



KEYWORTH & DISTRICT U3A

ARCHITECTURE,
ARCHAEOLOGY AND
HISTORY (AAH) GROUP

NEWSLETTER

NO. 8 November 2019

2019 PROGRAMME

The dates for 2019 meetings are:-

21st November Methodist Church

19th December Methodist Church. At the August meeting the wish was expressed to hold a meeting in December.

2020 Programme - Meeting dates - Methodist Church except where indicated

16 th January Share your photos from 2019.

20th February

19th March

16th April

21st May

18th June

Visit being planned. See also back page.

Scampston Hall and gardens including lunch, by coach. Includes a guided tour of the Hall which is only open for a short time each year. The walled gardens are laid out by Piet Oudolf, the Dutch exponent of Prairies Planting and are really beautiful. If you feel up to it there are also walks around the estate, but at the very least walk to the west side of the house to visit the lake and the formal garden area.

16th July

20th August

17th September

Belper North Mill Strutt Tour - mill, Riverside Gardens and Community. The latter a series of streets built by the Strutts to house their workers. Although they are now in private ownership they still have the appearance of how they looked in the C18th century. The Unitarian Chapel will be opened for us the visit. By Keyworth Community Bus and possible car share. Includes a cuppa and biscuit.

22nd October

19th November

17th December

The group meets in Keyworth Methodist Church Hall (sometimes in the church itself) on the third Thursday monthly commencing at 2 p.m.

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New Library at St. John's College, Oxford



Composed of a historic patchwork of colleges, Oxford is a unique urban ecosystem. Its basic building block is the quad, a hangover from the medieval era when learning was conducted in monasteries. College chapels and dining halls with their associated rituals are similarly beholden. “Eat, pray, study” was Oxford’s original *raison d’être*. Within this network, St John’s College, founded in 1555, is one of the more powerful players, both academically and fiscally. It was said that you could walk from Oxford to London on land owned by St John’s. Alumni include Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and Tony Blair.

Typical of Oxford colleges, St John’s evolved slowly and incrementally, to the point where it now contains a neat potted history of English architecture from the 16th century to the present day. The impetus to shape and express the college’s sense of identity through its buildings has spawned a catholic assemblage that encompasses such strange bedfellows as the luxuriantly baroque concerto of Canterbury Quadrangle, built by William Laud, the Anglican archbishop of Canterbury under Charles I, who fell foul of the treacherous currents of Jacobean politics and was executed in 1645, and the conspicuously modernist Beehive building, which has a literal (and radical) honeycomb plan. Designed in 1960 by Michael Powers of the Architects’ Co-Partnership, it was the first genuinely modern building to be constructed by any Oxford college and move away from the popular perception that the place is preserved in aspic.

Today, this forward-looking patronage, both architecturally and in efforts to challenge elitist stereotyping, continues under Maggie Snowling, St John’s current president, with outreach activities to schools in marginalised areas, scholarship programmes and free summer schools. The latest addition to the college corpus, a new library and study centre designed by the London-based partnership of Wright & Wright Architects is also conspicuously modern, reframing the human need for learning in peace and quiet.

The library has always been at the heart of St John’s, and over time its holdings have grown into a significant body of precious manuscripts, printed books and personal papers. Highlights include Jane Austen’s letters, a second edition of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, and collections owned by Robert Graves, AE Housman and Spike Milligan, among others. These are now sequestered in the new study centre’s subterranean archive, while a reading room spread over three levels has space for 120 scholars, augmenting the college’s two historic libraries in Canterbury Quad.

On the side facing the president's garden, walls of creamy Clipsham stone are embellished both inside and out by a carved bas-relief by the sculptor Susanna Heron. The concept of ornamented stone was inspired by the figurative carvings in the adjacent Canterbury Quad. Heron's abstract interpretation flows sumptuously across the irregular grid of the stone wall, perpetually changing as the sun strikes it, as if the wall is somehow alive. A shallow reflecting pool around its base also catches the light, casting a fugitive lustre on to the rippling surface. While swimming in Hampstead ladies' pond, Clare Wright was struck by how light refracted by water on to stone generates shimmering caustic reflections. This prompted an exploration into how solid matter could be animated by the play of texture and light, underscoring the collaboration with Heron.

As well as the interaction of light and materials, ideas about thresholds, connections and the relationship between old and new coalesce to define and enrich the building. The study centre is both an end in itself and a component in a larger formal and spatial sequence that activates fresh ways of experiencing the college. The building creates an active connection between Canterbury Quad and the more modern elements of the college to the north, strengthening links between different eras.

While on the president's garden side only oblique views are permitted of the landscape through a series of vertical slots, like arrow slits in a castle fortification, on the other side the upper floor lifts up and peers over the existing boundary wall to the college's great lawn. Here, the building presents a different spectacle: a long, glazed vitrine cradled within the embrace of its heavy stone container. Openings capture and frame specific views, choreographing a series of vignettes as you move through the interior.

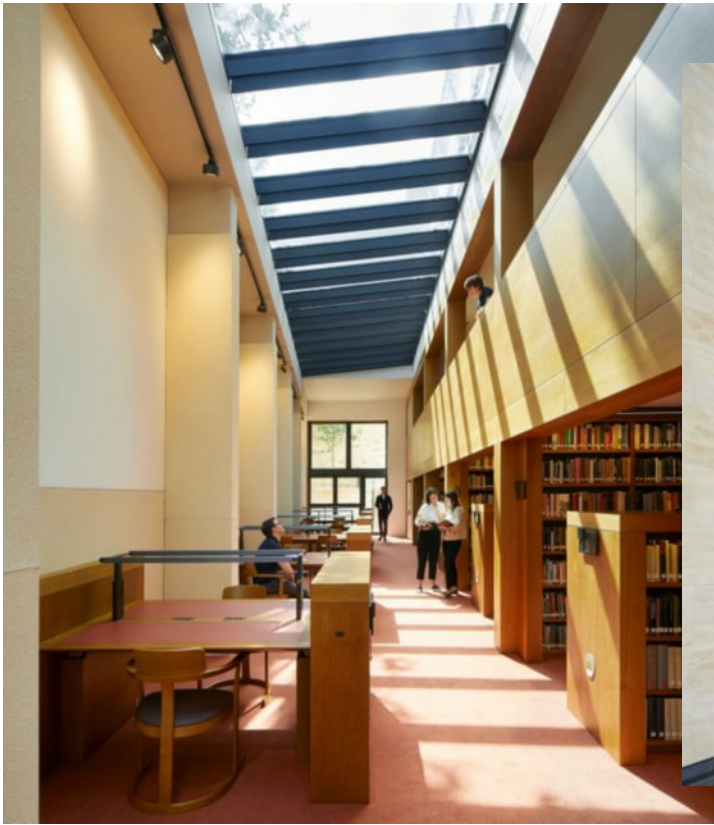
At St John's, as elsewhere, the shift from print to digital media continues to impact on habits of library use, but despite repeated jeremiads concerning the death of the book, there remains a need to engage with actual objects. Rather than cancelling each other out, print and digital technologies have achieved a kind of symbiosis that still requires physical anchoring and embodiment. This is especially true of a college library, which is a social as well as an academic hub. With its intimate, human-scaled landscape of specially designed study carrels, desks and bookshelves, the reading room in the study centre is an environment that the college's monastic forebears might recognise, albeit now equipped with laptops and wifi.

Poetry is combined with pragmatism, as the study centre incorporates a number of passive environmental control measures designed to reduce its energy consumption, with an emphasis on natural ventilation and daylighting. Heating is provided by water from ground-source boreholes, and photovoltaic panels on the roof contribute to electricity generation. Such measures are designed to fully offset the building's carbon emissions to achieve a carbon neutral status.

The notion of depth resonates throughout Wright & Wright's work. Most obviously and explicitly, it is expressed through thick walls, complex sections and earthbound materials, but it also reflects the practice's deeply held belief in the social purpose of architecture. And in an age when architects are increasingly content to churn out generic details and cede control to contractors, Wright & Wright have a reputation for being deft and thoughtful builders. With St John's the outcome of this skill is palpable, the difference between a bespoke suit and a more disposable off-the-peg number. Of course, St John's can afford to opt for bespoke, but as custodians of an institution that is 464 years old, there is an imperative to see beyond the current era and build for an as yet unimaginable future.

Adding to St John's centuries-old conglomeration presented the familiar challenge of impinging as lightly as possible on the site and existing structures. Sandwiched between the president's garden and an ancient boundary wall, the new building had to be introverted as direct views were not permitted into the president's garden, to preserve privacy. Such proscriptions might have deterred or derailed flashier architects, but Wright & Wright have turned the provocation of designing an essentially blank-walled building into a subtle feat of artistry and invention. Conceived as a casket of stone pierced by light, the study centre eases gently into the bucolic college landscape, a sober and circumspect modern interloper.

Disdaining the veneered slickness of stick-on cladding that is a convenient panacea for many architects, Wright & Wright embrace a culture of what they describe as "thick-skinned" buildings. "We are drawn to heavy, earthbound materials, especially stone and brick," says Sandy Wright. "We like the idea that space is almost organically carved out of solid masonry in the manner of a thick-walled castle keep."



China opened a new \$50bn airport designed by Zaha Hadid in Beijing – the terminal, which will handle 72 million passengers a year by 2025, is said to be the world's largest. Daxing is undeniably impressive.

Roman Fort Under a Bus Station

Catching a bus at Exeter's bus station, no-one would have guessed that they were standing in a Roman fort!

Archeologists from Cotswold Archeology made the discovery when working for Kier Construction before a new bus station and leisure complex is built.

The discovery has been stated to be 'very important' and comprises of ditches belonging to a previously unknown Roman military site which was either an occupied fort or, maybe, a defended compound. Coins and pottery made in the area for the military together with imported Samian ware were also found.

Andrew Pye, Exeter City Archaeology Officer, is quoted saying, "This is a very important and completely unexpected discovery, in an area that has been heavily changed by previous post-war redevelopment. Along with other recent work in Exeter it demonstrates just how much of the city's history can still survive in unlikely places, despite damage caused by bombing and modern concrete foundations.

As the city continues to grow and renew it is a good example of how the planning system and developers work together to make sure that remains that are inevitably affected by new development are properly excavated and recorded for the benefit of this and future generations.

This discovery of yet another new Roman 'fort' within the city does demonstrate, along with that of the fortress and baths in the 70s and several other military sites in the last decade, just how pivotal a role the Exeter area played in the first decades of Roman conquest, and how crucial development-led archaeology has been in revealing this."

A Roman fortress was established in Exeter in around AD55, with a civilian town later built as the regional capital of South West England. It was discovered under the Cathedral Green in the 70s and more recent work has uncovered several other similar finds in the city.

October's Visit

25 of us went on this outing using the Community Bus and car share, to a little known East Midlands gem, the Leicestershire County Council owned Donington-le-Heath Manor House, near Coalville.

We were split into two groups and had excellent guides around the house, both were very knowledgeable and clearly had great affection for the house and its checkered history dating back to 1290, although in its current restored guise it represents how it would have looked in the 1620s. In the C15th it came into the hands of the Digby family, an old gentry family which owned other land and houses in Leicestershire and Rutland.

In 1618 the family started a modernisation project and the exterior we saw dates to that time. Roof levels were raised, mullioned windows added in the then current fashionable style and other refinements made.

In 1627 it passed into the hands of the Dike family. When acquired by Leicestershire County Council not too many years ago it had been used as a local museum before become a place housing farm animals, namely pigs. The County Council took it on the save it from ruin. Excavations and research revealed much of the story of the building and its occupants.

The LCC restoration has placed the house in the 1620 when it was owned by James Digby, a prosperous solicitor, and occupied by his family and servants. James Digby was a cousin of Sir Everard Digby who was involved in the Guy Fawkes Gunpowder Plot but no evidence has been found of James having any involvement with the plot.

The furnishings of the house have no connection with it, apart from one slate bedded table in the dairy. The furnishings are all genuinely of the period and came from various sources including other Leicestershire museums, gifts and purchases. Some are original but most reproductions. However, they give a deep insight into, and feel for, the home as it was at the time with the bonus that many can be handled.

Naturally the gardens were well passed their best but were interesting to walk through, both kitchen and pleasure parts - some of us dared to enter the maze!

Included in the cost was an afternoon tea with cake in the Barn cafe and an additional bonus was that the entrance fee lasts for a year so we can pay return visits any time we wish until October 2020.

Advance Notice

In our travels around the UK and abroad many of us take photographs of the places we visit.

Our meeting in January 2020 will be given over to you having an opportunity to share your images with the rest of us and giving a description of what we will be seeing. Your description can be as simple or detailed as you wish, no need to stress about it.

All that will be required is to let Howard have your images a couple of weeks before the meeting so that he can put them into a PowerPoint show. The images can be sent by email or given on a memory card. If you have any doubt how to do this just ask - it is really very simple.

Nottingham Castle

When travelling into Nottingham on the keyworth bus, by tram or by car, we will all be familiar with the Castle being wrapped in security sheeting. This is part of a massive alteration to the castle and its attraction for visitors.

Part of this work involves a great deal of archaeological work by Trent & Peak Archaeology and their latest find have now been reported.

Archaeology Update - An intriguing find! from Trent and Peak

Thanks to project archaeologists, Trent and Peak for the news and images of a really interesting find on site...

"We have recently uncovered two previously undiscovered features of the early Medieval Castle whilst working in what will be part of the new Robin Hood Gallery and on the access road to the south of the Ducal Palace. These features add new understanding of previously unknown phases of the Medieval Castle."

"Work in the Boiler Room required the removal of a small section of bricks revealing a void which had been back filled with stone and rubble. Once cleared out this revealed a circular feature which measured 1.72m across and was set back into the wall by a depth of 1.5m. It was first thought that the circular feature was possibly an oven, however after further examination it was decided that this was not the case. The sides were open to the air and would be unable to retain heat effectively. It was also noted that the stonework at the back of the feature showed no evidence of being directly affected by high temperatures, which would be expected in an oven."

The undercroft is directly below the spiral staircase suggesting that this was possibly the main access to the undercroft. It has been tentatively suggested that the spiral staircase could have continued upwards and run into Romylowe's tower, constructed in 1362, giving access from one of the lowest areas of the castle in the undercroft to one of the highest in the Middle Bailey."

„Close to the location of Romylowe's tower over the wine cellar, a small section of medieval wall has been uncovered.

"During the excavations in 1998-99 an area outside the south side of the Ducal Palace was excavated and a large section of the curved curtain wall was exposed."

"This section of the wall was measured as being 2.5 meters thick. The new fragment of wall was less than a meter wide. Presuming the curtain wall was at least a similar thickness all around the Upper Bailey this goes to show the level of truncation. The curtain wall would have been demolished during the slighting of the Castle after William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, purchased the site in 1661."

Outings

We have been very disappointed with the response to our request for a guided tour at Wentworth Woodhouse. They have offered us a tour but failed to answer our questions about details and also demanded a non-refundable deposit of £100. We feel this is an excessive amount and contrasts with the deposit of £25 required by Scampston Hall. In all the circumstances we decided that we could not go ahead with that outing.

Instead we are talking with Wirksworth Heritage Centre about a visit to their museum coupled with a walking tour of the town (on the flat as opposed to a walk taking in very steep hills), and including afternoon tea. There is a possibility of coupling this with a ride on the Ecclesbourne Heritage Railway which runs between Dronfield to Wirksworth. However, we won't know this until the timetable for 2020 and costs are published.

We have also had to consider the increased cost of coach hire for next year and so are thinking that one coach tour a year plus two other outings using the Community Bus and/or car share will be more affordable and so our best option.