



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

# Heritage Project eNews

No. 15 September 2021



## Since our last newsletter ...

As you will see from this newsletter, the church & Heritage Centre buildings may have been locked for large parts of the past year, but the heart of St Helen's has continued to beat.

Our new website was launched just as lockdown started and has enabled us to share both church and heritage activities to much greater effect. Whilst we couldn't do things face to face, online heritage activities continued.

All our children's events went online, as we offered activities to do at home or on daily walks, such as heraldic shield making, rock painting, Great British Bunting for VE Day, Paper Plate Poppies for Remembrance and a mouse hunt around the churchyard. We also invited local people to create 'Christmas Windows,' which formed part of a trail around the town.

In July 2020, the Festival of Archaeology went online, with our website, Facebook and Instagram pages offering insights into the archaeology around St Helen's for the nine days of the event.

This Spring, St Helen's was awarded a grant of £21,000 from the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to help us recover from the pandemic and re-open our heritage activities in a Covid safe way.

We've been able to spend the money in lots of ways, including deep cleaning; maintenance and safety checks; setting up to be Covid safe; events; talks; exhibitions; workshop materials and staffing to support this activity.

In June, we welcomed the Very Revd David Monteith, Dean of Leicester, to give a 'virtual' talk about the discovery and reinterment of Richard III. Thanks to the Culture Recovery Grant, we were able to offer the talk for free.

That same month, we held our first in-person event over three weekends, with our 'Isolation Creation' exhibition, showcasing art and craft work created by local people in lockdown. This would not have been possible without the Culture Recovery Grant, which paid for display stands and printing costs. Our Calligraphy Exhibition, by Sheila Smith, currently in the Heritage Centre, has also been funded by the Grant.

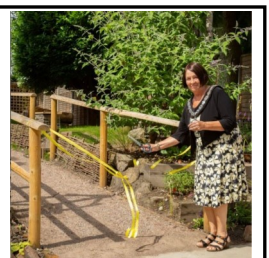


We put on two children's workshops in August and we've purchased some exciting new historical costumes to help us with future events. Pudding Bag productions have made a couple of films for us - about Isolation Creation, the calligraphy exhibition and the garden. We'll also soon be showing a short film about our wonderful heritage, so look out for that.



## Wildlife Friendly Garden!

During the summer, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust and our volunteers completed work on the garden project behind the Heritage Centre. The support of funders and fundraisers has helped us create our wonderful wildlife friendly garden, which was officially opened in July. We look forward to enjoying this special space.



# Research News

## Our Grinling Gibbons Connection

This year marks three hundred years since the death of Grinling Gibbons, England's pre-eminent wood carver. Whilst we unfortunately don't have any of his wood carving in St Helen's, we do have examples of his stone carving - and more of them than we initially thought!

One of our researchers, Ian Scruton, has made an exciting research breakthrough via his examination of the 7th Earl of Huntingdon's letters to Gibbons. It would appear that Grinling Gibbons carved not one but **two** of the memorials in our Hastings Chapel. The snippet of information that put Ian on to this was a reference in one of the Earl's letters to Gibbons as to how he would like the carving of the Bull's head to be done. There isn't a bull's head on the monument we knew to be by Gibbons, but there is one on a different monument in the Chapel.



Come along during 'Hello Heritage' - between 4th and 19th September - to see our temporary exhibition in the Hastings Chapel, where Ian explains his findings.

## What is a churchyard?



Another of our researchers, Anne Heaton, has recently completed a two year postgraduate diploma course in Parish Church Studies via the University of York. As a result of Anne's work on churchyards, she has written an article which was recently published in our Parish Magazine and which you can now find on our website. Copy and paste the link below into your browser if you'd like to learn more.

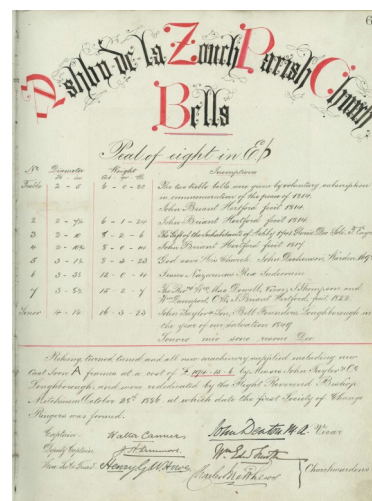
<https://sthelensashby.net/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=292478>

Photo courtesy of Ashby Museum


## Golden Days for the Bell Ringers of St Helen's Church

Julie Starkey has been looking through our magnificent Peal Book and the detailed log books kept by St Helen's Bell Ringers between 1886 and the 1920s. Her article was first published in a May 2021 issue of the **Ringing World Magazine**.

In November 1886, a service was held in the church to re-open and re-dedicate the church's eight bells, which had been tuned by Taylors of Loughborough and re-hung on new machinery at a cost of £194 15s 6d. The only problem was that most of the bell ringers of St Helen's were new to their craft and needed extensive help and support. A dedicated group from Burton, some of the finest ringers of their day, provided tuition, leading to a heyday of top quality ringing by the Ashby men. If you'd like to learn more of this fascinating story, copy and paste the link below into your browser:



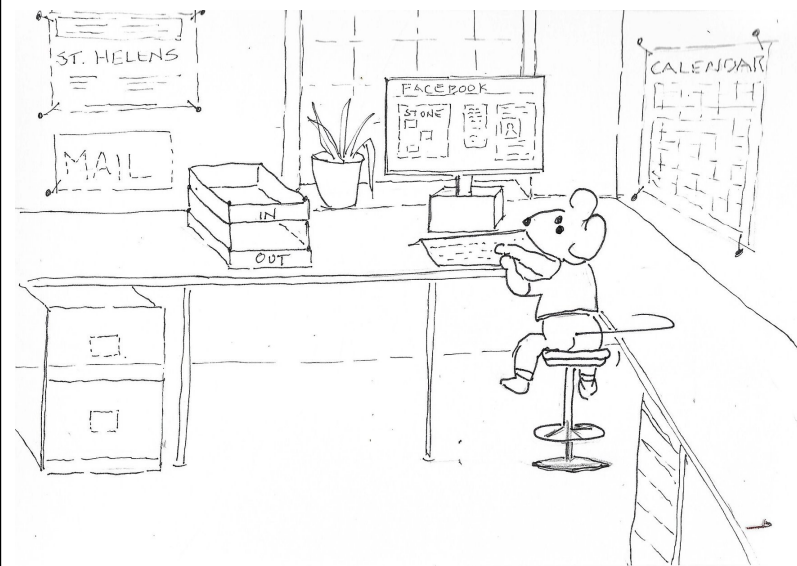
<https://sthelens.churchinsight.com/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=287877>

 Have a look under 'Our History' in the Heritage pages of our website to learn more about our ongoing research projects. Please get in touch (details on the final page of this newsletter) if you'd like to join us?

## A big 'thank you' to Sharn ...

Many thanks to our 'mouse whisperer,' Sharn Stinson, for her work at St Helen's. Sharn moved on at the end of June after 4 years, first as administrator and then as our Heritage Operations Manager.

Sharn worked her socks off! She put on some terrific children's workshops, produced our wonderful Heritage plays in the summer of 2018 and masterminded all our online activities during lockdown. She also put in a lot of hard



work behind the scenes, working on grant applications and, most recently, masterminding the 'Isolation Creation' exhibition.

We will miss Sharn and her mouse cartoons, but hope that they will appear in book form one day in the not too distant future.

And we'll still see her around when we visit a local stately home!

*... so this is how so much information finds its way onto Facebook!*

## Ever thought about volunteering with us?

We offer lots of opportunities for volunteering with St Helen's Heritage. Whether your forte is research, chatting to people, making cakes, arts & crafts, gardening or admin, we have a role for you. There will be an exhibition on volunteering for us in church during 'Hello Heritage.' Come along and have a look.



## Children's Workshops



We were delighted to welcome children back to workshops in August, for the first time since February 2020.

Carla Harris ([carlaharrisglass.com](http://carlaharrisglass.com)) came in to run a hugely successful fused glass workshop on 14th August.



On 18th August, we were joined by Makaton tutor Alison Cross, who taught a keen young audience the basics of Makaton sign language. They picked it up amazingly quickly. Caroline Essex provided the music and a good time was had by all.

Thanks are due to our tutors, Carla and Alison, and to Helen, Adrienne, Caroline, Susan, Michelle, Emily and Julie for facilitating the workshops.



By the way, we're pleased to say that we're now set up for contactless payments as well as cash.



# Heritage Open Days - Hello Heritage

## Saturday 11th September

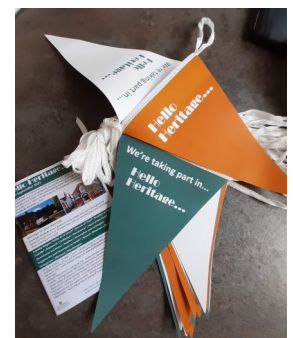
Plans are in full swing for this year's Heritage Open Days in September. We're also taking part in North West Leicestershire's 'Hello Heritage' and are excited to have taken delivery from them of a large printed board full of colourful photos and information about our churchyard, designed by Anne Heaton, which will hang on the church gates from 4th-19th September. There are information leaflets in the church, packed with detail on other local places offering events during 'Hello Heritage.' Look out for banners and bunting too!



Our own event will take place on Saturday 11th September, between 10 am and 4 pm. There will be stewards in the church, a pop up café serving light refreshments (think cake!), facilities for those taking part in 'Ride & Stride' to picnic in our garden and church tours throughout the day.

We are offering free guided tours of the church at 10.30, 12 noon and 2 pm. If there is sufficient demand, we will also offer a brand new tour of our fascinating churchyard.

As if that's not enough, children can follow our 'mouse trail' around the church or the whole family can join in one of our 'hidden nature' trails. We have one for inside and one for outside.



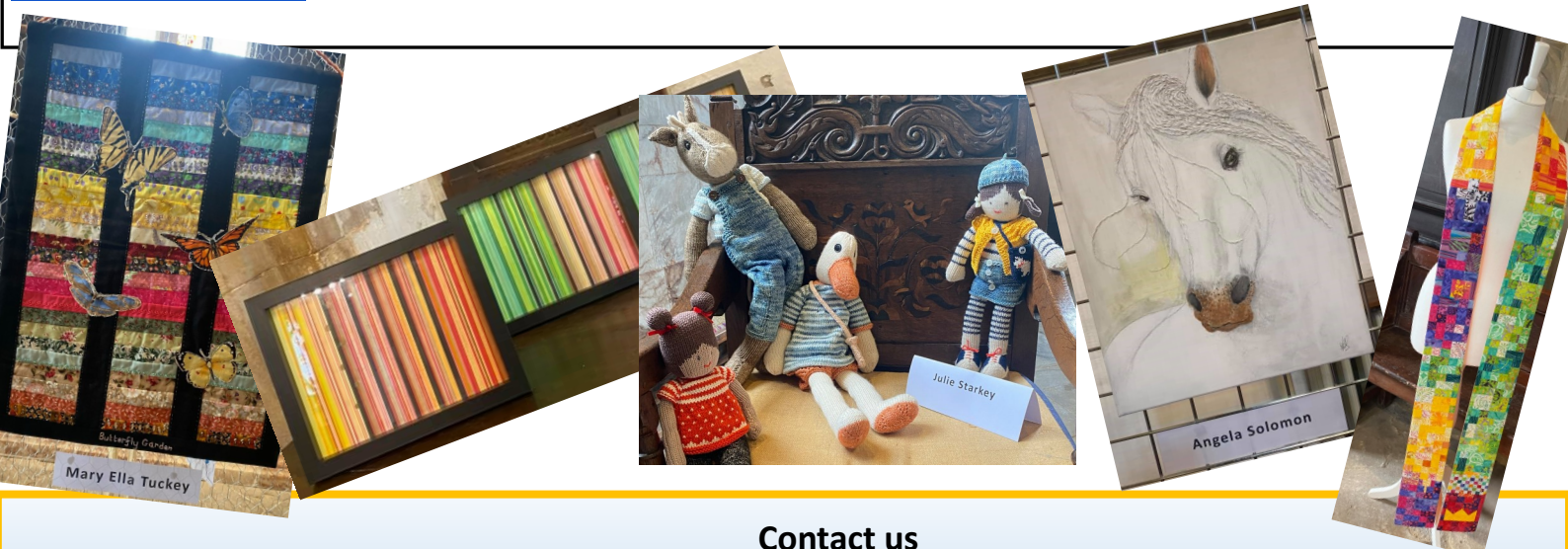
## Heritage Films

Pudding Bag Productions have been filming inside the church and Heritage Centre and in the Heritage Centre garden.

If you copy these links into your browser, you can see what they saw:

Isolation Creation Exhibition: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/mz1pwmnl3mj851o/Isolation%20Creativity%20Exhibition.mov?dl=0>

Garden and peal books: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/lxsn8hbtqbm0hij/Garden%20and%20Peel%20Book%20exhibition.mov?dl=0>



## Contact us

Website: [www.sthelensashby.net](http://www.sthelensashby.net) - Facebook: [facebook.com/sthelensheritage](https://facebook.com/sthelensheritage) -

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