



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

Heritage Project eNews

No. 20 April 2024



Since our last newsletter ...

Heritage Talks Series 2023-24

We've held a successful season of Heritage talks. Stuart Warburton joined us back in September 2023 to talk about coalmining during the Wars of the Roses. Moira Ackers spoke in October on the building of Staunton Harold Church during the 17th Century Commonwealth after the execution of King Charles I. We had something completely different in November, when Mary Tuckey gave us a history of textiles, from Viking longship sails to spacesuits and everything in between. Peter Liddle returned to St Helen's in January with a fascinating history of burial practices in Leicestershire over the past 5,000 years.



Peter Liddle giving his Heritage talk, January 2024

In February we hosted Ursula Ackrill to talk about our Parish Library and in March Lesley Rowe gave us an insight into the importance of St Helen's to the Puritan movement in the 17th Century.

***Exciting news:** Ursula Ackrill has issued an invitation to us to visit our Parish Library in Nottingham. More information on page 4.

Heritage Talks Series 2024-25

Our first winter talk, on 1st October, will be '**Annoying Ancestors**' by **Gay Evans**. This is an anecdotal take of what to look for and the pitfalls to avoid when researching your family - how our ancestors can unknowingly be annoying as they put obstacles in our way! Gay is an engaging speaker, who returns to St Helen's by popular demand after her talk on The Last English Peer hanged for murder (Earl Ferrers) in our 2019-20 talks series.

Our winter talks for 2024-5 will be on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in the Heritage Centre:

Tuesday 1st October 2024	Tuesday 28th January 2025
Tuesday 29th October 2024	Tuesday 25th February 2025
Tuesday 26th November 2024	Tuesday 25th March 2025

The cost will be £4 per person and light refreshments will be included in the entry fee.

More details of other talks coming very soon.

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY TALK & TOURS 2024



 **St Helen's Church & Heritage Centre**
Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leics, LE65 1AB

As part of the **National Festival of Archaeology** this year's St Helen's event will be:

Leicester Cathedral Revealed

Join archaeologist **Mathew Morris*** for a talk about Leicester Cathedral's recent archaeological excavations & what they tell us about Leicester and the lives and stories of its people over the past 2,000 years in the St. Helen's Heritage Centre on Tuesday 9th July at 7.30 pm



£ 4
inc light refreshments

* Mathew Morris has spent much of his career digging up Leicester and, in 2012, he supervised the successful search for the lost grave of King Richard III

 Facebook.com/sthelenheritage  instagram.com/sthelenheritage  www.sthelenashby.net 

We will be taking part in the Leicestershire & Rutland Festival of Archaeology this July, with three events.

On **Tuesday 9th July** at 7.30 pm we will be welcoming Mathew Morris, Project Officer at University of Leicester Archaeological Services, to our Heritage Centre to talk about the recent Leicester Cathedral dig.

Cost is £4 on the door (cash or card).
Light refreshments included.
No need to book.

On **Saturday 13th July** at 2 pm there will be a guided tour of the Church.

The tour is free but donations are welcome.

On **Monday 15th July** at 2 pm we are offering a brand new tour of our churchyard, with some new research and interesting stories about our ancestors.

Again, the tour is free but donations are welcome.

More information about all these events

on our website: https://sthelens.churchinsight.com/Groups/402608/Festival_of_Archaeology.aspx


St Helen's Church & Heritage Centre

As part of the **National Festival of Archaeology** this year at St Helen's our events will be:

Guided Tour of St Helen's Church

Saturday 13th July at 2 pm

- Learn more about this Grade 1 listed 15th Century church, its history and some of its people.
- Find out about its close connections to royalty.
- Discover its links to the early Puritan movement in England.
- See the only pilgrim memorial in England and a very rare finger pillory

Guided Tour of St Helen's Churchyard

Monday 15th July at 2 pm

- A brand new tour, not to be missed.
- Hear about some of the Ashby personalities of centuries gone by who are buried here.
- Learn from the grim report of the Board of Health in 1849.
- Listen to the tale of the bodysnatchers.
- Find out when the gravestones were laid flat - and why.

Two unique opportunities to explore the site with our experienced tour guides

Free tour but donations welcome

Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leics, LE65 1AB

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Churchyard Stories

Our brand new churchyard tour this July is part of our ongoing 'Churchyard Stories' project, which aims to uncover more stories about people who have lived in our town over the centuries.



Late 19th Century gravestone carvers pose for a photograph.

Photo courtesy of Ashby Museum

Did you know that until Holy Trinity church was consecrated in 1840, St Helen's was Ashby's only burial ground? Both churchyards closed when Ashby cemetery opened in 1857, except for a few burials in existing family graves.

Ashby Museum volunteers carried out a thorough survey of the churchyard between 2004-2008 but the vegetation has grown back and our gravestones are decaying and becoming harder to read.

Last summer we started to carefully clear vegetation from some of the gravestones and to photograph them. In 2024, we will be continuing with this and starting to tell some of the stories of our churchyard, looking at the reasons behind the creation of new burial grounds and exploring the lives of some of our people.

We have soldiers from the Napoleonic Wars, publicans, business people and small children. The Ashby Union Workhouse Master is here. There are tales of bodysnatchers and of people who travelled huge distances to end up here.

Funeral practices have changed a lot through the ages so we'll also be bringing the story of funerals right up to date.

Maybe you have family members buried at St Helen's?

Maybe you have photographs or documents relating to our churchyard?

Or are you simply fascinated by the rich history of our town and keen to explore some of our stories?

This is a collaborative project with other groups in the town. For instance, Ashby Museum will be mounting an exhibition on burial in Ashby this summer.

Please get in touch if you'd like to be involved and please come along to our talks, trails and churchyard tours during the Festival of Archaeology in July.

Contact us via sthelensheritage@gmail.com or see our website: https://sthelens.churchinsight.com/Groups/402608/Festival_of_Archaeology.aspx

Visit to Nottingham University Manuscripts & Special Collections

You may remember that Ursula Ackrill, the librarian who has the care of our own Ashby Parish Library, visited us to talk about it and other local parish libraries back in February of this year.

We have since received an exciting invitation from Ursula to visit the library and take a close look at some of our books. Normally, there is a charge to visit the University Manuscripts and Special Collections, but the visit will be free and is available to up to 20 people.

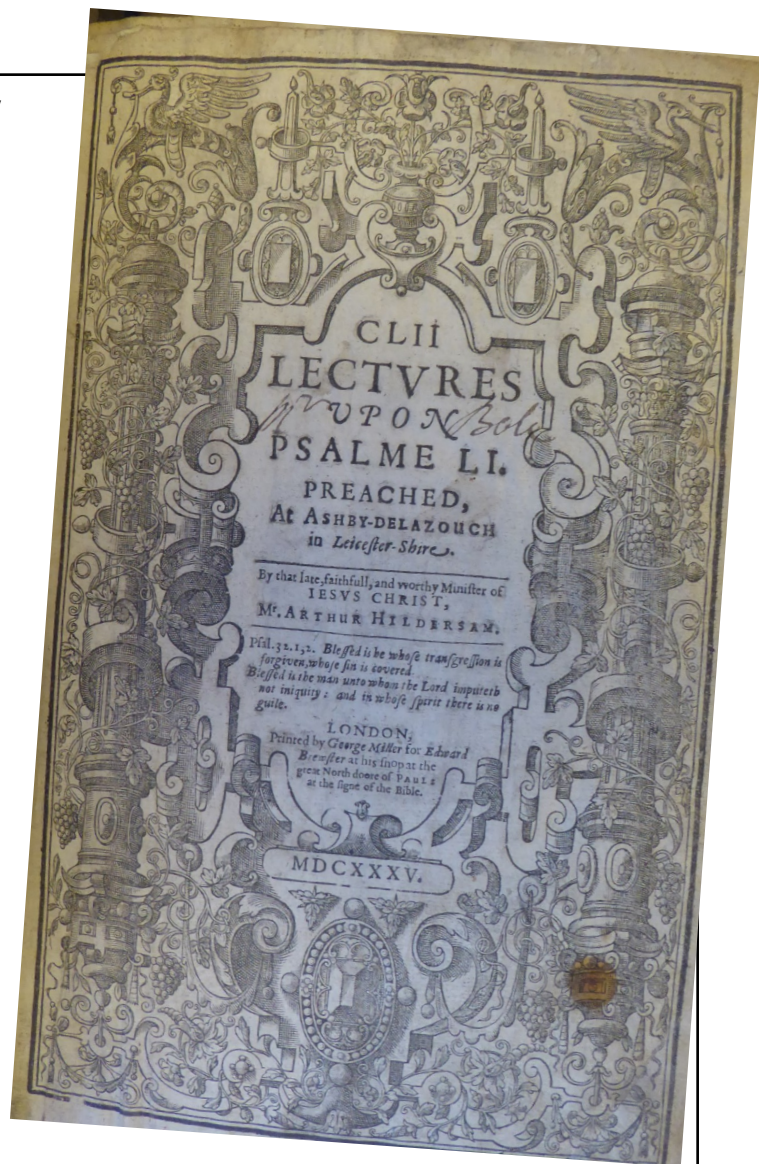
You will need to make your own way into Nottingham and there is a charge for parking at the library, on the university's King's Meadow Campus at Lenton Lane, but the visit itself is free and will be hosted by Ursula.

The date will be Friday 21st June at 2 pm and the visit will last around 2 hours.

If you would like to go, please email us as soon as possible at:

sthelensheritage@gmail.com

For more information about the Manuscripts and Special Collections, visit: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/>



One of our books: Arthur Hildersham's lectures on Psalm 51. The eagle eyed will notice that on either side of the word 'upon' are the words 'Mr' and 'Bate.' This is Thomas Bate, who founded the Ashby Parish Library.

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/StHelenChurchAshbydeLaZouch)

(NB: please ensure it's our official FB page-which has no hyphens in the name of our town)