**CLEVELAND and TEESSIDE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 December 2023**

The Society has changed because of history.

On 30 January 2020 the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, a situation which lasted until 5 May 2023. During this period, and particularly during the period when the UK Government declarations of restrictions on gatherings of people – ‘lockdowns’ – from late March 2020 to June 2020 and again from January 2021 to July 2021, the Society had to change the way in which it operated and in which it delivered its services to Members.

We moved our lecture programme on-line, we held Committee meetings via Zoom, and we provided more information and articles via our web site and social media.

The restrictions of lockdown are no longer with us, and the Society has been able to return to delivering talks and walks in the time-honoured tradition whereby people meet in a physical location. We have, however, used the experience gained during lockdown era to continue offering lectures, and the Committee has continued to meet, via Zoom.

Whilst some may prefer the traditional format of meetings, we have seen that on-line lectures allow us to attract those, including speakers, for whom attendance at a venue on Teesside is difficult, if not impossible, due to distance, travel time and costs, and personal circumstances. For Committee Members it has allowed individuals to participate in meetings despite being in Scotland or on the wrong side of the Pennines on the evening of the meeting.

In addition, we are on the verge of making our considerable archive of articles published in Cleveland History available on the web site as a digital resource, thus showing that we are grasping the opportunities that technology offers.

Considerable progress has been made with the project announced at last year’s AGM to digitise the wealth of material available in past Bulletin articles to it can be made available through the web site and in response to enquiries. Val Harrison has scanned bulletin articles and liaised with Matt Falcus to ensure these are uploaded to the society web site. Tests are being carried out to ensure the system works. We hope to finalise this exciting initiative by making the resource available in the Members Only area of the web site during Local History Month in May 2024.

The Committee has also liaised closely with Barry Harrison to explore the possibility of the considerable research carried out by him and Jacky Quarmby, transcribing large numbers of Yorkshire Wills and Inventories being digitised, with the support of the Surtees Society.

Through these developments we hope as a Society to have a positive impact on the availability of reliable resource material for historians undertaking research.

The Committee met three times in the year ended 31 December 2023, all the meetings taking place via Zoom. A further two meetings have taken place in 2024.

The activities of the Society are coordinated by the Members of the Management Committee, ably led by our Chairman, Geoff Braddy.

Members of the Committee have individually contributed effectively – as will be seen in what follows - organising events, producing publications, responding to enquiries, suggesting new activities, etc.

Whilst Committee meetings continued to take place via Zoom, the programme of events included some in-person meetings – at Globe Theatre and at the Dorman Museum - as well as on-line ones, and also two walking tours.

Matt Falcus, as Programme Secretary, has continued to deliver a varied and interesting programme of talks and activities.

In the year ended 31 December 2023, the following talks took place:

Saturday 21 January 2023 at the Dorman Museum

Wayward Wynyard – The Story of the Vane Tempest Stewarts, by Ron Tempest

Ron Tempest, from the Wynyard Estate, told the tale of the Vane Tempest Stewarts, the family name of the Marquesses of Londonderry, with a family history going back to the time of the Norman Conquest who later made their home at Wynyard.

Recording Above Ground Monuments in St Mary’s Churchyard, Norton, by Dr Maureen Norrie

The church of St Mary the Virgin in Norton dates back to pre-Norman times. In early 2020, Teesside Archaeological Society began a project to record the above ground monuments (mostly 1700s and 1800s, a few dating back to the 1600s) in the churchyard. Alongside this, has been research into the histories of some of those interred there. Dr Norrie gave an insight into the study and the findings.

Saturday 18 February 2023 via Zoom

NYMA and The North York Moors – Their History, by Raymond Clarke

Raymond Clarke of the North York Moors Association presented this online talk helping us discover the history of the North York Moors, that beloved place of beauty on the doorstep of those in Cleveland, Teesside and North Yorkshire. The talk encompassed the developments, from the ice ages that shaped the moors, to the railways, mining, and a look at the Moors in the 21st century.

Saturday 18 March 2023 via Zoom

Phyllis Short – Wife of Battle of Stockton Hero George Short, by Tony Fox

The anti-fascist campaign on Teesside was led and organised by two people: George Short and his wife Phyllis. Short, the founding father of Teesside communism, was born in Chopwell in 1900 and so too Phyllis, in 1903. George and Phyllis were working-class heroes, facing down all enemies to fight the class struggle — especially the British Union of Fascists. Tony Fox looked at the life of Phyllis in this new talk.

Saturday 15 April 2023 at the Dorman Museum

The Families of Ingleby Manor, by Geoff Taylor

Ingleby Manor is a building dating from the late medieval period, although parts may be older. Geoff Taylor gave a talk on the families that lived there.

War Kids – Stories of Yorkshire and the North East, by Caroline Brannigan

Caroline Brannigan entertained the meeting with stories of children who stayed at home in Yorkshire and the North East during World War II.

Saturday 30 September 2023 at the Dorman Museum

William Henry Blessley (1841 – 1936), by Ian Stubbs

Ian Stubbs told the meeting about William Henry Blessley who was a Victorian architect, little known today but he did an awful lot of work in the town of Middlesbrough and the locality. He was born in Highgate in London in 1841. He died in 1936. Sir Hugh Gilzean Reid writing about W. H. Blessley on 26th August 1870 said "To his talent, skill and refined taste the street architecture of Middlesbrough owes much". Several of his attractive buildings still remain to this day including several listed buildings in the town's Historic Quarter. In January 1868 he is documented as supervising work at St Hilda's Church, Middlesbrough and then in 1870 he designed 2, 3 & 4 Exchange Place, Middlesbrough as offices. This row of buildings are adjacent to the NER Albert Bridge, near Middlesbrough Railway Station and were originally named Albert Bridge Place. He also designed The Albert Park Hotel, Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, Linthorpe Primary School, the Chapels in Linthorpe Cemetery (now demolished) New Exchange Buildings, Queen's Square, Middlesbrough , as well as schools for the school board, and Christ Church in Eston.

The Story of Pilotage from Babylon to Tees Bay, by Geoff Taylor

Geoff Taylor explained the role and importance of Pilots to the shipping activity, both in terms of efficient passage and the safety of ships, with examples from ancient to modern times. He focussed on the activities of local Tees Bay Pilots.

Saturday 21 October 2023, via Zoom

They Did Their Duty – Teesside Men at Trafalgar, by Martin Peagam

Martin Peagam delivered a talk on the anniversary of the most famous naval battle in British History, telling the story of the battle and in particular the men and women who took part, with particular reference to those from Teesside who participated,

During the summer of 2023 there were four ‘outings’ for Society Members:

Wednesday 24th May 2023

250 years of Skelton’s history: 1770-2020

Peter Appleton led a walk through Skelton which combines the evidence of the buildings, together with a knowledge of local events, to explain when, how, and why the village changed from a largely rural, estate-dominated community, through a suburban dormitory for heavy industry, to the craft and artisan-dominated community of today.

Saturday 3rd June 2023

Tour the Ormesby Hall Attics

Members enjoyed a visit to Ormesby Hall like no other, touring the attic spaces of the Grade I building with the House and Conservation Team – an area not usually accessible to the public. There was also the chance to explore the gardens, tearoom, and see the refreshed interpretations of the hall in the new 2023 exhibitions.

Saturday 29th July 2023

Guided tour of Kiplin Hall, North Yorkshire

Members enjoyed a visit to Grade I listed Kiplin Hall, situated between Northallerton and Richmond, touring the house with one of their expert guides. They learned about the founding of Maryland, the history of the four families related by blood or marriage who owned Kiplin Hall, and some Royal connections. Members took an opportunity to explore the gardens and visit the tea rooms after.

Wednesday 23 August 2023

Ironopolis Necropolis Tour

Ian Stubbs delivered a talk and tour at Linthorpe Cemetery.

The Frank Elgee Memorial Lecture was revived with a lecture by CIAS in 2022, after a hiatus due to lockdown in 2020 and 2021. In November 2023, the programme continued with a lecture delivered on behalf of the Teesside Archaeological Society by David Mason who told the fascinating story of ‘Aethelfrith of Northumbria and the Battle of Chester: Fact or Fiction’.

CNFC will deliver the Frank Elgee Memorial Lecture in 2024, whilst CTLHS will take responsibility for the lecture in 2025. Conscious, however, of the significance of 2025 in local and national railway history, instead of a lecture hosted solely by CTLHS, plans are being made for an Elgee Day School in 2025 involving contributions from all four societies.

Following an approach from The Surtees Society, discussions are taking place about holding a joint half day conference between the Surtees Society and CTLHS to launch John Little's Stockton Book of Orders in the winter programme for 2024/25.

Members of the Society were actively involved in the delivery of talks and walks as part of both Local History Month in May and the Discover Middlesbrough Festival in October and have contributed to other initiatives such as the Stockton Townscape project and the Middlesbrough Heritage Quarter project.

We have continued to explore the opportunity to use a donation to the society to fund a competition to encourage young people to explore their local history, with Stephanie Green taking the lead in discussions with the Northern College of Art.

We were once again unable to support the Love Local event at Ormesby Hall this year, due to a lack of volunteers available to staff a stand, but thanks to Julie Tweedy our leaflets had been made available on the ‘More Than a Run’ stand.

The Society had also been invited to have a stall at Stokesley show but again lack of volunteers meant the offer had to be declined.

The Committee received an approach from the family of the late Jacky Quarmby to discuss the disposal of her considerable collection of books on local history and is in discussion with them about the best way to do this. Similarly, the Committee had been approached by the brother of the late Paul Stephenson and had liaised to ensure that his considerable body of research was deposited with Teesside Archives to catalogue and make available to the public.

Recognising the need to keep Members involved and interested, particularly those affected by social isolation, the Society has paid particular attention to its web site and Facebook page, ensuring both are regularly updated.

In particular, the Facebook page has enabled the Society to promote and inform Members about events such as Local History Month, the Discover Middlesbrough Festival, the relocation of Teesside Archives, the restoration of the Globe Theatre, International Women’s Day, the work of the Friends of Linthorpe Cemetery, the Stockton Townscape Project, and the Middlesbrough Heritage Quarter initiative. It has also allowed us to share information that has relevance to our local history – providing stories about people, places and events by reference to the dates they occurred and sharing stories from other sources, thus maintaining an on-going dialogue about local history.

Thanks are due to Ian Stubbs for providing regular updates of the Society page.

Although we have embraced new means of communication, the Newsletter and Bulletin continue to be essential to the Society and its Members.

The Society Newsletter continues to drop through letterboxes to delight Members.

Sadly, the production of The Scroll has not been as successful, with only one edition having appeared in the year (in April 2023): it is hoped to redress this soon.

John Little has settled into the role of Bulletin Editor. After successfully publishing and distributing Bulletin Number 123 in time for Members to enjoy at Christmas 2022, John has now gone on the edit and publish two more editions of Cleveland History. Although John has sufficient material for another edition, he is always interested to hear from people who might offer an article.

That Society publications drop through letterboxes is due to the excellent work of our Distribution Secretary, Stephanie Green.

Linda Polley is leading on a project to update and enhance our very popular Maps publication.

Sadly, there were no entries submitted for the Packett Prize Competition in 2023. The Committee has reviewed the situation and has decided that the Packett Prize in 2025 should focus on a single theme – recognising the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1825 – with a view to encouraging original articles on the history of railways in the area normally covered by articles in Cleveland History, that as £300 was saved this year because there were no entries, it should be added to the £300 we would expect to spend in prize money this year, to make a total prize fund of £600 (the division of which was yet to be determined), and that the Society approach the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway with a view to exploring working together to define the competition parameters, to promote the competition, to assess entries, to determine the timescales for promotion, submission of entries, and announcement of results, and to consider how the resultant essays might be published in Cleveland History and/or The Globe. John Little and Martin Peagam (as existing members of both CTLHS and the Friends of the S&DR) are liaising with the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.

As of 31 December 2023, the Society had 208 Members including 20 institutions.

In contrast, as of 31 December 2022 there were 222 paid up members including 20 institutions, and in the previous year there had been 228 Members and 22 institutions.

Lee Firth, our Membership Secretary, in her twenty-third year in the role, has continued to do a great job liaising with members and encouraging their continued membership.

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to the Society, the Committee decided to award Margaret Wilby Lifelong Membership.

In her role as Treasurer, Julie Tweedy had another busy year.

The financial position of the Society can be seen in the audited accounts for the year.

In summary, however, at year-end assets totalled £18,368.78, comprising £12.69 Cash In Hand, £5,887.70 balance in Current Account, and £12,468.39 balance in Savings Accounts, and there was an excess of income over expenditure of £1077.10.

We have seen an increase in income from subscriptions, the sale of bulletins and refreshments, and significantly higher interest.

There was a reduction in expenditure from last year due to paying out for four bulletins in 2022 (compared to two this year) and for one extra payment for postage.

Unfortunately, printing costs for the Newsletter have increased as have the costs of envelopes for bulletins/newsletters. Postage costs are continuing to rise.

Overall, the balance is looking very healthy which will help us prevent an increase in membership rates when postage costs increase.

We are grateful to Ian Saul for auditing the Society accounts and membership records.

We are optimistic that the commitment of Committee members and the loyalty of Society Members will mean that the Society will continue to be an important part of the local history of Cleveland and Teesside.

*Martin F Peagam*