

Archival News 2013

This year, the archives have been very well used again with twenty four of the many enquiries needing lengthy research. Most emails have been filed as they contained so much local history and interesting family information which might well have been lost.

In October 2012, Mr. & Mrs. Verity of Alvanley, researching the Port of Frodsham, spent a morning in Castle Park House borrowing books, documents, files and the 1938 viaduct CD, which proved fortuitous for the archives. Only Part 1 of a long article about the Port by Peter Swift, who had worked in the archive room, existed in the records but Malcolm Verity, (the Secretary of Merseyside Industrial Archaeology Society) , knowing Peter, was able to provide the completed article on CD - a welcome donation from the author.

Mr. Herman Lenders of Gt. Budworth Heritage Society wanted to know how Frodsham had acquired its original Blue Plaques. There was no information in The Frodsham Society's newsletters 'Interact' and as Vale Royal no longer exists, no one seemed to recall who had produced them. Eventually, a CWC Conservation and Design lady was contacted who offered to help Mr. Lenders' society.

Rachel Swallow, a visiting lecturer of Chester University, spent several hours during two days, in the archive room researching Frodsham Castle and its landscape to establish its possible existence. This potentially exciting project with her supervisor, Professor Stewart Ainsworth of 'Time Team' fame, was to be a non-invasive archaeological survey of the park, eventually enlisting volunteer 'archaeologists' from the village. Several months of Rachel's work and planning ended suddenly when the project's funding was curtailed. It was pleasing to know that Rachel found our archives, Dr. Dodd's papers and recorded information, 'a treasure store'

Facts and photographs about the old Whalebone Inn were scanned and emailed to Mike Jones who had early memories of the building.

A young school boy wished to know more about Frodsham shops and their owners for his school project. Mrs. Dorothy Smith agreed to meet him and gave him all the information he needed. One very pleased young person.

There have been three local family enquiries which the archives, Frodsham Library and Chester Record Office supplied most answers once I had researched them.

Mr. Simon Longden was interested in the Gleeson and Kydd's Jam factory and has recently donated a very interesting magazine article about Helsby and Longden's history.

Mrs. Doreen Hough generously donated a beautiful love token card and also written information about the Sandland family, and the Harrison family who built one of the cottages on Main Street (see the blue plaque).

Lindy Knowles of Canada made contact again about her Corker grand parents life in Gasworks Cottage, Green Field Lane.

Yvonne Stephens of Australia, continued last years absorbing correspondence with her relatives all of which has been added to the archives.

I was intrigued when Ben Aston (16) of Runcorn, sent me several very polite emails asking about the Aston family's history and the possibility of there being aristocratic ancestors. He had read my last year's report on the internet! Information from the archives was emailed to him as well as Church and County service contacts.

Philip Jenkins of Devon made contact again with additional information and questions about his Noden, Done, Antrobus and Snelson connections. He requests that if anyone recognises his name he is willing to share family knowledge. Information and photos were emailed to him.

Jamie Bruce Lockhart's (of the Abbott Wright Family) help has been sought again on two occasions; first to identify an old photograph recently found, which might have been Harriet Shaw Weaver. It proved not to be but Jamie emailed delightful family photographs of Harriet which are now in the archive.

Secondly, a letter was sent this September, from remaining family members, supporting the Frodsham residents' suggestion to develop the recreational ground at the corner of Fountain Lane and Prince Way, as a Garden of Remembrance.

Gordon Liversedge's enquiry about the Newton Hall Estate 1947-1960 and Springside Villa's previous owners, eventually led him to find he had several siblings unknown to him - a very happy outcome. The National Children's Home file is growing steadily and more information is in the pipeline for future reference, especially for enquiries from abroad.

Christine Storey of Carlton, near Poulton-le-Fylde had a fascinating enquiry. She was researching her own local field names and found that one, Tween Mills, also had a reference to Tween Mills Field in Frodsham. I was asked for any information that might indicate where the two Frodsham mills might have been. When approached, Farmers Sam Williams and Geoffrey Warburton asked around but no one now remembers the name or exact site of the mills, which, according to the limited information from our records and from the Internet, were in the vicinity of Castle Park. Tween Mills Field - does anyone have any knowledge of its location?

There have been enquiries about who planted the walnut trees in Stapleton Court and when; the springs which flow under the houses at the top of Red Lane; the original cellars of Castle Park House; Frodsham Library asking if the building is listed; 'Fraser James', the hairdressers, wanting photographs of Railway House to decorate their new premises; land rights in Blue Bridge Lane, Frodsham ; and the whereabouts of Don Bradman's Pitch. This was once a concrete cricket pitch in the Overton Conservation Area, provided by the People's Don Bradman Fund in co-operation with National Playing Fields Association. It no longer exists but the plaque remains on the wall by St Laurence Church.

All enquiries were looked into and answered.

Ken Crouch trying to trace a particular Methodist WW1 plaque from a photograph, found it eventually in a cupboard.

Councillor Allen Wales and I met Mrs. Dylis O'Neil to discuss whether her detailed records of Frodsham's WW1 fallen soldiers could be published in a booklet, to be given eventually to Frodsham school children.

A letter has been donated by Mr. John Nield, recounting a WW2 Frodsham soldier's horrifying experience entering Belsen in 1945 and his onward very difficult march. This is an historic modern document.

Bob Heaton of Acton Bridge, spent time in the archive room, researching The Black Horse and White Hart Inns on the River Weaver and also the Edward Aston family 1731 and 1825. All the information I gleaned was passed on and Bob very kindly donated deeds and a River Weaver navigation map to the archives.

Richard Hewitt has given his talk 'From the Archives' again, making good use of Dr. Dodd's slides of Frodsham 1960 to 1980. He also took photographs of 'Lisroan' (the late Dr. Earlam's house in Fluin Lane) just before it was demolished and this made the front page of the 'Chester Chronicle'. The archives now have computer copies of Dr. Earlam's funeral address, a news report of the efforts to stop the demolition, and images of 'Lisroan' as it was, and as a shell .

It is with great sadness that I have recorded in the archives, the career and death of Mr. Derek Walker of Frodsham; a retired Helsby High School teacher, an internationally known mountaineer, a Past President of the British Mountaineering Council and a member of the History Society.

Finally, Thank you to Arthur Smith, Mrs. Dorothy Smith, Nick Smith and everyone who has given me answers, passed on enquiries, donated books, documents, files, maps and unusual artefacts - I am ever grateful. As always, I invite anyone, who is interested, to visit the archive room and spend some time there.

Kath Hewitt.