



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

# Heritage Project eNews

## No. 7 November 2018



### Award winning Centre

St Helen's Community Heritage Centre was one of three finalists at the 2018 Rural Achievement Awards for the category of Best Community Building. The awards are given by the Rural Community Council (RCC) to recognise projects which have a positive impact on rural communities across Leicestershire and Rutland. The award dinner was held on 11<sup>th</sup> October and we were delighted to be announced as winners of the Best Community Building award.

Our thanks go to Chris Lewis for writing our submission, and to him and Susan Boardman-Weston for meeting the judges when they visited the site earlier in the year.

We won the award for the best *Community* building and our vision for a building being used by the whole community of Ashby is already being realised with groups using it from the Civic Society to mindfulness groups, individuals hiring it for special occasions and local businesses using it for their training activities.



The photo shows Chris Lewis and Helen Smith from St Helen's Community Heritage Centre and Alan Kafoor, presenting the award on behalf of category sponsor, Norris and Fisher.

Not only is the building an asset to the community, it was created by volunteers, with the church and local community being involved at every stage, including consultation, design, fundraising, support, soil shifting and decorating. The project has been made possible by funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, the Diocese of Leicester, grants from county and local authorities and a number of other grant sources as well as the amazing time, money and energy of the people of Ashby.

From the outset many people were involved in the project. As well as the project team of 30 individuals over the 9 years it took to develop and execute the project, many people from both the congregation of St Helen's and the wider community have been and still are involved in ensuring that our building serves the needs of both St Helen's church and the whole growing community of Ashby.

### How to find out about our Project

Our website: [www.sthelensheritage.co.uk](http://www.sthelensheritage.co.uk) Our Facebook page: [St Helen's Heritage Ashby de la Zouch](#)

# BATTLE'S Ashby Remembers

# O V E R



Hundreds of people gathered in the church yard at St Helen's on the evening of Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November to take part in one of over a thousand events across the country to celebrate 100 years since the Armistice that ended the First World War.

A NATION'S TRIBUTE

11TH NOVEMBER 2018

100 YEARS OF REMEMBRANCE

The Mayor of Ashby, Roger Bayliss, joined Rev Mary Gregory and St Helen's Choir to share the remembrance in words and music. At 7 pm the Last Post was played by bugler Caitlin Richardson from the top of the church tower, floodlit in red, as the Royal British Legion released poppy petals to honour the fallen of the First World War and the crowd fell silent.

The Town Council then lit one of the nation's 1,300 beacons in front of the World War I memorial and the bells of St Helen's rang out in celebration, just as they had done a hundred years ago. With the tower doors open, there was a rare opportunity to watch the ringers. Afterwards, a large number of people gathered in our Community Heritage Centre for refreshments.



The event was organised by The Royal British Legion, Ashby Town Council, and St Helen's Church and was a fitting way to draw a weekend of Remembrance to a close.



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*Thanks to members of St Helen's Church for most of the photos on this page, and to Paul Wesson for his stunning photo of the beacon.*

## Heritage Wednesdays and Saturdays - winter season

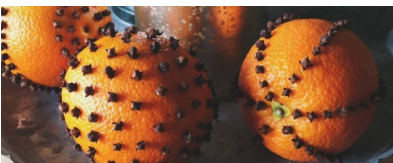
We had some great events in the St Helen's Community Heritage Centre during the summer and through the winter months it will still be 'the place to be' on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

As usual we will be offering a warm welcome, tea and coffee, and a chance to look at our Heritage Centre displays. We have a series of exhibitions planned – we are currently enjoying a Margery Wright exhibition and the artwork from the Big Draw. That will be followed by a photography exhibition, with some stunning images of St Helen's taken by members of Ashby Photography Club.

Every Saturday morning we are running 'Chat and Play at the interactive cafe'. Our heritage toy box is full of traditional toys and games; you might like to join in the community jigsaw; or try your hand at some crafts - there will always be plenty to do for the young and young at heart and there will be cake!



*Margery Wright exhibition NOW ON! Come along to learn about this remarkable woman, whose charity was still helping Ashby people 350 years after her death in 1623!*



On 24<sup>th</sup> November you can get started on your Christmas

decorations with a **wreath making** workshop (now fully subscribed, but contact us to join the waiting list in case anyone drops out). In

December it's the children's turn to have a go at **pomander making**, when we have a drop in craft session on 15<sup>th</sup>

December (£1 per child).

Do come and enjoy a cuppa and join in the fun. Tell your friends too – we look forward to seeing you!

**Helen Smith**



## Volunteers' Christmas Get-togethers

Calling all our volunteers: please come along to the Heritage Centre on either Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December or Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December at 11am, for an hour or so.

These informal festive get-togethers are to give you an update on what's been happening, what's coming up in the months ahead and, most importantly, to hear your thoughts and ideas. It will be similar to the last meeting we had, but this one includes Christmas cheer, a heritage inspired quiz and mince pies!!

If you are able to come, please let Sharn know so that we can plan the catering.

Email: [sthelensheritage@gmail.com](mailto:sthelensheritage@gmail.com) or phone 07435 564236.



## Research update

**V**olunteer researcher Ian Scruton has been hard at work again. Ian's area of interest is in members of the Hastings family, particularly the 7th Earl of Huntingdon. His most recent research has taken him all the way down to the British Library in London.

*This first piece, however, starts with a monument to the 2nd Earl and his family, continues with controversy and confrontation and ends with a 'national treasure'!*

### The Alabaster Chest Tomb - the Clare Balding Connection

**T**he man on the alabaster chest tomb in the Hastings Chapel is Francis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Huntingdon. The figures around the tomb are his children: his sons on the side facing into the church, and his daughters on the far side. In pride of place at the end of the tomb is his heir, Henry, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Huntingdon (the "Puritan Earl"). Henry had no children and so was succeeded by his brother, George, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl.

George's descendants continued as Earls of Huntingdon until Francis, the 10<sup>th</sup> Earl, died in 1789. The title of Earl of Huntingdon can only be passed on to a legitimate male heir. Francis's only son was illegitimate and his three younger brothers all died before him so the title became dormant.

30 years later "heir hunter" Henry Nugent Bell (working on a "no win, no fee" basis) put forward the claim that the impecunious Hans Francis Hastings was the rightful Earl of Huntingdon. Hans Francis was descended from Edward Hastings, brother of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Earls, and therefore one of the figures on the chest tomb. The Attorney General accepted the validity of the case Nugent Bell had put forward and Hans Francis was confirmed as the 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Huntingdon.

However, claiming the Huntingdon title was only the start. In his book "The Huntingdon Peerage" Nugent Bell says that there was an understanding in the Hastings family that their estates should be reserved for whoever held the title of Earl of Huntingdon. However, the 10<sup>th</sup> Earl bequeathed his estates to Francis Rawdon, the son of his sister, Elizabeth. Nugent Bell describes this as "an eternal disgrace". The new Earl of Huntingdon wrote to Francis Rawdon (now 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Hastings and Governor-General of India) on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1819:

*"I presume your Lordship has already been apprized of the establishment of my right to the Earldom of Huntingdon, and of my having, in consequence, been called to my seat in the House of Peers. I am led to believe, that there are considerable estates held by your Lordship, which are vested in me as Earl of Huntingdon, and I entertain a confident hope, that your Lordship will give orders for the immediate surrender of them".*

In order to bolster his claim, the 11<sup>th</sup> Earl, accompanied by Nugent Bell, visited Ashby on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1819 to claim "squatter's rights" to the Marquis's estates. Nugent Bell describes what happened:

*"His Lordship announced his intention of attending divine worship the following day, Sunday, and desired me to write to Mr McDowell, the Vicar, that he would feel obliged if the family pew of the Earls of Huntingdon would be prepared for his reception. To this a reply was sent, stating, that if his Lordship demanded access to the pew, it would be shut against him. Next day, on entering the church, we found a person placed in it by order of one Mammatt, Steward to the Marquis, who informed us he had orders not to allow his Lordship to enter, on learning which, he passed into an adjoining pew prepared for him".*

The following day there was a similar confrontation at the castle:

*“At the gate leading into the field in which the Castle stood, we were met by Mr Leonard Piddock, Solicitor, who was deputed to forbid his Lordship’s entry”.*

The 11<sup>th</sup> Earl’s attempts to claim the estates ended in failure and he had to be satisfied with just the title.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Huntingdon and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Hastings are commemorated in St Helen’s by their hatchments. (A hatchment is a diamond-shaped board with the coat of arms of a deceased person painted on it. First of all it was hung at the person’s home and then afterwards permanently displayed in the church). There is nothing in St Helen’s to commemorate the 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Huntingdon but there are memorial plaques to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Earls in the Hastings Chapel. (The current, 17<sup>th</sup>, Earl of Huntingdon is William Edward Robin Hood Hastings-Bass).

The title of Earl of Huntingdon has now been in the Hastings family for nearly 500 years but, when Henry VIII gave it to them in 1529, it was the sixth time that it had been awarded. (This does not take account of the legend that Robin Hood was the Earl of Huntingdon). The title was first awarded by Edward the Confessor in 1065, making it one of very few Earldoms dating back to before the Norman Conquest. (Another of the Anglo-Saxon titles was the Earl of Wessex, which had been extinct for over 900 years when it was given to the Queen’s son, Prince Edward).

However, when Tony Robinson went to meet “Britain’s Real Monarch” for his 2004 television programme, it wasn’t the Earl of Huntingdon that he visited but Michael Abney-Hastings, then 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Loudoun. (He has since been succeeded by his son, Simon Abney-Hastings, the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl). The programme was based on the theory that Edward IV (the close companion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Hastings) was illegitimate. This would have made his “half” brother, the Duke of Clarence, the rightful Yorkist king. Henry VIII’s efforts to exterminate the descendants of the Duke of Clarence left Katherine Pole, great grand-daughter of the Duke of Clarence and the lady on the chest tomb, as the heiress of the Plantagenet royal family.

And the Clare Balding connection? The 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Huntingdon is her uncle, so she is a descendant of the Edward on the chest tomb.

*Ian’s second article focuses on the 7th Earl’s involvement in a tussle between Protestants and Catholics during the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688.*

## **1688 and All That**

1688 saw “The Glorious Revolution” when the Catholic James II was ousted by the Protestant William of Orange (husband of James’ daughter, Mary). However, it was to be a traumatic experience for Theophilus Hastings, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Huntingdon, who remained loyal to James.

James II became King in 1685. He was the first Catholic monarch since Mary Tudor. (Charles II, his brother, had prudently waited until he was on his deathbed before converting to Catholicism). James was unpopular and increased the size of the army to bolster his position. He commissioned Theophilus to raise a regiment, the Earl of Huntingdon’s Regiment of Foot.

Soon after James’ accession, the Duke of Monmouth, illegitimate son of Charles II and a Protestant, declared himself King. His rebellion was defeated at the Battle of Sedgemoor.

It was thought that James’ Catholicism would be a short-term problem because his heirs were his Protestant daughters, Mary and Anne (by his marriage to Anne Hyde). However, his second wife,

Mary of Modena, gave birth to a son in June 1688, who then became heir to the throne. (In his memoir the Earl says that he was present in the Queen's bedchamber at the birth).

The consternation caused by the Prince's birth led to William of Orange being encouraged to mount an invasion. On James' instructions the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl set off for Plymouth on 3<sup>rd</sup> December to assist the Earl of Bath in repelling the invasion. He had to leave his pregnant wife, Elizabeth, behind in London. However, by the time Theophilus reached Plymouth the Earl of Bath had defected to William's side and the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl was in prison!

On 13<sup>th</sup> December Captain Thomas Carleton wrote to him from London: "*The rabble yesterday and the day before pulled down the Spanish Ambassador's house and that of the Resident of Florence and burned everything but the walls*". On 15<sup>th</sup> December Elizabeth wrote of "*itt being reported the mobily [mob] threatened my hous*". She went on to say: "*the Prince of O[range] is att Winzor and they say will be heare a Monday. My father is just now come from thence and seas you have a great many enemis there*".

On 24<sup>th</sup> December Elizabeth died in childbirth. On 26<sup>th</sup> December the Earl was freed by order of William of Orange.

1689 did not get any better for the Earl. William and Mary passed "*An Act for the King and Queens most Gracious Generall and Free Pardon*". However, the Earl's name was second on the list of those specifically excluded from the pardon.



There will be more fascinating stories about the Hastings family from Ian in the next issue of Heritage e-news.

## Volunteer update

I was both flattered and honoured to be asked by Susan, Heritage Project Team Chairman, to take on the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Heritage Project until June 2019.

As you all know, without the generous help of volunteers from the churches and the wider community of Ashby and the nearby towns, the Heritage Project would not have run so smoothly through the last couple of years and won us so many prizes and awards. Therefore, my role essentially is to build on that achievement, to facilitate and support all volunteers, to build closer relationships, to listen to your views and suggestions and take volunteering to an even higher level within a welcoming, inclusive, trusting and friendly environment.

I very much look forward to working with you all and getting to know you better so that volunteering for the Heritage Project, in whatever capacity we find ourselves, will prove to be a satisfying, rewarding and missional joint venture.

See you all at one of the Volunteers' Christmas Get Togethers planned for Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December. (see page 3 of this newsletter for more information)

**Eileen Coombs**



## The Big Draw 2018

Following on from the huge success of last year's Big Draw, we just had to do it again during the October half term holiday. Lots of people came and great fun was had by all. Thanks to Sharn and her team for all their hard work.

Here are just a few photos of the day.



Put the date in your diary for next year!

## Education Update

Rachel Grevatte, our Education Development Co-ordinator, is already hard at work. Last month, Rachel attended a pre-visit event for teachers put on by Ashby Castle. She's also been gathering information and resources and talking to English Heritage's Education Officer about local heritage education initiatives.

Rachel, accompanied by volunteers Zoe Betts and Steph Whiten, delivered her first interactive Power Point presentation to 175 children at Woodcote Primary School on 12<sup>th</sup> November. It was well received and the school is keen to take part in piloting resources. Other local school assemblies are in the pipeline.

If you'd like to get involved in our Education Offer to local schools, please contact Sharn in the office.



Coming up in the next few weeks ...

## Heritage talks

We've already enjoyed two excellent talks this season. **Peter Rose** visited at the beginning of October, to talk about the history of the violin and its invaluable contribution to church music. At the start of November, **Wendy Freer** talked about the people of Grace Dieu Priory during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and showed a fascinating short film. Our Heritage Talks season will continue at 7.30 pm on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, when **Dr Rebecca Gregory** will be coming to talk about place names. Her talk is entitled, 'Layers of Leicestershire: uncovering the past through a thousand years of place names.' We learnt the origin of the village name, 'Thringstone' this month. I for one am intrigued to learn more.



Peter Rose demonstrates one of his large and varied collection of violins.

Looking ahead to the new year, Peter Liddle will be with us on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January to talk about the archaeology of the English Civil War in Leicestershire. As we know that civil war soldiers were encamped where our building now stands, this talk is very close to home!

The talks will continue on the first Monday of every month, right through to March 2019. Check our Facebook page or website for further details. Just £3 per person. Tea/ coffee and biscuits included.

## Photography exhibition

Ashby Photography Club's exhibition of church photos will be in the Heritage Centre this month.

## Pomander Making

Here's an event for adults and children to enjoy together. Come along on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December to make your own pomander to take home. £1 per child.

## Church Tours

Come along at 11 am on the first Saturday of each month for a guided tour of our fascinating church, led by someone who knows and loves it. Just £3 per adult. No need to book. The next tours will be on Saturdays 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018 and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

**All these events, and more, are detailed in our latest Guide to Activities and Events leaflet – out now. Pick up your copy from Tourist Information, in the Church or in lots of other places around the area.**

## Research meetings

Our most recent Research Group meeting was held in the Community Heritage Centre on 7<sup>th</sup> November. Meetings are informal and are a chance to share our research findings and ideas.

As a research group, we have access to the online research resource, 'Find My Past' and to two laptop computers. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at 9.30 am.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact Julie Starkey via email or phone. (details below)

## Contacts:

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## Heritage e-news - next issue

The next Heritage e-news will be published on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019. All contributions to Julie Starkey by Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019 please.