



St Helen's Church
Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Heritage Project eNews

No. 17 November 2022



Since our last newsletter ...

CONCERTS

We've welcomed local singing group "Concordia," who performed a nautical programme of music in the church, including sea shanties and a touch of Simon & Garfunkel. It was a joy to have them back. We also welcomed The Cecilian Singers, whose programme was also, coincidentally, on a water theme. They delighted their audience with "Love on the Rivers," sharing the music of McLeish, Debussy, Fauré and Brahms.

Perhaps the hot dry summer made them all think of water, though we're certainly making up for it now with all this rain!

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY

It was great to see the Festival of Archaeology back up to full strength in Leicestershire and Rutland this year, with lots of events happening around the County during July.

We were delighted to be able to host a workshop for primary school children and two guided tours of the church for adults. Both were a great success, with everyone happy to be back to 'in person' events.



HELLO HERITAGE



In September, for the two week 'Hello Heritage' celebration of local museums and places of interest, North West Leicestershire offered to print a banner for us free of charge and we were happy to accept the challenge of providing words and pictures for it.



This year's theme was "astounding inventions," so we had a look around the church and came up with just a few.

The banner was hung from the churchyard gates for the period of the event. Inside church, we created a display highlighting all the tours we have on offer as well as our trails for children.

POPPIES

Following on from our wonderful cascade of poppies down the north wall of the church in November 2021, we decided to do something different this year. If you've walked through the churchyard you may have seen our wreath of poppies around the war memorial, and if you've been into church, you'll have seen poppies twisting down the central pillars.

We also invited local people to 'tag' a poppy with the name of a loved one who died in conflict or a message for peace.



Since our last newsletter ... (Continued)

CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS - VEGGIE VENTURES!



Elizabeth Smith and her team organised a wonderful workshop for primary age children during October half term. The children were invited to take part in "Veggie Ventures." Activities included medieval pottage making (delicious!), vegetable carving & sculpting and printing and pattern making using fruit and vegetables. Not to forget heritage apple catching! This provided a fun alternative to Halloween as well as celebrating the rich Autumn harvest from our gardens, fields and hedgerows.



HERITAGE TALKS

We're now half way through our season of Heritage Talks.



In September, we welcomed Peter Liddle, former County Archaeologist and co-ordinator of the Leicestershire and Rutland Festival of Archaeology. Peter has spent a great deal of his time over the past two years at a secret location, helping to uncover a Roman Villa, which was discovered during a lockdown walk by the son of the farmer who works the land.

Peter's topic was, of course, the Rutland Roman Villa and he enthralled a packed audience as his talk brought the progress of the dig up to date. Our picture shows Priam, King of Troy, and his shield bearer, one of the amazing images within the dining room of the villa.

In October, Wendy Freer came to show our audience two films made in the church earlier this year, featuring some of the characters from the church's history. "Comrades in Arms" is about soldiers who died during various conflicts. It was originally written to commemorate the centenary of World War I and was staged as a play in the church at the end of our Heritage Project in 2019. The second film was "Dinner at St Helen's," in which people from different periods of time received a mysterious invitation to dinner. Who had sent it and why? All became clear over the course of a very entertaining evening.



In November, two of the people who normally "staff" our Heritage Talks abandoned the coffee making and washing up to take centre stage. Anne Heaton delivered a talk about a thousand years of the English Parish Church, using St Helen's as an example as well as showing illustrations from other churches around the country. She ended with a question as to what will be the future of the parish church. Our lovely Grade 1* listed building is safe for now, but many beautiful churches are now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust or have changed their function.

At appropriate points during Anne's talk, Julie Starkey chipped in with tales of some of the very different vicars who have ministered to St Helen's congregation during its history.

Our photograph shows St Helen's prior to its extension in 1878-80.



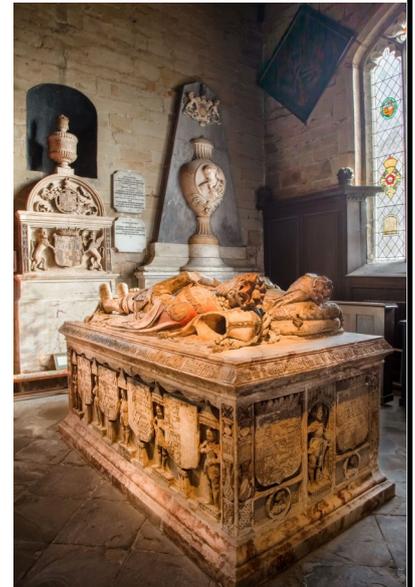
Research News

More about our Hastings Tomb and Richard III ...

Ian Scruton is continuing with his meticulous and wide ranging research into the monuments in our Hastings Chapel, but he has now cast his research net wider, writing an article for the Church Monuments' Society about the burial of Richard III in Leicester Cathedral. Look on their website for Ian's latest article.

The Church Monuments' Society website is well worth a browse. There are some fascinating church monuments from all over the country - and beyond - featured each month.

Ian has had two articles published so far this year, in January and July. Paste this link into your browser to read more: <https://churchmonumentsociety.org/monument-of-the-month>



Hastings Tomb -

photo by Martin Vaughan.

... and clergy through the centuries

Julie Starkey is still focusing her research on vicars of St Helen's. There have been many of them over the centuries, so this work is likely to be on-going for quite some time!



Information about Nineteenth Century vicars Robert Behoe Radcliffe and Marmaduke Vavasour has now been added to our website and current attention is focused on Canon John Denton, who spent the whole of his more than fifty years of ministry in Ashby and was instrumental in establishing a separate parish for Holy Trinity Church and extending St Helen's.

Articles about our clergy over the centuries can be found by following this link:

https://sthelens.churchinsight.com/Groups/362493/Our_Clergy.aspx

Photo of Canon John Denton, courtesy of Ashby Museum

Church Plans

In the course of recent research, we came across the original plans and drawings for the building of the north and south galleries and re-pewing of St Helen's in 1829 (whilst Robert Behoe Radcliffe was vicar). We also found J P St Aubyn's original architectural drawing of 1877 for the extension of St Helen's. It is annotated in his own hand. All of these drawings, and many more, can be viewed online via the Lambeth Palace Library archive.

Go to: images.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk. Then type 'Ashby' into the search box top right.

Research Interests and queries

If you have a research interest, or a query about St Helen's history, please get in touch via: sthelensheritage@gmail.com

Events Coming up ...

Ashby String Orchestra Concert

On Sunday 11th December at 7 pm, Ashby String Orchestra will be performing music by Handel, Vivaldi, Elgar and Tchaikovsky.

Admission is free but there will be a retiring collection.



Heritage Talks Series 2022-23

Our Heritage Talks season will be back in the New Year on the fourth **Tuesday evening of January, February and March at 7.30 pm.**

Talks are all in our Community Heritage Centre. Entry is £3, including light refreshments.

January 24th - Mike Hawkes - GRAFFITI IN MEDIEVAL CHURCHES - IS THE WRITING ON THE WALL?

Mike studied archaeology at the University of Leicester. He is Archaeological Advisor to the Dioceses of Leicester and of Southwell and Nottingham. He also works as a freelance archaeological illustrator and is involved with a project looking at early medieval parish formation in the Kingdom of Mercia.



February 28th - Rachel Askew - CATHOLIC RESISTANCE & SUBTERFUGE AT BREEDON

How did the Shirley family flaunt their Catholic faith in a fervently Protestant age? Join Dr Rachel Askew, Heritage Officer at Breedon Priory Church, as she explores the church's 16th & 17th century monuments.

March 28th - Peter Ackers - RELIGIOUS NONCONFORMITY & THE EARLY LEICESTER LABOUR MOVEMENT

Leicester was a major stronghold of the Churches of Christ. Peter, Emeritus Professor in the History of Industrial Relations at Loughborough University, will talk about their influence in the Boot & Shoe worker co-operative movement, as well as the Great War conscientious objection movement.

Keep an eye on the "What's On" pages of our website and on our social media for future events.

Website: www.sthelensashby.net

Instagram: [sthelenschurchandheritage](https://www.instagram.com/sthelenschurchandheritage)

Facebook: [St Helen's Church Ashby de la Zouch](https://www.facebook.com/StHelenChurchAshbydeZouch) (NB: please ensure it's our official FB page-which has no hyphens in the name of our town)