



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

Heritage Project eNews

No. 19 August 2023



Since our last newsletter ...

We've been busy! It's hard to know where to start.

Several concerts were held in St Helen's during the Spring, the church held a successful Spring Fayre in May and there was a children's weaving workshop in the Heritage Centre during May half term. That's not to mention all the amazing free sewing workshops that have been taking place in the Heritage Centre all summer.



During July we've had a fantastic 'Festival of Archaeology,' with three events here at St Helen's and we have a children's Stained Glass Window workshop to look forward to in August. Perfect for those less than perfect summer days we seem to be having this summer.

There were also guided tours of St Helen's for Burton U3A and for a Rotary group visiting from South Africa. Feedback from both was very positive. Our 'Festival of Archaeology' guided tour attracted both local people and visitors from elsewhere in Leicestershire.

It seems about time to bring our readers up to date with all we've been doing and news of all the things still to look forward to during 2023.

CHURCH TOURS

Our experienced tour guides have a wealth of knowledge about St Helen's which they would love to share with your group. Tours generally end in the Community Heritage Centre, with an opportunity to explore our interpretation panels alongside our tour guides. We charge £4 per person for a guided tour of the church lasting approximately one hour. Light refreshments can be provided afterwards in our Community Heritage Centre for a small extra charge.

Contact sthelensheritage@gmail.com to discuss bringing your group for a guided tour.

CHILDREN'S ARCHAEOLOGY WORKSHOP

A fabulous nineteen children and their adults attended our children's archaeology workshop in July, with most staying for the full morning.

Our dig boxes were by far the most popular area, with most children working their way around all the different ones.



We also offered dressing up, an insight into pre-decimal coinage and a timeline of artefacts to put into the correct order.



Events Coming soon ...

CHILDREN'S STAINED GLASS WINDOW WORKSHOP

On Monday 14th August, we will be opening our doors to 4-11 year olds once more, this time for an interactive workshop based on the stained glass windows in our church building. The cost is £3 per child and the workshop runs from 9.30 - 12 noon.

No need to book. Just turn up and pay on the door (cash or card).

Sew It, Don't Throw It

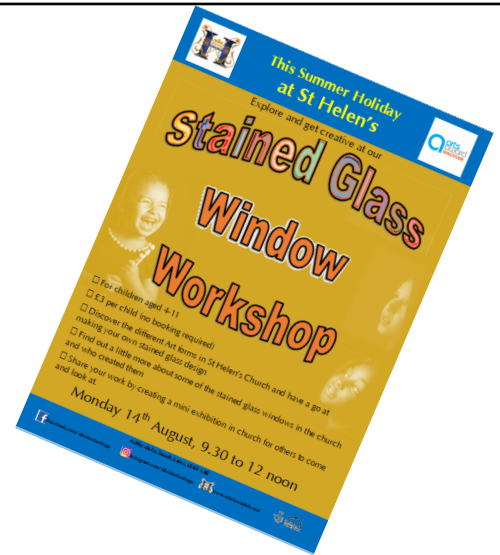
We are delighted by the response to our 'Sew It, Don't Throw It'



Sewers hard at work

There have also been two fascinating talks, including a sell out visit from 'Great British Sewing Bee' participant Gill Thomas, who enthralled her audience with the details of her personal sewing journey.

More dates have now been added for workshops in August and September. Please visit the 'Sew It, Don't Throw It' page on our website: https://sthelens.churchinsight.com/Groups/334801/Sew_It_Dont.aspx to book your FREE place.



workshops and talks, which have been running in the Heritage Centre since our launch event in March. A dedicated team of experienced sewing tutors have given their time to teach sewing skills using our 8 brand new sewing machines and re-cycled textiles. Many people have attended several workshops and some have attended just a few, but so far we have welcomed 38 different novice sewers to the Heritage Centre and sent them away with new skills.



From left to right: some of our sewers with their aprons made from recycled textiles & glasses cases.

Sewing Bee Contestant Gill Thomas pictured with Anne, one of our volunteer tutors.

Exciting news about the Sew It Don't Throw It project finale!

We will be joining in the fun of this year's **Ashby's Fabulous** with a fashion show of reused, re-purposed and recycled clothing. The show will feature garments created from waste fabric and looks put together by our local charity shops to demonstrate the art of the possible.

Join us on the catwalk in church on the morning of Saturday 7th October – look out for details.

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY TALK 2023



This year's National Festival of Archaeology ran from 15th - 30th July, with the theme 'Archaeology and Creativity.' We love participating in this event at St Helen's, showcasing our own archaeology beneath our church building and our Community Heritage Centre and bringing interesting speakers to our town.

We were particularly excited this year to welcome Neil Redfern, Executive Director of the Council for British Archaeology, who was on tour, visiting events up and down the country. He was with us on Day 12 of the Festival and shared many photos of his visit on Twitter @RedfernNeil.

Neil was generous with his time, arriving in the early afternoon to spend time exploring the church and town with us. Special thanks are due to Carol Walton, who opened the Museum's doors on an afternoon when they're usually closed so Neil could visit. We also visited the town's 'Courts,' which were packed with overcrowded insanitary housing in the mid Nineteenth Century, as well as the castle and our lovely Georgian terraces on Station Road and South Street.

Neil's talk, 'From Find to Mind: archaeology and the importance of creativity' was powerful and thought provoking. The Hastings Hall was full on a very rainy evening.

We've received a lot of extremely appreciative feedback for Neil's talk, both verbal and via

email. Thank you to everyone who came and to those who gave us feedback, which is extremely valuable for our future planning.



Heritage Talks Series 2023-24

Talking of talks ... we have a new series of Heritage talks starting at the end of September. They will be on the final Tuesday in each month (not December) from September to March inclusive at 7.30 pm. Talks will cost £4 per person, which includes light refreshments at the end.

September 26th	Stuart Warburton	Coalmining during the Wars of the Roses: the medieval miners of Leicestershire.
October 24th	Moira Ackers	Staunton Harold Church & Robert Shirley: an Act of Protest
November 28th	Mary Tuckey	A History of Textiles
January 23rd	tbc	
February 27th	Ursula Ackrill	Parish Libraries: including the Ashby Parish Library
March 26th	Lesley Rowe	Puritanism in Leicestershire



Clearing the Gravestones

We had a good morning recently and you will hopefully notice a difference to some of the gravestones. We found the names of several of the carvers and a number memorials to children and young people; however several were people in their 70s and 80s. The ones we uncovered are exclusively 18th and 19th century graves and are made from Swithland slate. Several of the gravestones are broken, probably by the mowing machines. Many thanks to Caroline and Robert Millward, Caroline Essex, Helen Smith, Liz Smith and Julie Starkey. Also Susan Boardman-Weston who was gardening in the borders as well as trying to excavate the stand for our Heritage events flag. We had a lot of fun!

There are still many stones to clear, so there will be a repeat on Saturday 26th August at 10 am. Even if you can only spend an hour, it's surprising how much you can do in that time. Bring a spade or edging tool, brush and bucket.

Anne Heaton



Graveyard prior to stones being laid flat in 1880



*Some of the stone carvers
(photo courtesy of Ashby Museum)*

Hello Heritage

We are very happy to be taking part in North West Leicestershire's 'Hello Heritage' event this September. There are free events on all over the district between 2nd & 17th September.

Our information board this year concentrates on our 15th Century Tower and will be up on the churchyard gates during the event.

The full festival programme is available via North West Leicestershire's website:

https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/hello_heritage

Hello Heritage... 2-17 September
Celebrating the rich heritage and culture of North West Leicestershire.



This event is part of the national Heritage Open Days event, when places all over the country will be open free of charge. Check out the national website at heritageopendays.org.uk/about

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)

Research News

Our research volunteers continue to be active. Ian Scruton's most recent piece of research is included below:

STRAIGHT FROM THE HERALD'S MOUTH

An account of the 2nd Earl of Huntingdon's funeral in St Helen's in 1560 is contained in Henry Machyn's Diary. Henry Machyn was a London clothier who supplied funeral trappings. He was a friend of William Harvey, the Clarenceux Herald (he left his Diary to him in his will). William Harvey was present at the 2nd Earl's funeral and so presumably told Henry Machyn about it:

"The fourteenth day of July was buried the noble Earl of Huntingdon, knight of the Garter, with a standard [a long tapering flag] and many mourners. And then came his great banner of arms [a square flag containing a coat of arms] and then came more mourners and then came three heralds of arms in their coat of arms. One bore the helmet and the crest [a figure on top of the helmet in a coat of arms] and the mantles [cloaks], and another carried the target [a round shield] with the Garter [a small belt, the badge of the Knights of the Garter] and the sword, and another his coat of arms. And then came the corpse with eight goodly great banderoles [small banners] about him. And then many mourners. And the church and the place and the street hung with black and arms. And there was a goodly hearse and garnished with great escutcheons of arms [shields with coats of arms on them] and a great majesty [the canopy of a hearse] of taffeta and the valence gilded. And upon him a new pall of black velvet. And three heralds, the Garter King of Arms, the Clarenceux Herald, and the Norroy Herald."

At that time the funerals of aristocrats were organised by the heralds of the College of Arms. The three most senior heralds, the Garter King of Arms, the Clarenceux Herald and the Norroy Herald, attended the 2nd Earl's funeral. We do not know who else attended. For the 3rd Earl's funeral Lord Burghley wrote to his brother: *"I account you to be the principal mourner at the funeral, and the Earls of Worcester and Lincoln, being allies of the house, and the Lords Clinton and Compton your nephews to accompany the said earls; and the rest to be performed by your brethren"*. The Countess of Huntingdon, Katherine Pole, would not have been there as it was not the practice for women to attend funerals in the Tudor period.

The alabaster chest tomb in the Hastings Chapel commemorates the 2nd Earl. Curiously the inscription on the tomb gives the date of his death as 1561 and not 1560, as it should be.

The 2nd Earl was a Knight of the Garter and during his lifetime his Garter banner would have hung in St George's Chapel, Windsor. The 1980 edition of the St Helen's Church Guide says that it is this banner which hangs from the ceiling of the Hastings Chapel. If this is so, it has been there since 1560 which would explain why it is so threadbare today.



Tomb of the 2nd Earl of Huntingdon and his wife, Katherine Pole

Ian Scruton

Research Interests and queries

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