



Atherstone Civic Society

'TOWN AND VILLAGE'

ATHERSTONE CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
Number 95 Autumn 2018

To preserve the best and improve the rest

CHAIRPERSON

KATH JOHNSTON WRITES:-



Autumn is upon us already!

Where does the time go?

We on the committee have been very busy on your behalf; one member, Patrick Woodcock, monitors planning issues. You'll see I've outlined a few on page 3, a sample to give you a flavour of how hard Patrick works on our behalf.

Our membership and treasury secretary Carl Gurney has been very busy collecting and collating membership fees. Thanks to Carl and Stuart Jones. I hope you have remembered to update your Standing Order. I forgot!! The web site successfully managed by Stuart, our secretary and webmaster, is going from strength to strength. If you have any news to share for the web site, please get in touch with him. The web site address is on the back of this newsletter.

Roy Taylor has written a very informative report, overleaf, on our enjoyable visit to The Coffin Factory.

Thanks to Pauline Gurney, with support from Rita Poulson, for creating for us some great talks and wonderful days out. They are organising next year's programme, which requires a lot of hard work. More exciting times ahead!

Margaret Hughes has been given an NWBC award for community service. See page 3. Margaret's a long standing ACS member, producing/editing Newsletters, minuting meetings, and writing or editing many of our publications. Her book on *Boudica at Mancetter* is nearly ready. Congratulations, Margaret, on a truly deserved award.

Thank you to all the committee who work tirelessly on your behalf for our society.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday October 23rd

Willingly to School?

What did you get up to?

Have you got any tales to tell?

Come listen to anecdotes of North Warwickshire schools from former Schools Inspector David Howe.

At Trinity Church 7.30

Tuesday November 20th

Shakespeare: in celebration of a life

Talk by John White.

At Trinity Church 7.30

Thursday, January 17th, 2019

Seasonal dinner at the King's Head,

Long Street, Atherstone.

Details forthcoming.



Members enjoyed the visit to Shrewsbury, as part of our trip to Attingham Park, in August.

Over the page →

When we went to the Coffin Woks.....

A "LIVE"-LY VISIT!

In the middle of September a coach-load of ACS members and friends went off to Birmingham: first stop- the Coffin Works. There in Fleet St near the city centre, we were met by Cornelius the chief guide, who'd worked for some years in the stamping shop. Divided into two groups, we first went into the stamping shop. But wait a minute, I hear you ask! How does a stamping shop belong in a coffin works? Well, this typical Victorian factory was built in 1868 for the Newman Brothers to produce the upper-market fittings and adornments for the funeral trade; coffins were made elsewhere - from here came breast plates, handles and handrails. So all in all a very Birmingham type of goods: skilled metalwork. Newmans also produce linings and shrouds. The stamping shop employed twenty people, women doing the lighter work on the window side and men on the other side working on heavier items. All this in a building heated by gas flames. Skilled die setters produced steel dies while machines stamped out designs from metal blanks. Angels, handles were produced elsewhere in iron, later coated and polished. The largest stamping was the breast plate for the coffin lid, which was later plated and inserted with a name and a date and so on. While a breast plate could cost up to £250, smaller items could be stamped out at one per second.... the ladies were more dextrous. What's more, very tall people couldn't work in this section; the control handle swung around overhead. Each job was piecework. And they had Dolly with her trolley, tea lady for all three factory floors. The gas boiler was temperamental, and had been known to blow up. The toilets were positioned over the boiler to discourage those who might think to stay too long. The first floor was for checking, packing and storage, again mainly by ladies, and the sewing room for shrouds was on the second floor. Caskets were also catered for. These were heavier duty with

a hinged lid in which were viewing panels. In later years, handles were made in plastic for cremation.

The company dealt only with the the upper end of the market and provided for the funerals of Churchill, the Queen Mother and Princess Diana, as well as other notable people at home and abroad. In 1970 they decided to provide the whole service - that is, coffins ad all. They tried flat-pack coffins, building a small extension for this purpose, but the venture wasn't popular.

After an excellent buffet lunch, our group walked to the Pen Museum on the edge of the Jewellery Quarter. There, a video set the scene, followed by an escorted tour around the works, which produce every type of writing instrument from cow quills to Waverley fountain pens. Millions of pen nibs were made from metal stampings; once again we find it is the ladies who possess the nimble fingers adept at piece work. The various types of pens were named after the professions using them: barrister, Bank of England, aviator, post office, and more. We visitors found it interesting to try out different writing instruments, with "proper" ink - and script - before we left these works, originally supported by three families: the Masons, the Gillets and the Hinks. A look around the well-stocked gift shop with its kits for script writing, and books to guide, brought an end to our day steeped in Victorian manufacturing history.

Our Society is well-served by its Social Committee, well practised and, behind the scenes, generous with their time, in setting up days like these.

ROY TAYLOR



An 1884 design for a cabinet plate and handle

PLANNING MATTERS

Recent planning concerns have included opposing the MIRA application to build on what is thought to be the battlefield site of Richard III and Henry Tudor. With intervention from The Battlefield Trust so far the application has been refused. This was featured on BBC news.

The Britannia hat factory site on Coleshill Road has at last got interesting plans and the scheme has been accepted for residential accommodation for retired people and thankfully retaining the original façade.

We put in an objection to retain the original building, 'The Black Swan' pub, at Grendon against the building of a new Costa Coffee. The plan was to demolish the former pub and erect a drive through Costa coffee house. This was turned down because of traffic flow.

The Co-op near the Railway Station put in plans to build a couple of shops on their site. we objected because of the loss of the view of the historic Railway Station from the roadway. Although the plan was turned around 90degrees, there has been a further objection because the bins and storage will be on view . There will be further consultation.

Kath Johnston reports on Patrick Woodcock's planning interventions

ROMAN MANCETTER PROJECT

In our previous newsletter we were a-glow with news of plans to work towards the creation of a permanent, significant Roman Mancetter Visitor Centre. We spoke of an initial exhibition as a "gateway" to the more long-term Visitor Centre project, and, indeed, over the Summer a dedicated group of our members voluntarily worked very hard to assemble an attractive, informative display. Thanks and appreciation to Martin Saunders, Carl Gurney, Malcolm Lockett , Stuart Jones, Eddie Smallwood and Lorna and Neil Dirveiks. However, as all do know, the path of aspiration never does run smooth, and the chosen venue proved unworkable. But the positives are that a portable exhibition has been created and stands ready to go, and alternative venues are being considered.

Meanwhile, work goes on towards bringing out a freshly researched compilation of the very strong evidence for Mancetter as the site of Boudicca's last battle.

SEE PAGE 4 , UNDER THE BOOK SECTION



We are pleased to picture the recent Presentation event at which one of our members, Margaret Hughes, received an NWBC Award for Voluntary Services, as our Chairperson writes on page 1.

MARGARET BELL has stepped down from our committee, to devote more time to responsibilities on both the NWBC and WCC. We owe her a big thank you for all she has done for ACS. We'll miss her greatly, but know she'll still be there for us, offering her excellent brand of help and support.

ACS PUBLICATIONS



Available from the Information Centre,
in Long St., open Tues, Fridays & Saturdays,
or from timholmes@hotmail.co.uk

- ◇ Once upon a Time in Atherstone £3.00
- ◇ Roman Mancetter. £5.00
- ◇ Atherstone :a pleasantly placed town. £15.00
- ◇ Roman Trail Guide. £1.00

JUDY VERO PUBLICATIONS

- ◇ Hatters Town. £8.95
- ◇ A Concern in Trade. £5.00



BOUDICA AT MANCETTER

The site of that final battle has long tantalized researchers. Yet always, in serious historical debate, one place crops up again and again: Mancetter. There are those who argue against that preference. For Peter and Dan Snow Mancetter is a mere aside in their *Battlefield Britain*, Towcester proposed instead. But on the other hand we can count Shepherd Frere, Antonia Fraser, Miranda Aldhouse-Green, Michael Wood, Richard Unwin, Paul Sealey, Anne Ross, M.J. Trow, Vanessa Collingridge, Neil Oliver - all as pro-Mancetter as they dare to be given the dearth of archaeological finds. (We have no king in a car-park.) Graham Webster, of course, is *the* authoritative Mancetter guru, and more recently Nic Fields has made Mancetter his choice (*Boudica's Rebellion*, Osprey 2011).

Margaret Hughes is working towards bringing out *BOUDICA AT MANCETTER*, and ready to defend that title via a range of strong evidence. Not only does it present a startling new insight on the narrow valley, or “defile”, in which the Romans initially took their stance, it also worms its way back through the centuries to unearth the reason behind Mancetter’s Roman name *Manduessedum*. It reveals that name alone is almost proof enough.

There are hurdles yet to be overcome. Expert confirmation of the “defile” is desirable - and costly. Publication could be costly. But here we are, close to the geographical centre of England and a prime spot for a memorial to the thousands killed in one of England’s most significant battles.

Worth working towards? 4

WHO ARE WE?

*Atherstone Civic Society
was formed in 1990
to stimulate interest in,
and action for,
the improvement of
the local environment*

See Our Website:

www.atherstonecivicsociety.co.uk

HOW DO I JOIN?

Contact us on 01827 713976

or

admin@atherstonecivicsociety.co.uk

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

<i>Adults</i>	<i>£10</i>
<i>Students</i>	<i>£5</i>
<i>Corporate</i>	<i>£25</i>

THE SOCIETY’S COMMITTEE

Roy Atkins	
Carl Gurney	Treasurer
Pauline Gurney	Social Programme
Kath Johnston	Chairperson
Stuart Jones	Secretary+webmaster
Margaret Hughes	Minutes+newsletter
Malcolm Lockett	
Rita Poulson	Vice-chair+Social prog
Martin Saunders	
Roy Taylor	
Patrick Woodcock	Planning matters