



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

Heritage Project eNews

No. 1 November 2017



Opening of the Heritage Centre



The Bishop of Leicester, the Rt Revd Martyn Snow, cuts the ribbon to officially open our new Community Heritage Centre on Saturday 30th September 2017



Pictured: Sarah Capewell (Heritage Team), Rev Mary Gregory, Susan Boardman-Weston (Chair of Heritage Team), Rt Revd Martyn Snow (Bishop of Leicester), Llynda Baugh (Heritage Officer), Councillor Virge Richichi (NWLDC), Heather Broughton (Heritage Lottery).

At 2.30 pm on 30th September, the church was full for the Service of Dedication and Thanksgiving for St Helen's new Community Heritage Centre.

Members of the St Helen's congregation past and present were joined by Heritage Lottery Fund staff, local councillors, individuals and representatives of all the groups and organisations who have worked over the past 9 years to make our dream a reality.

Heather Broughton from *Heritage Lottery* spoke warmly at the after service reception about the success of the project and Councillor Virge Richichi presented a plaque from the District Council. As a further memento of the occasion, Ashby Congregational Church Minister, Rev Catherine Booton, presented a framed photograph of St Helen's, taken by a member of their congregation.

The reception provided an opportunity to catch up with friends, old and new, and to examine in detail the recently installed Heritage displays.

Research Group News

Did you know that we have an active research group which meets in the Hildersham Room in the Heritage Centre?

We have a formal meeting once a month, usually on a Tuesday, and the room is available to research volunteers all day every Tuesday, when they can come in and use one of our Heritage Laptops for their own research into life at St Helen's over the centuries. We have wi-fi throughout the Centre and a subscription to 'Find My Past', which - among other things - gives us access to extensive birth, marriage and death records, census records from 1831-1911, the 1939 register (produced on the eve of World War II) and national newspaper archives.

Every so often, we are joined by our professional researcher, Susan Payne, who is based in Lincoln, and who has already led us through the Lincoln archives, including an exciting glimpse of the 12th Century Bishops' Rolls.

Do come and join us or contact Julie Starkey or Llynda Baugh for more information.

Heritage Talks

Our first talk was on Monday 2nd October, when Mrs Margaret King travelled from Northamptonshire to talk to us about Ithiel Smart, who was vicar at St Helen's between 1622 and his death in 1661.

Mrs King's interest in him stemmed from the fact that he was vicar in her own parish of Wombourn before moving to Ashby. She has been researching Ithiel Smart for many years and has learned much about his family, though there are still questions to be asked, especially around the intriguing contents of both his and his widow, Dorcas's, wills. Smart's own will contains this bequest: *"I give to all those ministers that now supply Ashby lectures one pair of black gloves and a ribbon and 12d a piece for their dinner at Joseph Foster's house on the day of my funeral."*

His valediction in the Church Burial Register reads: *"Mr. Ithiel Smart, Minister of Ashby, a worthy and faithful servant of God, a famous Divine and a painful Preacher, ye comfort of God's people in his time, departed this life ye 22nd. November and was interred in the Chauncel of our Parrish Church in Ashby ye six and twentieth of November 1661."*

The talk was well received by an audience of around 20 people.



Peter Liddle and audience

A much larger audience greeted former County Archaeologist Peter Liddle, when he came on 6th November to talk about 'Houses of the Hastings family in Leicestershire.' As well as Ashby Castle, they had homes (at various times) at Kirby Muxloe, Donington Park and at Abbey Park in Leicester. Extensive work at Kirby Muxloe started in 1881, suggesting that the workmen moved there from Ashby once work on church and castle here were complete.

Do come and join us, if you can, at 7.30 pm on Monday 4th December, when Dr Lesley Rowe will be talking about *Arthur Hildersham and the Plague Summer of 1625*.

The archaeologists return!

On Tuesday 28th November at 7.30 pm, Mercian archaeology will return to give us the results of geophysical surveys carried out in the church during the summer. Did we find the vaults? Was there an earlier church on our site? The meeting will be in the church. Free entry. Small charge for refreshments.

The Big Draw

The BIG Draw took place on Thursday, 26th October as part of a national drawing event.



It was a wonderful event with 105 people of all ages drawing with pencils, pastels, chalk and felt tips! Both Church and Heritage Centre were used and the kitchen was busy serving tea and cake. We will definitely have this on next year's calendar.

'Sign up' for Heritage

Wednesdays and Saturdays


The Heritage Centre is now manned every Wednesday and Saturday between 10.30 am and 4 pm, so that members of the public can come in and look at our wonderful displays, showing the history of our site.

We need more volunteers for half day sessions to help us to stay open over the winter. You need to put out the 'open' flag and A-board, make the odd cup of coffee and chat to visitors. You can use one of our laptops whilst you're in the centre if you want to continue with your own research whilst you're here.

Have a word with Llynda or use our 'sign up' site to choose your volunteering dates: <http://signup.com/go/qDKKaPZ>

Volunteers' Christmas

Get Together

 Put the date in your diary. We will be chatting, socialising, putting our heads together over a fiendish quiz and eating festive food on **Tuesday 19th December at 2 pm**, in the Heritage Centre.

All volunteers welcome. Please RSVP to Llynda so we know how many mince pies we'll need!

Hope to see you there!

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