

November 2010

News from the Source



Partners' and friends' update from Worcester Archive Source Project

Greetings again from the Worcester Archive Source Project and welcome to our fifth newsletter.

There is also a big hello and welcome to Justin Hughes, who joins WASP as Outreach Officer on a part-time basis as Beth's maternity cover.



Justin has spent most of his career as an archaeologist with a particular interest in delivering community projects. He has also worked as a teacher in adult education and believes strongly that public access to archive collections and to the historic environment record should be inclusive.

He has a particular fascination with our prehistoric heritage but has also, for the last two years, developed a strong professional interest in oral history, specifically with the capture of memories of older people by the younger generation.

Locally, he has worked in heritage, education and on outreach projects at a range of sites including at The Commandery at Sidbury in Worcester and at The Butts, in advance of the construction of the new

Worcester Library and History Centre, where many local people have been actively involved in recording the city's heritage for posterity.

He has come to us on a secondment from Worcestershire Historic Environment Archaeology Service and is looking forward to continuing to deliver some of the broad range of programmes designed and tested by Beth Roper.

Justin can be contacted on JHughes@worcestershire.gov.uk or 01905 765926.

We're delighted to announce that Beth gave birth to a healthy baby boy in August. Our best wishes to Beth, Simon and baby Laurie!



West Side Story Wins Award

Last year, you may recall that we won an award at Worcestershire County Council's Adult & Community Services Awards Day. We've done it again! Beth, Debbie Overton, Sheena Payne-Lunn and artist Victoria Westaway worked with a variety of local groups in the Dines Green area of the city to tell the 'West Side Story'. Ten archive and art sessions were held in the Green Centre over two months. Fifty people were involved, including an after school children's club (Kids' Club), an older women's group (Worcester 'Live at Home') and a support group for adults with disabilities (CONNECT support group, see image above).



The three groups explored the history of Dines Green, the West of Worcester, and the people who lived there using historic documents such as diaries, maps and apprenticeship records from as far back as 1667 to the Victorian era, and sharing their own memories and experiences of life in St Johns. Taking their research as inspiration, the groups created canvases which depict their own interpretation of the history they'd learned, with the help of Victoria Westaway of Expressive Arts. The three groups produced three very different artworks which were showcased at an open day at the Green Centre last November, attended by friends and family and members of the local community.

WCC presented the award for Innovation at a ceremony at Pitchcroft in October. Unfortunately neither Beth nor Victoria were able to attend, so Paul Hudson and Kat Steenson went along with Debbie Overton to collect the trophy.

Left: Kids Club painting based on a tithe map.

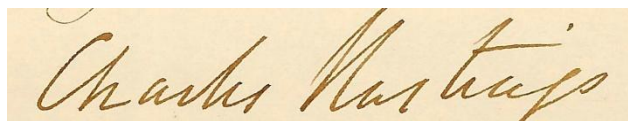
Right: Paul, Kat and Deb display the Innovation Award.



Outreach Update

Despite Beth's absence, we have participated in a couple of activities. On the 10th September, we teamed up with Discover History for Heritage Open Day. Discover History took 25 people on guided tours of Worcester before finishing up at the Library & History Centre to examine some of the historic documents relating to the people and places covered on the tour.

On the 29th September, Catriona Smellie, curator of the George Marshall Medical Museum, generously hosted an evening talk given by Kat Steenson about *Death & Disease in Worcester*. Forty one people attended the talk, an excellent attendance for a mid-week evening. This was followed by a chance to examine some of the Public Health related documents in the collection, including a letter signed by Dr Charles Hastings, founder of the British Medical Association.



Volunteer Updates

Our dedicated listing and research volunteers have continued to support the cataloguing side the project, with several boxes of school records have been arranged, cleaned and box-listed. A new biography, that of Dr John Wall, will shortly be available on the WASP website, the result of a tremendous amount of research and leg-work by volunteers. The Freeman's index now includes almost 1,500 transcribed entries from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Previously the paper index to the registers contained few details, but this new transcription contains all the information in the entries and will make tracking down the right person much easier.

Although we are delighted that so many people continue to come forward wanting to get involved, unfortunately we can't accept any more new project volunteers. The cataloguing side of the project is scheduled to end in May, and from the end of 2011 the Record Office will be closed in preparation to move to the new building.

WASP Words

Purprestures (or pourprestures): Unlawful encroachment on public land by a private individual. The collection has several 17th and 18th century purpresture books, where the Council fined people for encroaching on public highways or any other common ground. Often the manor or other landowner would tolerate encroachments on payment of an annual fine, and records show that some people did indeed make regular payments for the same purpresture. Some encroachments could be reasonably small, such as Widow Mosely's, fined 3 pence for two posts (at her door) in Gaole Lane, and Samuel Cooke, whose overhanging shop windows in St Nicholas cost him 6 pence in the early 1700s. Others were more substantial: their fellow citizen Anthony Willetts paid 2 shillings for a building at the Three Crowns.

Twitter: Follow us on Twitter! Worcestershire Record Office now has an official Twitter stream www.twitter.com/worcsrecords

Kathryn's Conservation Corner

At the beginning of summer, the first batch of documents was sent off for repair by a professional conservator, Moira Buick. Very little of the archive is in a bad condition, but as inevitably in a collection of this size and age, there will be some documents that have fared badly. These 'before' pictures show the mould and moisture damage to the volume relating to the River Severn and the wear-and-tear to the leather and binding on the book of Frankpledge. The actual pages of the Frankpledge book were in a satisfactory, if dirty, physical condition. The pages of the River Severn volume were in a much worse state and water damage had left some of them stuck together.



Left and bottom left: Water-damaged volume.
Above and below: Wear-and-tear to the binding.

The mould damaged cover could not be saved, but the damaged inner pages were cleaned and strengthened with acid-free paper. The Frankpledge volume now has its own drop-box protective storage. The volume had contained smaller folios bound into one volume, but after cleaning and de-compressing the pages, it was decided to keep the individual folios separate acid-free folders. The original cover and bindings have been retained.

