



SUMMER 2012

WHG SUMMER OUTING

AN outing to the Roman site of Letocetum and cathedral city of Lichfield in August was much enjoyed by the 19 members and friends who attended. Meeting at the Roman fort in the modern day village of Wall, the group had a lively guided tour of the site and museum with a National Trust volunteer. Although only a small part of this massive site can be viewed it gave a fascinating glimpse of what was once a bustling urban centre.

The second part of the trip to nearby Lichfield was also very successful. Many of the group chose to go on a walk around the Cathedral Close, discovering some of the incidents and characters which shaped the city's fortunes. Others chose to stroll around this historic market city or visit one of its three museums.

The cathedral tour examined how the building (the third on the site) developed from a smaller Saxon structure which housed the bones of its founder St Chad, the first bishop of Lichfield. This first cathedral was at the heart of the powerful Kingdom of Mercia, which had its royal centre in nearby Tamworth. The Cathedral's Gospels and beautifully-carved stone angel date from this period as do items from the Staffordshire Hoard which are also on display here, having been found only a couple of miles outside the city boundary.

Pilgrimage to St Chad's shrine brought wealth throughout the Norman and pre-Reformation period, shaping the building as it's seen today with its distinctive three spires, inspired by the Trinity (the only English Medieval cathedral with this feature). The way the building was used to house armies during the civil war was discussed, as were subsequent restorations. The day finished with home-made cream teas in the adjacent Georgian house, built on the site of an earlier bishop's palace and now the Cathedral restaurant - a very enjoyable day for all.



WHG members and friends inspect the footings at Wall



Erasmus Darwin herb garden, Lichfield



Pectoral cross from the Staffordshire Hoard

Warmington's Recently Discovered Dovecote

The footings of a medieval building, thought to be a dovecote, were uncovered recently by archaeological investigations carried out at Hill Cottage, School Lane. *A dovecote, or columbarium, is listed among the possessions of the Prior of Warmington in 1291.*

Whether the footings found at Hill Cottage are monastic is uncertain, but property deeds of 1660 and 1685 refer to this dovecote belonging to a leading Warmington family called Draper in what was then called *Dovehouse Close*. They were built to provide secure homes for domestic pigeons which supplied meat, eggs, down and feathers and dung.

The Romans had dovecotes, or *columbaria*, but ones still standing date from the 12th to 18th centuries. They were built in stone, brick or timber and were circular, square or polygonal in shape. The interior might have more than 1,000 nesting holes. Nests were reached from a rotating central post, with projecting arms, known as a 'potence', to which ladders were attached. Until the early 17th century, only lords of manors or parish priests were allowed to keep pigeons; part of a privileged way of life, providing a luxurious supplement to an already ample diet.

Contact Details

If you would like to submit an article for the newsletter, or if you think there is something we've missed out please contact Liz and Harriet Newman by phone on 01295 690641 or by email on alecnewman@btinternet.com

Dates for your diary

Excavation continues at the Herb Centre throughout September on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 10am-5pm, weather allowing. If you have not been before, please let us know that you will be coming.

On Saturday 22nd September Shenington Airfield will mark the 70th anniversary of the Whittle Jet being flown at RAF Edgehill with an open day and commemorative stone and plaque unveiling at 12.30pm.

The next meeting of Warmington Heritage Group will be a talk on Medieval drinking places with speaker Beat Kumin. The talk starts at 7.30pm on October 8th in the village hall.

David Freke and John Hunt will be running a day school on Warwickshire before the Norman Conquest on October 22nd. For details of this and the wide range of other events being run by the county council and Warwickshire Record Office see their websites.

For fuller details of forthcoming events visit www.warmingtonheritage.com