



Tewkesbury Museum

Supporter's Newsletter

**JUNE
2022**

STITCH STORY

The Stitch Story evening in the talks series went very well, with a different format to our normal talks, and insights into the project from Megan, Jo and Sam plus the opportunity to see parts of the finished item and to add a few stitches.

The project has certainly captured the public imagination and the viewing of the finished item at the Watson Hall over the weekend 21/22 May attracted 1,500 people. There was some spin-off for the Museum, as well, and we had our busiest weekend for a very long time.

The embroidery will be on display at the Abbey later in the summer, but now it is finished it needs a permanent home. There are not many public places which have 6m of wall available to display it. We can only await an announcement of its future from the team.

TALKS

The spring talks finished with a talk about comics, so you had to be a certain age to appreciate it! It's strange to think that something which was so deeply embedded in life just a few decades ago, and gave us a lot of characters who live on in the language should have disappeared so completely from the lives of today's children. John explained it all well, from the societal aspect, as well as indulging in a little nostalgia along the way.

Talks start again in the autumn, and the programme is:

4 October:	Hidden voices; Women in Tudor Society.	Kirsty Bingham
18 October:	Chedworth Roman Villa – A virtual guided tour.	Nick Humphries
1 November:	The life of Dr Edward Thomas Wilson of Cheltenham.	David Elder
29 November:	Deserter to VC Hero.	Mike Kean Price

On Thursday 9th June, the Civic Society have a talk by **Marguerite Collins** on the subject of 'Madresfield Court - the True Brideshead'. It will be held in the Old Baptist Chapel, and non-members are welcome.

The Historical Society's Anchor University continues with two talks at the Anchor pub on Tuesday 14th June. John Dixon will talk about the impact of rivers on our history and Joanne Raywood, will give a talk on 'A Day on the Ham'.

The Woodard Prize

The Historical Society have an independently-adjudicated award for the best article appearing in their annual bulletin, the Woodard Prize. This year, the winner was our Chair,

Joanne, for her article on the life of James Blount Lewis, respected citizen, businessman, Mayor and apparently the last person in the town to wear knee breeches.

The article is spread over two issues, Nos 29 and 30 (both in the Museum library) and provide an insight into a successful but very principled hosier whose life spanned the times of plenty and times of poverty in stocking-frame knitting in both Tewkesbury and Nottingham. It's a highly recommended read if you want to learn about the stocking-frame industry in Tewkesbury.

SANCTUARY

Recently, a visitor, whose primary interest had been to see the battle display, started a conversation about the role of the Abbey in providing sanctuary after the battle and how King Edward's dealt with those sheltering in the Abbey. Like a lot of things surrounding these events from 550 years ago there is a great deal of confusion arising from differences in early sources, often because of the loyalties of the authors.

We have two contemporary accounts. The first is the 'official' account from the Yorkist chronicle. 'The History of the Arrival of King Edward IV':

Thus this done, and with God's might achieved, the King took the right way to the Abbey there, to give unto Almighty God laud and thanks for the victory that, of his mercy, he had granted and given unto him; where he was received with procession, and so conveyed through the church and the choir, to the High Alter, with great devotion praising God and yielding unto him convenient laud. And, where there were fled into the said church many of his rebels, in great number ??? or more, hoping there to have been relieved and saved from bodily harm, he gave them all his free pardon, albeit there never was, nor had not at any time been granted, any franchise to that place for any offenders against their prince having recourse thither, but that it had been lawful to the King to have commanded them to have been drawn out of the church, and had done them to be executed as his traitors, if so had been his pleasure;

The second is from a chronicle written by the monks in the Abbey and contained in the 'Founder's Book' of the Abbey:

The maddened army of the foresaid King Edward IV entered the monastery and the town of Tewkesbury and despoiling very many people, and seized the goods of the monasteries, and some entered the church and violently laid hold of the wretched men from the army of the foresaid Prince and killed them, both in the cemetery and in the church itself. And as a result of this deed the church was polluted so that neither mass nor any divine office might be performed there for almost a month. And the church with its cemetery was reconsecrated again by the Lord suffragan of the Bishop of Worcester 30 May, that is, the Thursday before Pentecost, out of the resources of the monastery.

Believe what you will!

The idea of sanctuary was an ancient one, first written into law by Ine, King of Wessex, in 680, and developed through both Saxon and Norman kings, eventually being abolished by the Tudors. Some churches were places of refuge, where a fugitive was safe to remain, but most had lesser powers. A fugitive from law on entering a church had to confess his crime to a coroner, and upon doing so was given a passport to leave England. He was given forty days to do so, wearing sackcloth and carrying a cross. He was given a route to follow and a port to leave from. He was not allowed to stop for more than two nights en-route and had to embark on the first available ship. Return to England was forbidden, except in special circumstances.

Sanctuary was ritualised in a number of churches, and in the north we have the sanctuary knocker at Durham Cathedral (as, it was claimed, did St Nicholas' Church in Gloucester). Others, notably Hexham and Beverley had 'Frith Stools', places of protection from which to confess.

This isn't Tewkesbury, but the Combertons are close:

In 1283 there was a gross violation of ecclesiastical immunities at Little Comberton. A certain fugitive was taken by force out of the church, incited thereto by the bailiff of the hundred of Pershore and the reeve of Wick. At the same time the mob withdrew the priest and the parish clerk from their houses in the churchyard (probably as abettors of the fugitive taking sanctuary), and put them all three in prison at Worcester. For this outrage all concerned were excommunicated, and the bishop issued his mandate to the deans of Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol, Pershore, and Warwick, enjoining the public scourging of the delinquents, bareheaded, and wearing only their shirts and breeches, through the market-places of those five towns

ST MAURICE

Lord Wenlock, who was one of the commanders of the Lancastrian army at the battle of Tewkesbury has a coat of arms, and banner, which contains three 'blackamoor's heads'. The hirer of the banner was anxious about any possible links to slavery, so some research was carried out, which revealed some interesting things.

The 'blackamoor' was St Maurice, born in about 250 in Thebes, Egypt. He was a Christian convert and joined the, generally pagan, Roman army, rising through the ranks to be commander of the Theban legion, which was entirely Christian. This legion was called to fight in the Alps, to clear the St Bernard pass. They quickly got into trouble for refusing to sacrifice to Roman gods and importantly for refusing to attack local Christians. The Emperor Maximian had the legion decimated, in the original meaning of the word, and subsequently all executed. The site of this slaughter is now the city of Saint Maurice.

St Moritz, the spa and resort town, is also named for St Maurice, but is on the other side of the Alps.

St Maurice, and his heraldic symbol, gained prominence when he became the patron saint or the Holy Roman Emperors. Quite how he became linked to an English family with roots in Shropshire isn't clear, but it is assuredly not through slavery!

MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL PARADE

After an enforced break of two years the Medieval Festival is back, and will be held over 9th and 10th July. A popular feature is the parade, to be held on Sunday morning, and groups all over Tewkesbury are working away at preparing their displays, which this year will include even more giant figures than before, plus six horses and knights. Half of Tewkesbury seems to be engaged in weaving willow and applying papier-mache.

The parade has grown into a large, and popular, event. It has a lot of regulatory and safety hoops to jump through, and like all such events is always short of stewards and marshals. If you fancy helping to get the horses, knights and giants safely down the road, the organisers would like to hear from you. Email tbs@tewkesbury.org.uk

The Battle of Nibley Green

Sticking with this month's medieval theme, but a little remote from Tewkesbury, on Saturday next, 11 June, there's a guided walk around the site of the Battle of Nibley Green.

Nibley Green is a picturesque village tucked into the foot of the Cotswolds between Dursley and Wotton under Edge. It is the site of the last private battle fought on English soil between Thomas Talbot (Viscount Lisle) and Lord William Berkeley. The battlefield includes one of the most remarkable oak trees in the county, and the remnants of Michealwood, a name now remembered as a motorway service station.

Meet at 10:30am at St. Martin's Church, North Nibley, Gloucestershire, GL11 6DL. The walk is approximately 3 – 4 miles in length and will last between two and a half and three hours. The walk is free to members of the Battlefields Trust. A donation of £5 is requested from non-members. All proceeds go towards establishing an information board about the battle.

For more information and to book a place please contact Adam Dolling; 07968 722973 or asdolling@hotmail.com

CONTRIBUTIONS

This newsletter is intended for supporters of the Museum. It is confined to local history, the background to items in the museum collection and things which the editor thinks are interesting. I hope you also find them interesting!

Contributions are very welcome, and will add to the range and variety of topics covered. If you have a few minutes to type up something you're researched, or even to suggest a topic which would be of general interest, please email info@tewkesburymuseum.org.

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