A very Happy New Year and welcome to ‘The Forum’ Northamptonshire Heritage Forum’s Newsletter, the first of 2018. We would like to also welcome many new members who have joined us during 2017.

Our website is www.northamptonshireheritageforum.co.uk and facebook http://www.facebook.com/NMHHF

Here goes with all the news:

ROCKINGHAM FOREST TRUST

Settlers of the Nene Valley funding success!

Rockingham Forest Trust are thrilled to be able to announce that they have been given the go-ahead on their new community heritage project. The Trust, which manages Stanwick Lakes, is one of eleven organisations in the Nenescape Landscape Partnership Scheme that have received funding for activities which explore the Nene Valley, its people, heritage and identity in a changing landscape.

The lives of the Neolithic, Roman and Saxon settlers of the Nene Valley are to be explored, re-created and celebrated through a wide range of exciting heritage activities for the local community focussing on the journeys that the settlers made, where and how they lived, and what we can learn from them. There will be hands-on opportunities to learn new skills in the traditional crafts and constructions techniques which enabled people to settle and make their home in the valley, school projects and community events.

The Trust is looking for volunteers to join the team, so anyone who likes the idea of learning new skills, exploring their local history and making new friends should contact RFT on 01933 625527 or email info@rftrust.org.uk.
ALTHORP HOUSE

TO CATCH A KING - Charles II’s Great Escape

by Charles Spencer  Published on 5th October 2017 William Collins £20
ISBN 978000 815363 2

THE TRUE STORY OF ONE OF THE GREATEST ESCAPES IN BRITISH HISTORY—
THAT OF YOUNG CHARLES II WHO FLED FOR HIS LIFE WITH A VAST PRICE
ON HIS HEAD AFTER DEFEAT AT THE BATTLE OF WORCESTER, TO ESCAPE
THE MEN WHO HAD KILLED HIS FATHER AND WANTED HIM – AND ALL
TRACES OF THE MONARCHY – DEAD.

Events held this year included the third Food and Drink Festival which took place on 6-
7th May and later won ‘Best Event-Historic House’ at the Heritage Awards in August.
The festival is set to take place on 12-13th May 2018 and continues to welcome and
celebrate local producers and suppliers.

The Althorp Literary Festival is described as a Literary Festival like no other and this
year didn’t disappoint! We were delighted to welcome many inspiring authors and
introduce the inaugural Children’s Festival. Next year we enter its 15th year! A unique
celebration of the written word, the festival takes place against the backdrop of one of
England’s most beautiful, private Historic Houses. Our 2018 dates are 5th-7th October.

Our public opening season welcomed record numbers of visitors and 2017 marked a
special 20th anniversary of the late Princess Diana. An exhibition of 15 iconic images
taken by Mario Testino was displayed in their entirety, originally taken for Vanity Fair.
Our 2018 public opening dates are 16th July – 9th September,* excluding 25th & 26th
August.

WOLLASTON MUSEUM

Charles Lister, property Manager at Boughton House
gave a talk on ‘Boughton House the English Versailles’
to members and friends of the Wollaston Heritage
Society. Charles gave a fascinating insight into the life
of the family and the amazing contents of Boughton
House.

WHS runs the Wollaston Museum in High street,
Wollaston, open April to September Sunday and
Wednesday afternoons 2.30-4.30pm. Entry is free of
charge and offers a wealth of historical detail from agriculture to yesteryear, via
horseradish relish and the Titanic! It also offers a view into life in the early 20th Century
with its little gem Curiosity Cottage plus Beacon Hill, offering splendid views across
the countryside as well as lovely gardens. Our website: www.wollastonmuseum.com
or www.facebook.com/WollastonMuseum.
RINGSTEAD HERITAGE GROUP

Ringstead Heritage Group’s latest venture was the support of Ringstead C of E Primary School’s celebration of its opening 150 years ago. The Group provided a display of old photographs of the school and past pupils and gave guided walks for the pupils and visitors to explain how the village would have looked in the nineteenth century. Local historian David Ball in collaboration with RHG Chair, Jon Abbott, produced a booklet covering the school’s history.

It was also the 400th anniversary of the creation of the charity The Ringstead Gift. This provides grants for educational purposes to Ringstead pupils. Jim Tuttle, a descendant of the founder of the charity, and his wife joined us at the school.

PHIL MORRIS - Individual member of the Forum and joint editor of the FHN UK magazine

The Fire Heritage Network UK is the umbrella organisation for Fire Museums throughout the UK. The nearest museum to Northamptonshire being "Under Fire" a reconstructed WWII Fire Station at Twinwoods near Bedford. One of the members is the "The Rice Manual Collection" who for a number of years has maintained a register of manual fire engines throughout the country. In order to keep the register up to date they have appealed for information on the make and location of manual fire engines. They could be in museums, fire stations, country houses or private collections.

It is vital that this register is kept up to date with museums closing and fire stations' disposing of their history sadly the whereabouts these fire engines is being lost.

C18th Geddington manual now in the Manor House Museum, Kettering
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

NIAG began life back in the mid-1960s as an informal group, so this year we have quietly celebrated 50 years of studying and promoting Northamptonshire’s industrial heritage. During 2017 we enjoyed an excellent year of activities, our winter programme of talks covered topics as diverse as 18th century textile manufacturing and the history of one of the county’s railways. Our summer season of walks and visits included trips to London, Oxfordshire and Leicestershire, whilst nearer to home we enjoyed walks in and around Desborough, Earls Barton and Finedon, and a fascinating visit to George James Blacksmiths at Broughton who restore heritage ironwork.

NIAG’s Newsletter goes out to members four times a year and in June our newsletter editor was thrilled to receive the ‘Newsletter of the Year Award’ from the British Association for Local History; this was very well deserved!

In October, NIAG hosted the East Midlands Industrial Archaeological Conference at Northampton’s National Training Academy for Rail which was highly successful and enjoyable. We are grateful to the staff of the Academy for their help and expertise.

Peter Perkins, Secretary

George James Blacksmiths at Broughton where NIAG enjoyed a morning’s demonstration of ironwork restoration skills

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

We’ve had a busy year promoting family history and helping our members with their research. We had stall at Who Do You Think You Are Live at the NEC in April for the three days of the event and it was great to meet up with lots of people, to answer their queries and sell our publications! We were fortunate to have a member of staff from Northamptonshire Archives there each day to help us and to promote the wonderful collections and treasures that they hold!

We have four meetings each month – at Rushden, Kettering, Northampton and Oundle with a wide range of speakers on family history related topics. Non members are welcome on payment of a £2 donation. Please see our website for the programme for the coming months.
We will also be holding a One-Day Conference on Saturday 19 May 2018 at Park Inn, Northampton £32.50 per person including a 3 course lunch. The programme of talks is as follows:

- Crime & Punishment in Victorian Northampton – Daniel Williams, Northamptonshire Archives
- Up with the Lark – Agricultural Workers – Ian Waller
- Manorial Records for family & local history – Sarah Charlton
- DNA for family historians – Barbara Griffiths.

The event is open to all and booking forms will be available on our website from January 2018.

One of our major projects is the recording of the gravestones in the churchyards around the county. So far over 170 titles have been published as small booklets (a list of those available is on our website). We will be recording in south west Northants during 2018. It is fascinating and occasionally sad seeing some of the stories recorded on the stones such as the high infant mortality or accidental deaths. This interesting stone was found at Kilsby: *Here lyeth the body of JOHN BAYLY sonn of JOHN BAYLY of Kilesbe departed this life upon the 27 of November in y yeare 1649. “Well growne in statur, more in grace and hence removed to see God’s face”*. It is not often that we find headstones for that early period – generally most date from the 1670s onwards. It is amazing to think that it has survived for almost 370 years – certainly a case of ‘gone but not forgotten’ especially as it is placed near the south door and can be seen by all those attending church! The following headstone from Northampton St Giles churchyard records the 10 children of George and Elizabeth Brown who died as infants and the father dying aged 37. The only surviving child Ellen died in 1896 aged 32, two years before the death of her mother. Hard times indeed!

In affectionate remembrance of the following children of George and Elizabeth BROWN viz: Sarah Eliz Dec 26\(^{th}\) 1855, William Sept 9\(^{th}\) 1857, Alice May 14\(^{th}\) 1859, George Edward July 20\(^{th}\) 1861, Albert and George Mar 7\(^{th}\) 1862, George Mar 21\(^{st}\) 1865, Harry Freeman Jun 6\(^{th}\) 1866, Frederick July 17\(^{th}\) 1868, Frank Mar 12\(^{th}\) 1869. Also the above George BROWN April 14\(^{th}\) 1869 aged 37, Elizabeth BROWN wife of the above died Sept 21\(^{st}\) 1898 aged 68 years. Also of Ellen Jane PHILLIPS, daughter of the above and the wife of John Robert PHILLIPS died Feb 29\(^{th}\) 1896 aged 32 years.

For more details of what the Society has to offer – please visit our website at www.northants-fhs.org
The Battlefields Society goes from strength to strength, spreading the word about Northamptonshire’s vibrant history by any means we can. Our work campaigning for and promoting local heritage was recognised at the start of the year by being presented with the “Nathanial Wade” award by the International Guild of Battlefield Guides. This award has previously been won by the likes of the Belgian Tourist Board, so we feel that isn’t a bad achievement for a small local battlefield society.

In respect of our campaigning mandate the highlight of the year would certainly be the “Save our Eleanor Cross” Facebook campaign which the Society launched very successfully and has led to positive action to preserve this important landmark. Once our concerns had been picked up by local radio and papers our Chairman, Mike Ingram, was kept very busy with request for interviews and comment. Radio Northampton have probably got a chair with his name on it, all ready for when he comes in!

Our approach to promoting our heritage is to get out there and speak to people, so we have been an ever-present group at local heritage events such as the Delapre Abbey Battle Day in July and the Nene Valley Event in September. At the Battle Day our tent was continuously full (not just because of the rain!) and our guided tours of the Battlefield itself proved to be popular as well. For the September event we provided the “Heritage Bus Stop” information at the Eleanor Cross where we combined talks on the Cross and the Battlefield. We rounded off the year with our attendance at the BBC Radio Northampton “Northamptonshire Day” event at Holdenby House in October. As with our other public events you could hardly move in our corner of the tent for people with questions about the battle and the various displays we take with us. We try to be creative with how to promote the battle and educate people about its importance as well as what happened. This last year we have had a battlefield model and game for visitors to play. Interest was such that we even produced it as board-game-in-a-book format for people to buy and play at home. Details of how to order are on our website (see below).

We’re also proud of our monthly series of talks that run throughout the year. These are free to Society members or £5 for visitors. This year we’ve had talks on the armour of Richard III, medieval battlefield injuries, pilgrimages and the historic features of the Northamptonshire landscape amongst others. Check our Facebook page for 2018’s programme, which includes Professor Anne Curry, the foremost expert on the battle of Agincourt. All the talks take place at 7:30pm at the Northampton Marriott Hotel, usually on the fourth Thursday of the month. Why not come along and join us and help preserve Northampton’s heritage as well?

Details of how to join, for the very reasonable amount of £10 per annum (£15 for a family) visit our website: https://northamptonbattlefieldssociety.wordpress.com/, or you can join “on the door” at one of our meetings.
Higham Chichele Society’s 2017 Exhibition held in Chichele College on 30th September/1st October attracted a steady stream of visitors. Displays included The John White Story, World War One and Pony Racing in Higham. Mr Geoff Moore displayed information and photographs about the Chelveston Air Base during World War Two and Mr Trevor Walker showed his collection of local advertisements etc. Plans are already in hand for our 2018 Exhibition which will take place in Chichele College over the weekends of 29th/30th September and 6th/7th October - the theme will be “Victorian Higham”

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

SNC is actively working to strengthen the rural economy and the use of village shops, pubs and other village services and its many attractions. One of the ways in which we are doing so is by promoting the District as a place to visit.

South Northamptonshire is well known for Formula One at Silverstone, but not what lies beyond. It is an unspoilt rural District, with extensive open countryside and a historic landscape featuring conservation villages, canals and the market towns of Brackley and Towcester. Many Drovers Roads pass through the District including the Banbury Lane, Oxford Lane and Salt Way. Watling Street (the A5) formed the frontier between Wessex and Danelaw. The District also features battlefield sites, fine local food and masses of footpaths and bridleways canal towpaths and country lanes that are perfect for walking, cycling and horse riding.

The District is a great place to explore and South Northamptonshire Council have produced a number of tourism guides to help locals and visitors to get the most out of exploring South Northamptonshire.

Visit www.southnorthants.gov.uk/explore-south-northamptonshire where you can find out more information or download copies of the Council’s tourism guides.
Heritage is ephemeral and is easily lost. I was the Head Gardener at The Menagerie, Horton, Northants, when Gervase Jackson Stops was creating a garden to suit the building. The Menagerie was a part of the Horton Hall Gardens and included gardens and pools for a small collection of animals. The building was what most people would call a Folly, but besides being a decorative feature of the parkland, it was quite practical, as it was a music room, with a subterranean kitchen beneath. Walls extended from central building which terminated with sheds, which could be used to store tools and food for the animals. In 1763, Horace Walpole, the diarist who seemed to get everywhere of any note, stated that the grounds of the Menagerie were set out as, ‘a little wood, prettily disposed with many basons of gold fish’. There were also animals; “storks, ‘racoons that breed there much’, a young tiger, a bear, ‘uncommon martins’, and ‘warthogs with navels on their backs”. The whole was enclosed by a circular moat, which may have been filled with water. Little of the moat now survives. I later discovered earthenware pipes between the ponds and bricks with a very dark green glaze on only one side which may have been part of the pools.

The hall itself was demolished and all its contents sold at auction. The Temple and Arch buildings were lived in, but the Menagerie building fell into disrepair. Gervase Jackson Stops bought the ruin and converted it into a habitable building. When I took on the position of Head Gardener Ian Kirby had designed a garden to suit what we all came to affectionately call, the Stately Bungalow.

Visitors to the menagerie would have left Horton Hall, by coach or on foot, and then crossed man-made lake using the Green Bridge. They could admire the animals and fish, and listen to music as they were wined and dined in the kitchen beneath them. Gervase, wanting everything in his garden that could have been found in the gardens of the grander houses during the 18th century, wanted a grotto and the kitchen was an ideal place to create one. As the kitchen was beneath the ground, what better theme than ‘Orpheus in the Underworld’.

Before work began, there was the problem of a drainage pipe set in the floor of the kitchen. Would building the grotto affect the drainage system? One bright October Friday morning Ian said that he was off to London, and as the ground was waterlogged he gave me a container of green dye, with instructions to pour some in the drainage pipe to see if I could discover where the water went. I poured part of the dye into the pipe and went down to a small pond in the field north of the Menagerie. We had been fairly certain that this is where the water would eventually go, but there was no sign of any greenish hue to the water. I decided that maybe I hadn’t used enough of the dye, so I went back and emptied the contents into the drain pipe and went back to the pool. Nothing! Rather puzzled I made my way back and met the farmer on the way. He asked what I was up to, so I explained. He suggested that the water may drain into the decorative lake in the valley, so off I went. I struggled through the undergrowth to the water’s edge. I stopped in horror. The water was a bright fluorescent green, rather like the fluid in a spirit level. One problem solved. At least we knew where the water drained to. I searched for the exit point and found a triangular structure built of stone that was in line with the centre of the Menagerie building, which was over four hundred yards away. Even with modern ploughing the simple drainage system still worked.

Christopher Hobbs, who amongst other things, constructed film sets, oversaw the implementation Gervase’s ideas. Steps descended from the patio to the kitchen.
entrance. It was decided to make a small pool in front of the door to represent the River Styx. Next to the doorway would be the ferryman, who would ferry you over the water. Charon the ferryman was constructed of lead sheeting. His head was modelled on Gervase himself. The outside walls by the door were covered with tufa, a volcanic rock full of air bubbles, rather similar to the inside of a Crunchie Bar. I planted ferns and other plants that could withstand the shade in pockets that I cut out of the tufa, to create a suitably gloomy atmosphere.

Christopher also created the figure Orpheus, which was modelled on Ian Kirby, although the likeness was not as good as the painted hardboard cut-out that had been set in place until the statue was completed. The various animals were also made by Christopher; I remember some being carved from breezeblocks before being covered. Stalactites were moulded from chicken wire mesh and then covered with pieces of old glass and pieces of broken pottery that I had collected in the garden. Much of the grotto walls were decorated with shells, but rough wood and bark were also used to create a rustic effect.

Over the fire place was placed Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guarded the entrance to Hades. All three of the necks were collared and chained, against a background of flames embellished with pieces of mirror that glittered in candlelight or the lights from the Orpheus tableau. A dipping pool cum Jacuzzi was built between Orpheus and Cerberus. The pool was removed by a later owner of the Menagerie. The grotto also housed a wine store, a shower, a sauna and an area for exercising with weights. The final touch was the ceiling, which was painted a dark blue and then the night sky as it appears at mid-summer day was added. Some stars were highlighted with sequins to make them sparkle.

The grotto was officially completed in time for Gervase’s farewell party. He returned to the Menagerie, much against medical and family advice, to be with his friends. An opera was held in a marquee that had been set up in the garden and later there were fireworks. Once it was dark enough and I opened the fountains to full height and turned on the lights too for some watery fireworks of our own. It was a magical occasion. Gervase was smiling. He died only a few days later.

Sadly, the grotto was removed by the owner of the Menagerie in 2017. The owner said that the grotto was morbid, since it was well-known that both Gervase and Ian had died of AIDS. Planning permission to re-instate the grotto to its original function as a kitchen was granted. As Conservation Officer to Northamptonshire Gardens Trust, I only found out once planning permission had been passed. All that remains of the grotto for the time being are photographs and memories, although I understand that much of it has been removed and it will be rebuilt elsewhere.
Although we have joined quite recently, the Northamptonshire Film Archive (NFAT) is pleased to have joined the Heritage Forum; after all, film is a genuine part of the social heritage of our community.

During the year we have continued our archiving and cataloguing work and our programme of public shows at Wellingborough Museum. Themes there have included: reviews of the development of the cinema, Travel film, Food Production, and British and American Railways.

We have also given presentations to a number of local organisations including: Brigstock Historical Society; Alfred East Art Gallery at Kettering; the Hemmingwell Skills Centre; Northampton Museum & Art Gallery; and local members of U3A. We have also exhibited at the Rushden Cavalcade and the Earls Barton Steam Rally.

A DVD of the work of the Archive has been produced and is now obtainable for purchase by interested parties.

Our website, easily found by searching on NFAT or Northampton Film Archive, has been rebuilt and receives interest from like minded film organisations. It is our intention to develop links with these groups with a view to collaboration and a higher profile in film heritage.

The Forum has already yielded fresh contacts and support in technical areas and we look forward to an enjoyable and fruitful membership in future.
Big changes are happening at Sulgrave Manor as we prepare for a brand new self-led visitor experience in Spring 2018. Free-flow access to the house from 12 noon until 4 pm will allow you to enjoy the house in your own time. In order to share more of our story, we are currently conducting a collections review of all the objects in our care. We are lucky to have on board two amazing volunteers, Emma and Clare, who are helping to uncover some fantastic stories!

Through many hours spent in the house, Emma and Clare have found some intriguing objects. One of our favourite objects they have researched so far is the ‘smoker’s tongs’ which were hung beside the fireplace. These tongs were used to hold a peat from the fire to light a gentlemen’s pipe without burning his hands.

We can’t wait to share the rest of our discoveries with you in Spring 2018!

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter

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