

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 December 2017**

The Cleveland and Teesside Local History Society continues to thrive.

Membership has remained steady: there were 257 Members plus 22 institutional members.

At a time of declining numbers in other groups and increasing demands on people's time, this must be a positive sign. It is in no small part due to the close relationship that our Membership Secretary has established with Members, ensuring that they feel that their Membership is valued and that their contact details remain up-to-date, thus ensuring that they continue to receive the Newsletter and other communications.

Our continued high membership is also a reflection of the importance we give to the services provided to Members.

The two core services we offer Members – talks by speakers and the provision of publications of interest – remain as vibrant as ever.

Thanks to the efforts of our indefatigable Programme Secretary, Allan Wilby, assisted by his wife Margaret, we continued to deliver a full and varied programme of talks and other activities.

In the twelve months to 31 December 2017, we have delivered four Saturday meetings, with eight speakers, hosted the annual Elgee Memorial Lecture, and provided, in conjunction with Teesside University and the Dorman Museum, two Day Schools.

The Elgee Memorial Lecture in December saw Robin Daniels deliver an excellent presentation on 'The Creation of the Medieval North' which, appropriately given the audience, addressed both the archaeology and the history of Medieval Durham.

The range of topics covered by speakers at our regular Saturday meetings was astonishing – embracing a small church and a magnificent cathedral, the family origins of the man who charted most of the world, a lady who created the map of the Middle East, iron and steel technology, the transportation from Egypt of an iconic monument in London, and insights into the changing landscape of a local town.

The programme this year comprised:

- From Roman Nails to Cleveland Victorian Ironmasters: Dr GD Spenceley and R Widdowson
- In Search of Cook's Cottage: John Rowlands and Kev Cale
- 'Gertrude Bell – The Uncrowned Queen of Iraq': Gordon Hetherington
- 'The Treasures of Durham Cathedral': Sophia Stovall
- 'St Helen's Church, Eston': Sylvia Fairbrass
- Cleopatra's Needle': Ian Pearce
- 'Pictures of Stockton Past': Alan Betteney

Our Chairman Geoff Braddy, did a sterling job when illness prevented a speaker from attending as planned, he delivered, at short notice, a fascinating insight into 'Middlesbrough 1912'.

The Day School, held on 11 March 2017 at Teesside University, addressed 'Prosperity and Discord: The North East in the Seventeenth Century', with perspectives being offered by John Little, Phil Philo, Diana Newton, Geoff Braddy and Stewart Ramsdale.

On 18 November 2017, a Day School entitled 'From Tokyo to the Tees', was held at the Dorman Museum in conjunction with a concurrent exhibition of the same name. The exhibition and the Day School commemorated the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Dresser's visit to Japan in 1876, and celebrated the strong, often forgotten, historical links between Japan and Teesside.

Dresser was the first European designer to visit Japan after the reopening of the trade links between the two countries, and this had a strong influence on his work for Linthorpe Art Pottery. The exhibition and the Day School explored these links in more detail, as well as other local connections including shipping, commerce and culture. There was also a short film show about the Japanese community on Teesside. Day School Contributors were Gill Moore (Dorman Curator), Linda Polley, Ian Stubbs and Val Harrison.

There were also three guided walks: at Coatham, Mount Grace Priory and Stokesley.

We continue to produce our biannual bulletin 'Cleveland History' and our triannual Newsletter and both are well received.

One of the purposes of 'Cleveland History' and the Newsletter is to encourage our Members to put pen to paper and share their knowledge and research with like-minded people. Both 'Cleveland History' and the Newsletter depend on Members to contribute articles, and over the past fifty years many people have taken their first steps to writing and publication through these publications.

The Packett Prize is particularly important in encouraging new writers. This year we were blessed with a number of entries to the competition, demonstrating the breadth of local history research being undertaken by Society Members. Although the judges were faced with a difficult task in choosing a winner, the essay they selected – 'The Eight Streets of Grangetown' by Peter McCarthy – was a worthy winner, demonstrating both detailed, original research and an engaging writing style.

The Society's Social Media Strategy continues to develop. Having improved the web-site, the focus in the last year has been on maintaining a strong Facebook site – which now has 911 followers - and on our new digital bulletin 'The Scroll', which is distributed via e mail to all those Members who have requested a copy.

In the twelve months to December 2017 we issued 16 copies of The Scroll, allowing us to inform Members of events, not only those organised by the Society but also local history events offered by other organisations, in a timely manner. The Scroll has also been used to report on events and to distribute electronic copies of the Newsletter.

The Scroll, Web Site and Facebook have been important in raising the profile of the Society, reaching new audiences and communicating with Members living overseas. Future planned developments include a 'Members Only' area, providing access to reports on events and to other resources such as copies of articles previously published in 'Cleveland History' and the Newsletter.

The Society depends heavily on the time, expertise and enthusiasm of a small band of people, primarily but not exclusively Committee members, to deliver everything that we do:

- Allan Wilby continues to deliver a varied programme of talks;

- Margaret Wilby continues to keep our finances in order;
- Lee Firth is the first point of contact for all membership enquiries, and does a great deal of work behind the scenes to ensure that Members are served well by the Society;
- Val Harrison edits 'Cleveland History', producing a bulletin which is highly respected and much appreciated by Members;
- Jenny Braddy produces our outstanding regular Newsletter, always welcomed by Society Members;
- Val Harrison and Ian Stubbs have developed our publication sales;
- Alison Brown, Paul Stephenson, Stewart Ramsdale, Peter Davison and Francine Marshall have all helped out throughout the year;
- Dorothy Thomson, our Distribution Officer, has kept our members supplied with all the Society's regular communications for many years;
- Martin Peagam, the Secretary, has also led on the Social Media Strategy, assisted by Matt Falcus.

We are grateful to each and every one of them, and especially to the Chairman, Geoff Braddy, and Vice-Chairman, Linda Polley, who have steered and guided the Committee, both stepping into the breach from time to time in the absence of speakers and others at meetings.

Special thanks must go to Jenny Braddy, who has resigned as Bookstall Secretary, after fulfilling this important role for an amazing thirty years.

The year ending 31 December 2017 was busy.

But 2018 looks like being even busier.

Cleveland and Teesside Local History Society was formed at a meeting in February 1968.

Fifty years later we are getting ready to celebrate our Golden Jubilee year with a wide range of activities and events, and several Committee Members are already heavily involved in planning and preparing for what promises to be an exciting year.

Finally, we must mention the people who are the life and blood of the Society.

We would not have a Society without our 250 plus Members, and providing services and activities that meet the needs of Members is the guiding principle behind everything that we do.

We are truly grateful for your support and enthusiasm.