

## ***Archival News 2011***

What began as a fairly quiet year compared with the last two years, developed into the most interesting and challenging series of enquiries.

Hillsboro House once stood on the corner of Townfield Lane and Vicarage Lane. Recently, deeds covering 150 years of its history surfaced unexpectedly in Hillsboro Close and Sheila Holroyd and I were invited to look at them. All were beautifully written in copperplate, apart from the last 1950's deed and many were signed by the Duke of Westminster and Earl Rock Savage. We spent two hours sifting through them and our final suggestion for their future was that they should be returned to the owners' bank safety box where they would be available for future scholarly study.

29 charming and poignant letters were found during repairs at Gates Garage and donated by Mr. B. Dunne. They illustrate the changing relationships of three young people, written between 1907 and 1910. Sixteen of the letters portray the unsuccessful romantic feelings of Miss Nellie Taylor of Runcorn for Mr. George Hibbert of Liverpool - and later Frodsham. A further thirteen letters, written from numbers 70 and 72 Main Street, Frodsham, relate the developing romance of George and Ellen Andrews -Nellie's friend. George's letters are articulate, hinting at a best forgotten past and show a depth of emotion which Ellen seems unable to share. The letters are gems of youthful social manners of the Edwardian era and a delight to read. Enquiries are being made to find their descendants.

Other enquiries have included finding information about; - 'The Dropping Stone'; James Frodsham Robinson, a Frodsham chemist 1860 to 1870; the Weaver Navigation Acts of 1714, 1754, 1807; the Frodsham Coat of Arms; the Helsby Quarry Tramway and the location of Dr. Frederick Poynton Weaver's family home - East Bank House (now Fraser House) in Bridge Lane .The Weaver Family can trace their ancestry from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This last enquiry generated many very interesting emails from a descendent, Mr. Jamie Bruce Lockhart, about his family and the Abbott Wright family of Castle Park House. Here, I must thank Nick Smith for identifying East Bank House and Simon Longden who lived there, for their help.

Recently, copies of Dr. Dodd's sketch maps of 1209 and 1873 showing the Main Street burgage plots (each about one acre) were added to the Town Council's planned objections to extensive new builds behind the shops.

The possibility of WW2 unexploded bombs on the marshes was investigated at the request of John Dearden. Apart from the information in the archives ,it was fascinating to hear from those who remember the terrifying bombing raids on Frodsham.

Coincidentally, a Frodsham lady wished to find out more about Italian P.O.W.s in the area and maybe solve a family mystery. Our archives provided some information for her, as did Mrs. Dorothy Smith, Nick Smith and Sam Williams. I also contacted The Imperial War Museums in Salford and London who were very helpful indeed and went to great lengths to find a possible solution.

Books, documents and maps have been borrowed for further study. Seven maps were borrowed by the members of 41 Dining Club for a very lively discussion! They included very large, detailed maps of this region from the 1880s, a Township and Lordship Tithe Apportionment map 1844, WW2 Home Guard Plans for Frodsham farms 1940, Engineering and Sewage Plans for Frodsham Township 1879, Engineering drawings of Runcorn Union Workhouse 1872 and Aerial photographs of Frodsham.

I was interested to read that the historic 1891 Methodist Church's Banner will be preserved at Englesea Brook Museum as the various museums I had approached earlier for Mrs. Caldwell, were unable to conserve or store it until Mrs. Dorothy Smith suggested Englesea Brook. Mrs. Caldwell was kind enough to let me borrow the 23 detailed photographic negatives of the banner, which were then scanned from film to digital and printed by John Hughes of the Photographic Society, for our archives, recording the names of so many Frodsham families.

A number of people have spent time in the archive room for personal research. The latest archive lists of books, documents, maps, posters, artefacts and the Journal Index from 1986 are available in CD form or paper copies in Castle Park House and Frodsham Library. The CD of the late Dr. Dodd's slides of Frodsham, 1960 to 1980, plus fascinating and rare glimpses of Frodsham's much earlier history, is also in Castle Park House's Computer Room and Frodsham Library.

In 1995, when Sue Davy and I began reorganising the archives, Bill Hawkin's complete archival list was typed on 8 sides of A4 paper while the latest lists fill 91 sides of A4 - excluding the thick files within a single entry! So, my thanks go to all those who have contributed such interesting and valuable historical information. There is much to see, so should you wish to visit or borrow anything from the Archive Room please contact me, using the "Contact" page on this website. I would be delighted to show you what the History Society has to offer.

Kath Hewitt.