resulted in twenty-three dead, including eight Manchester United players. The CND was formed in that year too. The decade ended with the first hovercraft crossing of the Channel and Britain's 'Mini' car, went on sale.

Now, do you know:

A, Who had the first U.K. number I chart hit with 'Here In My Heart'?

B, What happened to change the World on 4 October 1957 and how was Cheshire involved?

C, When did food rationing end?

D, What year were credit cards introduced? E, What organ was the first to be successfully transplanted in 1954?

F, What did James Watson and Frances Crick unlock in 1953?

Finally, to show how fast technology moves,

fibre optics were being tested for high speed communication back in 1954, and are finally being rolled out for broadband internet connection over the next few years!

Answers to did you know:

A, AL Martino. B, Sputnik launched and tracked by Jodrell Bank. C, 1954. D, 1951 biners Club (in the U.K. it was Barclay card in 1967). E, Kidney in 1954. F, the molecular structure of DNA.

Growing up in Liverpool in the 1950s

Report by Rita Lamb An evening talk with Jim Finn 27 April

"Your bedroom looks like a bombsite!" parents still shout at their sulky teenagers, although the chances are neither of them has ever seen a bombsite. Jim Finn has. Growing up in Liverpool after the war he and his mates used to scour them for wood they could chop up and sell door-to-door as kindling.

Of course just that one image tells you the 1950s are now as far away as the Middle many of remember during the Friends can still them. And Jim's vivid, fascinating talk,

remember we did: you could see h e a d s

nodding in sudden recognition as he easily and skilfully summoned up a vanished world where a Boys Brigade trip to the Isle of Man was thrilling foreign travel. Synapses dormant for five decades flared like Olympic torches at the words 'Lita Rosa', 'Saturday matinee' and 'saving stamps'. And the skiffle craze! It wasn't all washboards; it triggered the national rush to buy cheap guitars which made something like the Beatles inevitable. In fact, without the drab old Fifties the Sixties would never have swung.

Jim had brought his own guitar, and amiably tempted us into the occasional sing along. With some shock you realized you'd not only carried the entire lyrics to 'Puttin' On The Style' around in your head for over half a century, you'd also reached an age where you weren't embarrassed to sing them in public. It was an excellent evening,

even though it's not as if anyone in the room actually wanted to go back to a world of terrible teeth and no loft insulation. It's just that every decade eventually dips below the horizon of human memory, and this was a chance to look back fondly at one where a footballer with an open goal before him could stop, turn round and help a fallen defender to his feet. (Billy Liddell, Liverpool, in the 1950s. Jim Finn saw it happen.)

News and Notices Friends

If you have already looked at the calendar of events for this summer you will have noticed that there are fewer Friends events organised this year. The summer holidays are always a busy time for families, so may we pose a question to you? Would you like a Friends event, such as a day out somewhere local? Perhaps you have an idea of somewhere or an event that would make a good day out for us. If so, then this is your chance to suggest something, don't worry about having to organise it though, we can do that. We will review any suggestions made before the end of June and let you know of any event(s) that are feasible to arrange for July/August. Send your ideas by email to the editor.

The Friends website has been online for nearly two years now, and we have had over 500 unique visitors from 24 countries, with



common after the U.K. In total we have received just over 4,600 hits. Popular targets are the Home page, photos, events and the calendar page. We have also been contacted on a several occasions by people who have visited the site.

An open letter to Matt from Rita Lamb Secretary, Friends of the Salt Museum 'Dear Matt,

On behalf of the Friends I would like to congratulate you and all the team at the Salt Museum for your outstanding achievement in being shortlisted both for Cheshire's 'Small Visitor Attraction of the Year Award' and the national 'Museums and Heritage 2010 Award' simultaneously. This is a truly remarkable 'double'!

Record visitor figures in the past few months show how much you deserve to be recognised as a successful local attraction, but it is heartening that your work promoting our county's history should receive notice at national level too. The project for which you won your place on the shortlist - 'Above The Clouds: Mallory and Irvine and the Quest for Everest' - shows that what may begin as a Cheshire story can soon resonate beyond local boundaries.

May I offer you our best wishes for the forthcoming finals at Westminster (12 May & 11 June, ed.) and at Chester, and please pass on to all at the Museum our warmest congratulations.

Regards, Rita Lamb'

Museum

Northwich Heritage week runs from Monday 31 May through until Sunday 6 June. It will involve Anderton Boat Lift, Lion Salt Works, the Pumping Station, and Witton Church, and the Salt Museum. 1,000 'Northwich Heritage Week' booklets are to be printed and given away prior to this series of events. Entry to most of the venues will be free to holders of the booklet, so keep a look out for them! Thanks are due to Northwich Heritage Society, The River Weaver Navigation Society and the Friends of The Salt Museum for sponsoring the booklets.

Other items

During Witton Church Open Day (Friday, 4 June) we hope to allow people up the Tower! Bring your cameras, you can see for miles and miles!

The Girl Guides celebrate 100 years of Guiding this year and it is also the centenary of the death of Florence Nightingale. On a more local note it is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell. Knutsford was her home and her inspiration for Cranford. There are plenty of local events this summer that celebrate her life and works.

Winsford Library is hosting three events in May which may be of interest to our readers (to book an event phone 01606 552065):

"Horrible Handwriting for Historians" on Tuesday 18 May, 10.30 to 12.30. Cheshire Record Office experts will be leading a free workshop on deciphering old handwriting such as wills and deeds. Limited to 20 people.

"Hilary Green" on Tuesday 18 May, 2.30pm. Hilary is a trained actress and spent many years teaching drama including James Bond star Daniel Craig. She writes historical novels set in World War Two and lives in

the Wirral. Tickets are £2 (£1 if a member of the Winsford Library friends group).

"Census and Certificates" on Thursday 20 May 7.15 to 9. A talk by the Cheshire Record Office on finding your ancestors using the census and other materials, including local examples.

Looking for ideas for a day out this summer?

Plant Hunters Fair at Norton Priory on 6 June (Free).

Cheshire County Show at Tabley on 22/23 June.

Arley Garden Festival at Arley Hall and Garden on 26/27 June.

Medieval Britain, battle re-enactments, merchants and fair at Tatton Park on 26/27 Iune.

RHS Show & Floral Walk, Tatton Park between 21 & 25 July.

Nantwich International Cheese Show on 27 July.

More details/events can be found at http://www.favouritedaysoutincheshire.co.uk/site/events

Curator's Corner

Farewell Salt Museum....Hello Weaver Hall Museum & Workhouse.



This really is the last time I write to you as Curator of the Salt Museum. As of Tuesday I June 2010 we will become Weaver Hall Museum & Workhouse. The

decision to relaunch and change the name of the museum has not been an easy or straight-forward one to make and we know that there are some of our supporters who do not agree with it. We do feel strongly that it is the right course of action to take so that this museum and, in a few years' time, the Lion Salt Works can grow and forge their own identities for the benefit of our visitors.

As many of you may know, the Salt Museum has had a chequered history since its first incarnation in the 1880s. The collection has moved home several times and also experienced lean years of being

confined to store. We are very proud of what we have achieved with the Salt Museum since it moved to the London Road site in 1981. Visitor figures have fluctuated over the years but we are currently experiencing a record demand for our programme of activities – whether it's for our special exhibitions or the wide variety of school sessions on offer. All members of staff here and the Friends of the Salt Museum committee have worked extremely hard to make it what it is today – a highly regarded museum which has and continues to become part of community life in the area.

We understand that this reputation has been hard won and we do not intend to jeopardise it under a new name. Instead, we hope it can go from strength to strength as we uncover the wide variety of stories relating to the area's unique heritage - to appeal to people of all backgrounds and interests. We look forward too in supporting the future resurrection of the Lion Salt Works so that this unique and important site can reveal the history of salt and salt-making in the area in a more dynamic way than what we can undertake at this site. We hope that you and everyone else in the area will be able to benefit from having three high-class visitor attractions (including the Anderton Boat Lift) on the doorstep in the future which will be the envy of other towns in the country. Our inaugural heritage week starting on 31 May will give you a taster of what's to come in the future.

We hope that you continue to support us as we embark on this exciting journey and look forward to showing you the first stage of it on 1st June.

See you then. Matt Wheeler, Curator Salt Museum / Weaver Hall Museum & Workhouse

Ed.On Tuesday 1 June, the museum will be renamed 'The Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse', and will see the opening of the new 'Transport Gallery', in place of 'Made from Salt.' The empty Weaver Gallery will have a new art. exhibition organised by Patricia Kelsall.

Calendar of Events Friends Events in bold

(All 'Activity' events run from 10am-4pm)

May 15 Film Show: Night at the Museum 2

May 26 Tea & Talk 'Brit Chic: Fashion on Film, 1946-89'

May. 27 Film Show: TBC

Jun. I Launch Night 'The Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse'

Jun. 2/3 Activity: Workhouse Worries

Jun. 30 Tea & Talk 'Uncle Bill: The Life and Times of Dr Edward Wilson'

Jun. 9 (2nd) Visit to Blackden Trust

Jun. 10 Exhibition Launch: With Scott to the Pole

Jun. 29 Evening Talk 'In the Footsteps of Scott and Shackleton'

Jul 21/22 Activity: Ancient Games

Jul 28 Activity: Roman Soldier Day

Jul. 29 Activity: Roman Salt Making Day

Aug. 4/5 Activity: Fabulous Felt

Aug. 11/12 Activity: Beside the Seaside

Aug. 18/19 Activity The Curious World of Professor Mace

Aug. 25/26 Activity: Perky Penguins

Sep. 9 Exhibition Launch: Northwich in the 19 century

Oct. 21 A.G.M.

Nov. 18 Exhibition Launch: 'Victorian Toys'

Nov. 23 Evening Talk 'Medieval Chester's Trading Links'

Dec. 7 Christmas event and talk 'Victorian Optical Toys'

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