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Minutes of Members Meetings 2023-2024

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 18/04/2023

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed Jonathan Gilby to present his talk, "Commonwealth War Graves".

Jonathan was an RAF Flight Operations Manager and retired after 26 years of service.

His activities now include working with Redcar Lifeboat, and being a "hands on, eyes on" volunteer with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This role involves visiting local sites and carrying out routine inspections to ensure each grave is in good order and report any problems to enable remedial action to be taken.

Jonathan first gave some background to the origin and structure of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Following several questions, and thanks from the Chairman for a fascinating and lively presentation, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Peter in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

This was followed by the AGM - See AGM Minutes page

Fun draw: The lucky winners of chocolates were Paul Hayton and Derek Whiting

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 16/05/2023

The Chairman welcomed our guest speaker, Terry Waldron, a communications professional who has worked with a number of Teesside businesses following 5 years spent as a reporter with the Evening Gazette. Terry has been involved with a number of the emerging industries based in and around the old ICI and British Steel sites and has intimate knowledge of future expansion plans for the region.

Terry began by identifying the chronological rise of companies on Teesside and recapping the older, 'traditional' industries which he stated had been in decline for some years due to foreign competition. The heavy industries had traditionally worked with absolute raw materials and Terry explained that that had changed to the production of higher end chemicals, biotechnology, plastics and pharmaceuticals as well as energy production and recycling. He clarified the difference between certain processes, explaining that there was a move on Teesside to integrate new and existing businesses to achieve a 'net zero' carbon emissions status for the Tees Valley (TV) region. He highlighted the problems faced when he stated that the TV and Humberside areas were responsible for a third of UK industrial CO2 emissions and went on to say that both regions were collaborating to achieve 'net zero' by 2050.

Our speaker continued by going into the detail of existing processes, explaining how they were adapting to the need to reduce emissions and he highlighted the fact that Teesside was well placed to capitalise on new innovative technologies to achieve significant reductions in the emission of climate changing gases. Terry explained that one such technology, carbon capture, was already being actively worked on and was planned to be up and running by 2027. This process involved the processing of waste gases to extract CO2 and, after liquefaction, piping the liquid through existing pipelines to huge North Sea aquifers where the 'dirty' CO2 could be stored indefinitely. Terry explained that this technology was well proven and had been successfully used for over 40 years.

Another industry already established on Teesside is the French business SUEZ UK plc. This company operates the waste disposal and recycling plant at Haverton Hill, Billingham and 'converts' both industrial and household waste to energy (electricity and heat). SUEZ are planning to build a plant adjacent to their existing premises to capture the emissions from their incinerators and send the waste CO2 to the North Sea aquifer. In addition to this process, Terry went on to describe how the use of sustainable timber was being used in a Teesside power station to produce energy in a 'net zero' manner. He also highlighted how another company, Sembcorp, was contributing to the 'net zero' aim by building battery storage facilities linked to the national grid.

Terrys' presentation also included videos featuring the Tees Valley mayor and major stakeholders in the regeneration of the old British Steel site, including BP and Net Zero Teesside. He rounded off his talk by giving a preview to the incoming industries

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such as hydrogen production from seawater (expensive) and natural gas (less so), concluding that Teessiders should be optimistic about these future technologies and proud of the lead that the region is taking in the goal to significantly reduce greenhouse gases and reliance on other countries for energy and precious resources.

Members greatly appreciated Terrys' talk and following a question and answer session gave him a round of applause.

MINUTES - 16/05/2023

The Chairman opened the meeting with a warm welcome to new members Colin Hurworth and Mike McCamley and guest Bob Blakey

1. Apologies: 27 members, 7 apologies
2. Guests: one
3. Membership List 2023/24: The Chairman explained that, although the list had already been circulated, perhaps it would be prudent to produce an up to date list in June of each year to take into account change-over of membership.
4. Minutes of last Meeting: Accepted.
5. Matters arising: There were no matters arising.
6. Committee Reports:

Treasurer: Chris Lee reported that 23 members had renewed to date, and he expressed a wish for members to renew via bank transfer if possible. Chris went on to say that when organizing trips it would be expected that members would pay up front as transport companies were increasingly asking for non-refundable payments.

Secretary: No activity to report.

Website Manager: The Chairman introduced Brian Clarke to the meeting and explained that he was taking over the WM role from David Chalk.

Speaker Finder: Speaker programme in place for the remainder of the Club year.

Programme cards are available from the Chairman as well as the Club website.

7. Members' Lunches:

There was a good turnout from Members for lunch at the Crown in Kirkclevington with very favourable reports received. The next 'lunch' will be an

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early evening affair at the Cross Keys, on the A177 between Nunthorpe and Guisborough.

8. Trips:

Raby Castle has received considerable support with the Chairman stating that he will investigate transport costs and finalise dates in time for the next meeting.

'Deals and Deceptions' EVTC has been booked and paid for so the Treasurer will wish for participants to pay for the trip shortly? The Chairman announced that he had two spare tickets if anyone else wanted to go.

NYCC Recycling Centre at Allerton & The Bell pub lunch has some 18 people interested.

Today's Speaker, Terry Waldron, also mentioned visiting the ICI Wilton site. It will probably be an agenda item for next meeting.

Lanchester Winery Anfield Plain has the support of 15 members/guests so could be considered viable. Keith and Chris will do the logistics

9. AOB: None

Fun Draw. Stationery Sets won by Alwyn Boulby and Terry Ratcliffe

Next Meeting: Tuesday 20th June 2023 - Speaker: Ronnie Tempest - 'Wayward Wynyard'

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 20/06/2023

The Chairman welcomed our guest speaker, Ronnie Tempest, a native of County Durham, who after completing his PhD followed a 35-year career in the global pharmaceutical industry. He worked with a multi-national company developing new antibiotics, diabetes and anti-haemophilia medicines, with postings in the UK, Germany, Japan and USA and retiring as a Global VP.

Post retirement he returned north and took over responsibility for ramshackle historic family properties on the former Wynyard Estate being taught farming by neighbours and breeding the local endangered horse, the Cleveland Bay.

Before he began, Ronnie explained that his talk focussed on the scandals associated with the characters related by birth, marriage or otherwise, throughout history, to the various families involved with the Wynyard Estate.

His story began in 1068 when it's believed certain Norman noblemen were given large plots of land in the north with a view to protecting England from the marauding Scots. We hear about the Tempests, a family supposedly of Norman origin who settled around Skipton (Yorkshire) in the late 11th century and whose members settled in County Durham from around 1390 at Embleton and Holmside. Highlights of their story include military exploits at Stirling Bridge against William Wallace and at Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt during the Hundred Years War. Later still, during the Wars of the Roses, at Towton and Bosworth and once more against the Scots at Flodden Field.

Heavy involvement in the abortive Catholic rebellions of the Tudor period, 'The Pilgrimage of Grace' and 'Northern Rebellion' almost resulted in ruin especially the steadfast but perhaps unwise support of the Stuarts, the Royalist cause in the English Civil War.

Redemption came through judicious marriages to heiresses in the Georgian era and the rapid expansion of the coal industry which restored and expanded land holdings in Durham to include the Wynyard and Brancepeth estates.

The Vanes (a cadet branch of the family now at Raby Castle) enter the story in the late 18th century as a result of a tragic family accident, inheriting the Tempest estates upon condition that the heir and Tempest nephew Sir Henry Vane changed his name to Tempest. His only daughter and heiress, the attractive 19 year old, Frances Anne Vane Tempest married the Napoleonic soldier and diplomat, Charles Stewart of an Anglo Irish family in the early 19th century becoming in time Marchioness of Londonderry.

The Londonderry (Vane Tempest Stewart) family retained its ownership and connection with Wynyard until 1987 when the remaining estate was sold for executive housing and the hall developed as a hotel and wedding venue.

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The session concluded with Ronnie's description of the conservation work he has been carrying out on the estate church. The Chairman then thanked Ronnie for his entertaining and informative talk and members responded in the usual fashion.

The Chairman presented a Eulogy for Harry Bowes

MINUTES - 20/06/2023

Thanks to Derek Whiting for covering refreshments

1. Apologies: 20 Members attended with 14 apologies
2. Guests: The Chairman welcomed to the Meeting Dave Bennett (Guest of Bob Scott) and Malcolm Smith (Guest of Maj Chuhan)
3. The Chairman thanked Bob Scott for covering Minuting responsibilities.

The Minutes for 16th May 2023 were accepted.

4. No matters arising.
5. Committee Reports.

Treasurer: Chris Lee – apologies. Via KW

Accounts all up-to-date. No outstanding queries.

Subscriptions 2023/2024 32 paid with 12 pending CL and KW to check renewals

Trips- costs detailed in Item 7.

Secretary: John Edwards – apologies. Via KW

All records up-to-date. No outstanding queries.

Website Manager: Brian Clarke - apologies. Via KW

Members were advised that on the 'Home' page, under Club, an email address (stokesleyprobus@gmail.com) was listed for Members to submit comments and questions.

In-Memoriam and Eulogies: Added - Peter Elsdon and Harry Bowes

Taken down-John Foster, John Upton, Mervin Davies, Bill Graham

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Speaker Finder: Bob Scott. Current programme 2023-2024 completed and successful. Suggestions for 2024 – 2025 welcome.

6. Lunches. Peter Robinson.

Wed. 2nd August 2023 6.30 pm The Cross Keys confirmed

Tues. 31st October 2023. The Panda in Stokesley – pending

7. Trips. Chairman summary report on each visit.

Detailed Emails on each visit to be circulated.

NYCC Waste Recovery Centre visit 29th June 2023 Cancelled by venue due to Contractors

Working on site

Raby Castle: Thurs 27th July 2023 Castle and Coach Booked. 9Ms & 13Gs 11 spare places

Deals & Deceptions: Thurs. 22nd August 2023 Coach, Arncliffe Arms & Theatre booked. 12Ms & 10Gs

Wilton ICI Minibus Tour: Thurs. 28th Sept. Bus booked. Half Moon Inn lunch pending. 12Ms 5 spare places

Lanchester Winery: Thurs. 26th October 203. Coach booked. Venue pending. 12Ms 9Gs 12 Places

8. AOB

The Chairman issued Lapel Names, Programme Cards and Celebratory Probus Pens

Stokesley Town Hall Steward: change from Bill Atkinson to Keith Bellamy (very friendly and helpful)

Fun Draw: The Ultimate Guide to the Premier League; Colin Hurworth & Malcolm Britton

Next Meeting: Tuesday 18th July Peter Appleton – Alum: A Forgotten Industry

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Minutes of Members Meeting held on 18/07/2023

The Chairman was very pleased to introduce Peter Appleton to present his talk “Alum – A Forgotten Industry”.

Since retiring in 2008, Peter has been actively involved in local history with a particular interest in mining in East Cleveland. He is a volunteer at both the Land of Iron Museum at Skinningrove and Tockett's Mill, secretary of the Skelton History Group, has guested on TV documentaries and has written two books (so far).



For his presentation he chose to give a detailed history of alum mining in the area.

Alum is a crystallised form of aluminium sulphate and has numerous uses including paper making, leather processing, water purification, cosmetics, medicine, dyeing and in culinary processes.

In dyeing, acts as a dye fixative, produces richer, brighter colours and prevents fading.

In leather production it softens the leather. In paper making it acts as a sizing agent allowing ink to dry (without alum it would be very absorbent – blotting paper).

In the UK, alum was discovered in viable quantities almost exclusively in a band from around Swainby to Skelton and along the coast towards Whitby.

The first mining recorded was in the early 17th century (c1604) in the Loftus/Boulby area initially under a Royal monopoly, which ended during the Civil War. In the following years the Earl of Mulgrave and Sir Hugh Cholmley, local landowners, operated a cartel to mine, process and control the price of alum. Later, more mines were opened up by others and numerous cartels were set up. This continued for many years but by the early 19th century only five of the larger mines remained, when they also progressively closed, with Kettleless and Boulby the last to cease production late in the 19th century. At peak there had been 24 significant mines in the area.

Locally, the following mines were opened on the hillsides near:

Carlton 1680 - 1775

Kirkby 1701 - 1720

Ayton Bank 1765 – 1774

There is no evidence that large quantities were produced at these. They were bought out by other cartels to cease production to control supply and therefore price.

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The rock containing alum (mostly shale) was excavated from hillsides in steps around 12 feet wide and 8 feet high. The extraction of alum from the mined rock was a long process that took around 20 to 28 months depending on the make-up of the rock.

The alum is leached out of the rock in a series of tanks in which the leachate becomes progressively stronger until it is sufficiently concentrated for it to be easily boiled and cooled to produce pure aluminium sulphate (in crystal form) – alum. To eliminate the need to transport rock the processing took place at the mine site and since many of the mines were along the coast, numerous harbours were built to ship the alum directly by sea. Ships returning to the area carried goods such as slates, and urine from large cities – ammonia salt from the urine was used in the alum extraction process. The main markets for alum were in London, Hull, Liverpool, and Glasgow.

Initially, 100 to 150 tons of shale produced 1 ton of alum, but as processing became more efficient this was reduced to around 70 tons of shale. It is estimated that half a billion tons of rock was excavated and shifted during the 270 years of mining leaving vast scarring and re-profiling of the landscape as seen in the characteristic stepped skyline along the coast from Huntcliff to beyond Kettlewell.

The East Cleveland alum industry declined due to more efficient and cheaper sources and the development of techniques to produce alum by chemical process.

Following several questions, and thanks from the Chairman for a fascinating and lively presentation, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Peter in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

MINUTES - 18/07/2023

1. Attendance and apologies
Members in attendance: 26 Apologies: 12 Guests: 1
2. Minutes of last Meeting: Accepted
3. Matters arising: None
4. Committee Reports
Treasurer: Finances in good order and accounts up to date.
To date, 39 Members had paid their annual subscription.
5. Secretary: No activity to report.
6. Website Manager: Time spent becoming familiar with the website, but no problems encountered.
7. Speaker Finder: Apology for absence received. 2023/2024 programme completed.
8. Work has started on 2024/25 programme. All suggestions welcome.

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9. Members' Lunches

Wednesday 2nd August 2023: The Cross Keys "Supper Club" 6.00 pm for 6.30 pm. The menu has been circulated by e-mail and is shown on website. Printed copies were available at the meeting.

2 courses: £16.00 3 courses: £18.00 Pre-ordering requested - please advise Peter Robinson of your choices. If unsure of availability in advance, just turn up on the day.

Please note – when leaving the venue, turning right is not recommended due to reduced visibility and speed of traffic. It is highly recommended to turn left and make a detour or make "U" turn at first roundabout.

Thursday 2nd November 2023: The Panda, Stokesley. 12.30 pm. Printed copies of menu were available at meeting and circulated to Members by email. Also uploaded to website.

10. Trips

Tuesday 22nd August 2023: "Deals and Deceptions" at the Esk Valley Theatre. All arrangements made. Please make payment of £33.00 to the Treasurer to cover cost of coach and theatre entry. Cost of lunch to be paid by attendees.

11. ICI minibus tour. Due to limited size of minibus two tours are arranged to accommodate all those signed up in two groups. The tours will be held Thursday 28th and Friday 29th September 2023. Terry Waldron has kindly offered to drive and narrate. Approximate timings – mini bus journey plus tour of ICI: 10.30 am to 12.30 pm, lunch at the Half Moon 12.30 pm to 2.30 pm. Guests and ladies welcome.

12. AOB: No issues raised.

Fun Draw: The Chairman brought 2 copies of D & K book, "What's Wrong With Me", plus 2 Avon aftershave sticks. The lucky winners were Mike Lawrenson and Mike McCamley

Next Business Meeting: Tuesday 15th August 2023 when Peter Morgan will present his talk: "Early Ports of The Tees".

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 15/08/2023

MINUTES - 15/08/2023

1. Attendance and apologies: Members in attendance: 25 Apologies: 6
2. New Members and Guests: 3 guests in attendance
3. Minutes of last Meeting 18th July 2023: Accepted
4. Matters arising: None
5. Committee Reports:

Treasurer: Accounts up to date. 41 Members had paid their annual subscription.

Secretary: No activity to report.

Website Manager: Website up to date.

Speaker Finder: 3 slots filled for 2024/25 programme, 8 more to fill. All suggestions welcome.

6. Members' Lunches:

The Cross Keys "Supper Club" held on 2nd August 2023 – good meal enjoyed by all who attended. Fairly low turnout (10) most likely due to holiday season. Perhaps Members prefer lunchtime to evening.

Next lunch: the Panda, Stokesley at 12.30pm on Thursday 2nd November 2023. £8 for one course and tea/coffee, £10 for two courses and tea/coffee. Prices include tip. Menu on Club website. No pre-ordering required. Please contact Peter Robinson to book.

Suggestion for future lunch – The Blackwell Ox, Carlton. Several Members gave very good reviews of recent visits.

7. Trips:

Thursday 22nd August 2023: "Deals and Deceptions" at the Esk Valley Theatre. All arrangements made. 19 attendees have paid. There is one spare seat for whoever wishes to join.

ICI visit - minibus tour in two groups on Thursday 28th and Friday 29th September 2023. Terry Waldron has kindly offered to drive and narrate. Approximate timings – mini bus journey plus tour of ICI: 10.30 am to 12.30 pm, lunch at the Half Moon 12.30 pm to 2.30 pm. Cost £12 to be paid when alighting bus. There will be no change, therefore, correct amount only please.

Trips generally – As the Club incurs costs when booking - deposits paid to coach operators, and up-front full cost often required for venues - then, in the event of participants cancelling, the Club is exposed to absorbing any potential loss. In addition, participants are often slow in making payment and it was time consuming chasing up money.

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Therefore, guidelines for payment are needed. Several suggestions were made:

- non-refundable deposit paid upon booking
- non-refundable full cost paid upon booking
- non-refundable full cost paid by a set period before trip

- as costs are rising (especially coach hire), and often interest is low, it was suggested that trips be cancelled

- include as an Agenda Item at the next AGM

In 2023, 9 trips were researched and only 1 is taking place. This is an onerous workload for the Chairman, who undertakes this task. (The ICI Tour was added following a Guest Speaker input).

Decisions were deferred due to time constraints. Issue to be included in Agenda for September to allow further discussion on issue and suggestions.

AOB: No issues raised.

Fun Draw: The Chairman brought two copies of The Lord of the Rings together with related playing cards. The lucky winners were Mike McCamley and Chris Lee.

Next Business Meeting: Tuesday 12th September 2023 when Lara Moon will present her talk about the Teesside Archives.

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 12/09/2023

Lara Moon Notes - 12th September 2023

Lara gave an energetic and inspiring talk on the role of Teesside Archives in chronicling the history of the area, some of which dated back to the 14th century. The archives were brought under one roof, as it were, in 2019 and the resources of the Dorman Long Museum in Middlesbrough are utilised to allow access to those people wishing to research many areas of interest. Lara explained what documents the Archives held and, just as importantly, what they didn't hold. She went on to broadly identify individual records of the industrial heritage of Teesside including much of the heavy engineering roles of companies such as Bolckow & Vaughan, Dorman long, Cleveland Bridge to name but a few. Lara explained the difficulties in extracting some records from firms such as ICI as well as highlighting the skills of employees at the Archives in renovating old and damaged documents.

Probably as much, if not more, of an interest to members was the chronicling of the growth of the area from the late 17th century, and Lara illustrated this by highlighting the collections of early O/S maps of the area. She also added that the Archives had access to 'Find My Past' family history records along with other such records which are available to researchers in family history. She concluded her talk by encouraging people to 'pop along' to the Archives to see what was available but also, if members had an area of specific research, they could make an appointment to view up to ten specific documents to browse at the DL site. There were a number of insightful questions from members who gave Lara warm applause for her enthusiastic response.

Bob Scott

MINUTES - 12/09/2023

The Chairman thanked Members for the emails and cards with birthday greetings. Much appreciated.

1. Attendance & Apologies:

19 Members attended including 2 new Members. 1 Guest attended.
9 apologies recorded.

2. Minutes of the last Meeting 15.8.23: Accepted.

Lunches & Trips (matters arising) were agenda items

3. Committee Reports:

Treasurer: Chris Lee - Accounts all in order.

Secretary: John Edwards - No issues to report

Website Manager: Brian Clarke – website update. Comments welcome.

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Speaker Finder: Bob Scott – Current programme complete and running well.

2024-2025 programme in progress

4. Trips:

Deals and Deceptions EVTC Report: 22.8.23 - 9 Members and 11 Guests attended.

Comments from Members: ‘an excellent visit’, ‘thoroughly enjoyable’, ‘a lovely day’, Members not attending missed a treat’, ‘thanks to the Chairman for a well-organised and successful day’.

The Club Treasurer added thanks to the Chairman for his work on reducing the potential trip deficit from £120.00 to £5.00.

ICI Wilton Tour: The Chairman updated Members on details:

Thurs. 28.9.23 - 14 Ms & 1 Guest booked + Terry Waldron (full)

Fri. 29.9.23 – 9 Ms & 5 Guests + TW (1 spare place)

2024 – 4 visits currently suggested

The Chairman updated Ms on issues raised at the 15.8.23 Meeting regarding trip costs. Agenda item for next Committee Meeting 21.11.23. All further comments from Members welcome.

5. Lunches:

Proposed visit to The Panda Chinese restaurant in Stokesley 2.11.23.

10+ Ms have informed Peter Robinson of their support so the venue is now confirmed as a definite lunch booking. This is the 4th lunch of the year. Dates and Venues for 2024 under consideration. One suggestion received. Comments & suggestions on dates & venues for next year welcome

6. **AOB:** None

7. **Fun Draw:** The Hurricane DVD&Book - won by Keith Bell, Stefan Barmes & Maj Chuhan

Next Meeting: Tuesday 17th October – Gary Bankhead: Dive Durham

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 17/10/2023

The Chairman was very pleased to introduce Gary Bankhead to deliver his talk, "Dive Durham". Born in Pity Me, Gary was initially a fireman with a passion for scuba diving, and has now become a qualified archaeologist, university lecturer, and a regular face in tv documentaries. He is also a keen snowboarder and has run numerous marathons raising more than £100k for the charity, "Fire and Ice".

As keen scuba diver, a turning point in Gary's life was in 2007 when walking along by the River Wear in Durham and his wife suggested he go diving in the river. Curious as to what they may see, he arranged a dive with his brother to swim around the cathedral hill stretch starting at Prebends Bridge. Close to the bridge his brother spotted a trowel, which was an ornate silver ceremonial item presented to Bishop Arthur Michael Ramsey (previous Bishop of Durham and 100th Archbishop of Canterbury).

Returning the following day, they found further items including a bronze crucifix, and an ornate Russian icon. They were obliged to declare these finds as treasure trove, and approached the Cathedral authorities; the rule being that the discoverer is entitled to 50% of the value of items found. When the Archbishop retired, he returned to Durham and lived in the white house above the bend in the river. His house had been burgled and many items stolen. It seems the thieves realising these particular items would be difficult to sell, threw them in the river.

The cathedral authorities asked Gary and his brother to carry out a full survey of the riverbed, which they undertook over the next two years. During this time, they found many other objects from the Ramsey collection including gold coins, gold crucifix, medallion, etc.

Over the next years Gary and his brother surveyed the riverbed, and in the vicinity of Elvet Bridge they found an incredible range of mostly everyday items spanning the centuries since the construction of the first bridge at that point (in 13th century). In total, over 3,500 objects were found, which in conjunction with Durham University, Gary has identified and meticulously catalogued each item. Every find has been photographed, and accurately sketched. The bridge was traditionally the location of a market with traders' stalls along and in the recesses of the parapet walls, which explains how many of the items found their way into the river.

Some of the objects found include lead trade tokens (155), Tudor cast buttons (472), 14th/15thC brass pins (1,000 +), belt buckles (329), metal belt decorations (366), textile manufacturers' lead cloth seals (344), and numerous coins.

More unusual finds include gold and silver jewellery, pilgrims' souvenir ampulla (from religious centres throughout Europe), a St Cuthbert ampulla (unique – the only one known to be in existence), an armorial shield seal (a 1325 document in Durham museum shows the same seal).

Every item has been gifted to the people of Durham and are in the custody of Durham Museum of Archaeology.

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Gary worked closely with Durham University Department of Archaeology and in 2014 was persuaded to take a degree in archaeology. He graduated three years later with a MPhil. This has helped enormously with his continuing riverbed surveys, enabling him to apply scientific techniques and professional knowledge. The objects are found buried in the silt on the riverbed. Working systematically to a grid, guided by GPS, the most effective method in locating the finds is to move the stones aside, and delve into the silt with a sweep of a hand.

Now a lecturer at Durham University, Gary continues to survey the River Wear, and has become a regular guest on TV documentaries to talk about his speciality. He is a regular presenter on "River Hunters", and this has led to an offer from Sky History channel to present his own series filming of which starts in Spring 2024.

Following several questions, and thanks from the Chairman for such a fascinating and informative presentation, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Gary in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

25/10/23 JE

MINUTES - 17/10/2023

1. Attendance and apologies: Members in attendance: 26 Apologies: 10
2. New Members and Guests: 2 new Members (Jeff Prettyman & Graham Barwick)
3. Minutes of last Meeting 12th September 2023: Accepted
4. Matters arising: None

The Chairman made available leaflets about Teesside Archives.

5. Committee Reports

Treasurer: Accounts up to date.

Secretary: No activity to report.

Website Manager: Website up to date.

Speaker Finder: Slots 2024/25 programme, 5 or 6 more to fill. All suggestions welcome.

6. Trips

Guided tour of Wilton Works. Excellent guided commentary by Terry

Waldron. Enjoyed by all. Attendance:

Thursday 28th Sept.-13

Friday 29th Sept.-11

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The Esk Valley Theatre has announced that it will no longer be holding its annual August featured plays.

7. Members' Lunches

Next lunch: the Panda, Stokesley at 12.30pm on Thursday 2nd November 2023.

£8.50 for one course and tea/coffee, £10 for two courses and tea/coffee. Prices include tip.

Menu on Club website. Hardcopies distributed. No pre-ordering required. Please contact Peter Robinson to book, or simply turn up on the day.

8. Christmas Lunch

Tuesday 12 December at the Wainstones Hotel from 12.30pm

Menu issued by email and posted on Club website. Please send your course

Selection and make payment (£30 per person) to Chris Lee (cash, cheque, or Preferably by BACS) by the November meeting. Guests welcome.

9. AOB: No issues raised.

Fun Draw: The Chairman brought two copies of a brain exercise book.

The lucky winners were Bob Scott and Chris Lee.

As an extra prize the Chairman brought a honey selection gift pack which was won by Peter Robinson.

Next Business Meeting: Tuesday 21st November 2023 when Gordon

Hetherington will present his talk about Gertrude Bell.

17.10.23 JE

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 21/11/2023

The Chairman was very pleased to introduce **Gordon Hetherington** to deliver his talk, "Gertrude Bell". Originally from Bishop Auckland, and now residing in Great Ayton, Gordon was a solicitor specialising in personal injury claims. Later, he became deputy coroner and served as advisor on several claims assessment boards. He attended a school set up by Thomas Bell, the local industrialist, and the whole time he was there, the Bell family were never mentioned. This later sparked his interest in the most famous Bell, Gertrude.

Despite being one of the best-known women of her time, Gertrude had become largely forgotten.

However, as Newcastle University hold most of her archive and, following several exhibitions, Gertrude became of increasing interest to the public. Gordon was particularly drawn to her remarkable achievements and began his own extensive research from which his talk is drawn.

Born in 1876 in Washington, County Durham at her grandfather's (Lothian Bell) home, she soon moved with her family into the newly built family home, Red Barnes, at Redcar. Her father, Thomas Bell, was a keen sponsor of the Arts & Crafts movement. He commissioned the house to be designed by Philip Webb with the interiors by William Morris and decoration by Edward Bern-Jones, all leading proponents in their respective fields.

Gertrude's mother died during childbirth leaving her father to raise his two daughters. Over the next few years Gertrude became especially close to her father. Several years later he found a new wife, Florence Olive, who was a remarkable woman, French, and of considerable education especially in languages and the arts. Florence was a paragon of Paris high society with many influential connections.

Gertrude initially resented the presence of her new stepmother and became particularly difficult. However, Florence was a redoubtable and charismatic woman and soon won over Gertrude with her wide interests, and rather unconventional worldly ways for a woman of her time.

Gertrude attended school in London, and with the help of Florence, persuaded her father to allow her to study at Oxford, which was unusual for a woman and not encouraged at that time. She attended St Margaret Hall and achieved 1st Class Honours in Modern History in two years rather than the full three. She returned home and was as strong willed as ever and trashed the traditions of women as subservient.

Using family connections, she went to Romania to serve in the Diplomatic Corps where she was highly regarded and soon earned promotion with a transfer to Persia.

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Here, she had her first experience of the desert, which was to largely influence the rest of her life. She always immersed herself in local culture, and learned the local language, in this case, Parsee.

While there she met her first love, Duggan. Without introduction and the usual niceties of the day, she broke convention and wrote to her family informing them that she was engaged to be married. They were furious and, after background checks, discovered Duggan was already married, was bankrupt, and totally disreputable. They separated, and shortly afterwards Duggan died reportedly by falling off his horse, having sunstroke, and catching pneumonia.

Gertrude returned home, and moved to Rounton Estate, which had been bought by her grandfather, Lothian Bell before he died. Thomas had a new house built, Rounton Grange, and Gertrude designed and supervised the creation of the grounds and gardens.

Always looking for new challenges, she went to Alps where she quickly gained great skill. Within two years she was considered to be the finest women climber of her day and credited with her ability and bravery. After topping the Matterhorn and other popular mountains, she scaled four unclimbed peaks. Not satisfied with the conventions for women climbers who wore restrictive skirts, she designed climbing trousers and other apparel and equipment.

Around this time her family's wealth greatly increased when their steel and iron businesses merged with Dorman Long. Gertrude, therefore, could well afford to follow her interests and decided to return to the Middle East. She was fascinated by the deserts in the Turkish Empire, and wished to venture into Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia. She assembled 15 or so armed men, sufficient supplies, equipment, guides, interpreters and a train of camels, and set off on an ambitious adventure to learn about this region and its people.

Although travelling in the harsh conditions of the desert, Gertrude insisted on maintaining a civilised lifestyle and travelled with many luxuries. After long hard days riding her camel, taking photographs, making observations, and recording meticulous details about the area, camp was set up and she had a proper bath, dressed in fine clothes, and sat down to a formal dinner each night.

She met Sheiks and tribal leaders, learned Arabic, and became an expert on allegiances and rivalries between the tribes and influential families.

There were no maps, and they had to rely on following established tracks, therefore, after some time she returned to Paris and studied cartography and photography. Returning to the Middle East she began to map the area and took many panoramic photographs. She came upon numerous archaeological digs, mostly undertaken by Germans, and took great interest. And, having an insatiable desire to take on new

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challenges, and to learn more of the history of the area, she returned to Paris to study archaeology.

Around this time she met Major Dick Doughty-Wylie working for the Red Cross in Turkey. With an admirable WW1 service record, and an expert on the Arabic way of life, Gertrude fell for him immediately. However, he was already married, but Gertrude was determined that this should not be an obstacle. His wife, Lillian, was a trained nurse and had also served in WW1. There began an unusual, and quite controversial, relationship whereby Gertrude and Dick spent much time together often in the company of Lillian. Gertrude sent Dick many intimate and passionate letters, and on discovering these Lillian threatened to kill herself. Gertrude threatened the same if Dick broke off their relationship. Dick had obviously got himself into a knotty problem and, as a means of escape, volunteered for the Gallipoli campaign. He served valiantly in several actions and was awarded a VC for his gallantry. However, he was killed while leading his men to successfully take heavily defended Turkish positions.

A heartbroken Gertrude was posted to the Arab Bureau to contribute what she could to the war effort. It is there that she met T E Lawrence who shared many of her interests, and over the next few years they discussed much on Middle East matters. She was soon appointed Oriental Secretary and moved initially to Basra, then to Baghdad where she bought a house and spent the remainder of her life.

Among her achievements while in office, were reforming the education system and drafting the constitution of Iraq.

The occupying forces of UK and France re-aligned the countries of Arabia to improve security.

With Iraq being under British control, Gertrude helped draw up the new boundaries, and designed the new flag. She introduced Faisal to the British and persuaded the authorities to appoint him King and convinced the rival tribes to accept his rule. He, and later his son, successfully reigned until the son was overthrown in 1958 when the situation started to decline steadily.

During her time in the Middle East Gertrude amassed a formidable collection of artefacts and, upon establishing the Museum of Antiquities, donated them to this new national collection.

After suffering lung problems for a number of years (a lifelong smoker), she became very ill and travelled back to the UK 1925 for treatment. Not improving, and against her family's advice, she returned to Baghdad in 2026. Shortly afterwards she died overnight in her sleep. An empty bottle of sleeping tablets was found by her bedside. Such was her fame at the time that the UK was in mourning.

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Gertrude was hugely influential in Middle East matters and was very well known internationally, arguably, more so than Lawrence of Arabia at the time. However, over surprisingly few years she and her remarkable achievements became largely forgotten and overshadowed by the romantic and dashing image of Lawrence whose reputation and fame grew over the years and he is now seen as the single most influential person of his era in the Middle East.

Following several questions, and thanks from the Chairman for such a fascinating, very well delivered, and deeply researched presentation, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Gordon in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

MINUTES - 21/11/2023

1. Attendance and apologies: Members in attendance: 25 Apologies: 12
2. New Members and Guests : 1 Guest (Ron Dalton)
3. Minutes of last Meeting held on 17th October 2023: Accepted
4. Matters arising: None

Stephan Barnes had made copies of a DVD produced by the ICI film unit. The film follows the history of ICI in Teesside from the early 20th century to the 1950's. These were brought to the meeting by the Chairman and distributed to those Members interested, with priority given to those attending the recent ICI trip. The Chairman took orders for the next meeting. 25 Members in total will receive a copy.

5. Committee Reports

Treasurer: Accounts up to date.

Secretary: No activity to report.

Website Manager: Website up to date.

Speaker Finder: Jan, Feb and Mar 2025 dates yet to fill. All suggestions welcome.

6. Trips

Booking, estimating costs, and receiving payments for trips have been increasingly problematic. ICI trip was especially troublesome as allocated ICI minibus was unavailable due to it suffering vandalism. Booking alternative transport was difficult and costly and doubled cost for attendees.

Coach hire rates have risen substantially and are now around £500 per day.

In order to minimise financial risk for the Club, it was proposed to have firm early commitment, booking well in advance and to receive non-refundable payment.

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Alternatively, in the event of loss, this could be made good by drawing upon Club reserves (which run at around £2,000).

Members were invited to air their views. The consensus was that financial risk should be borne by individual Members as is the case when booking theatre or event tickets and the like.

Car sharing was also discussed, which may be beneficial for short journeys, but thought that for longer trips, the camaraderie of spending time together would be lost.

7. Members' Lunches

Lunch at the Panda, Stokesley, was very well attended (18 with 7 apologies) and enjoyed by all. Very complimentary feedback – one Member stating that it was the best Club lunch he had attended.

Suggestions for 2025: Comments on the venues and dates welcome.

- The Blackwell Ox, Carlton
- The Rudds Arms, Marton
- The Buck Inn, Great Ayton
- The Panda, Stokesley

8. Christmas Lunch

Tuesday 12 December at the Wainstones Hotel.

42 have booked to date. If anyone makes a late decision to attend, they can turn up and pay on the day.

9. AOB : The Chairman brought two wall calendars for any Members who wanted one.

Fun Draw: The Chairman brought three boxed jigsaw puzzles, each comprising four puzzles.

The lucky winners were John Richardson, Bob Blakey and Graham Howard.

Next Business Meeting: Tuesday 16th January 2024 when Andrew Bunting will present his talk, "Ocean Going Liners".

23/10/23

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 16/01/2024

The Chairman was very pleased to introduce Andrew Bunting to deliver his talk, "The Three Great Ships of the White Star Line". Andrew is a retired solicitor, having been a partner in a leading local practice and serving in the Magistrates Court. His interests include classical music, railways, ocean liners, and is a Freemason.

Following several questions and thanks from the Chairman for such a fascinating, very well delivered, and deeply researched presentation, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Andrew in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

MINUTES - 16/01/2024

1. Attendance and apologies: Members in attendance: 32 Apologies: 7
2. New Members and Guests: 2 guests
3. Minutes of last Meeting held on 17th November 2023 : Accepted
4. Matters arising:

Stephan Barnes had made further copies of the DVD produced by ICI film unit, which were distributed to those Members requesting a copy and did not receive one at the previous meeting.

Total issued to date – 23. Thanks were expressed to Stefan for the production of the DVDs.

5. Committee Reports

Treasurer: Accounts up to date.

Secretary: No activity to report.

Website Manager: Website up to date.

Speaker Finder: Jan, Feb and Mar 2025 dates yet to fill. All suggestions welcome.

6. Trips

The Chairman will summarise all comments from Members regarding how to manage future trips and will prepare a proposal to put before Members.

7. Christmas Lunch -

Christmas Lunch at the Wainstones Hotel was attended by 42 (22 Members and 20 guests) and enjoyed by all. Any suggestions for improvement will be welcome.

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It was noted that the staff at the Wainstones are quite flexible and can make minor changes to the menu to suit diners' particular requirements.

Members held a vote of thanks for the Treasurer and Chairman for organising the event.

Next Christmas lunch on 10th December 2024

8. Members' Lunches

The Blackwell Ox on Thursday 7th March 2024. Details will be issued to Members shortly.

The following venues were recently visited by the Chairman and Lunch Organiser; Peter Robinson to gauge their suitability for future lunches:

The Buck Inn, Great Ayton: expensive and below average menu.

The Rudd's Arms, Marton: not up to scratch

Future lunches:

Thursday 7th March – The Blackwell Ox, Carlton

Tuesday 4th June – TBA

Wednesday 25th September - TBA

Thursday 31st October – The Panda, Stokesley

Suggestions: Arcadia Garden Centre, Five Houses (KW & PR to visit)

9. AOB: The Chairman mentioned the recent news that Northallerton PROBUS Club had been wound up due to dwindling numbers and the rising cost of speakers and room hire. The Chairman contacted three Members of the Club opening an invitation to join Stokesley.

The Chairman also secured a copy of the NPC Speaker programme. Some of the NPC members had formed a local ROMEO club (Retired Old Men Eating Out).

Being the first meeting following Christmas, Member's enjoyed the customary mince pies with their coffee. Many thanks to Keith Bell for providing these – as he does each year.

Fun Draw: The Chairman brought boxed Novel sets of Agatha Christie's three most favourite stories as voted by fans.

The lucky winners were Malcolm Smith and Colin Hinton.

Next Business Meeting: Tuesday 20th February 2024 when Chris Lloyd will present his talk, "The Road to Rockcliffe".

26/01/24

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Minutes of Members Meeting held on 20/02/2024

The Chairman was very pleased to introduce Chris Lloyd to deliver his talk, "The Road to Rockcliffe". Chris, a well known local personality, is chief features writer for the Northern Echo and the Darlington and Stockton Times specialising in local history and politics. Former North East Journalist of the Year, Chris attended the funeral of HM the Queen at Westminster Abbey. He has written eight books on local history, and has featured twice in Michael Portillo's "Great Railway Journeys" when the programme has visited the area. This is his third presentation to our club.

Following several questions, and thanks from the Chairman for such a fascinating, very well delivered, and exceptionally humorous presentation, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Chris in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

MINUTES - 20/02/2024

The Chairman expressed condolences to both Keith Burton and Colin Howard for the recent very sad loss of their wives, Val and Liz. Members shared this sentiment and expressed their deep sympathy to Keith and to Colin, and their families.

1. Attendance and apologies: Members in attendance: 32 Apologies: 9
2. New Members and Guests: 2 new Members
3. Minutes of last Meeting held on 16^h January 2024: Accepted
4. Matters arising: None
5. Committee Reports

Treasurer: Nothing new to report.

Secretary: Nothing new to report.

Website Manager: Nothing new to report.

Speaker Finder: Next month (19th March) there will be a switch of speakers due to speaker (our very own Bob Scott) being unavailable. Next season only 2025 date yet to fill. All suggestions welcome.

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6. Committee Membership

At upcoming AGM two Committee Members will come to the end of their terms:

Keith Bell – Keith is willing to stand again, and being a General Member there is no requirement to stand for election.

Chris Lee – Chris is willing to stand again as Treasurer. This appointment is subject to election, therefore, any Member also wishing to be considered can put their name forward.

7. Trips: Discussion deferred until next meeting.

8. Members' Lunches

Next lunch will be at the Blackwell Ox on Thursday 7th of March 2024, arrive 12.30 to 1.00pm. Those wishing to attend please inform Peter Robinson. However, Members (and guests) also welcome to just turn up on the day.

9. Public Scandals

As an independent item (off agenda) the Chairman raised the issue of Public Scandals as presented on "ITV Tonight 24.1.24".

Key points were highlighted from the Blood Transfusion Scandal from the 1970s; the Hillsborough Disaster from 1989 and the Post Office Scandal from 1999.

All of the Scandals remain on-going due to unresolved Accountability and Compensation issues.

The one-off Item was raised for Members because a Probus Member was involved as a Victim in the P.O. Scandal.

There was significant comment, several questions and unconditional support for our Member highlighted by a round of applause as a mark of respect.

10. AOB.

Fun Draw: The Chairman brought three sets of "World Cup England Legends" dvd and book.

The lucky winners were Mike McCamley, Jim Gannon, and Keith Bell.

Next Business Meeting: Tuesday 19th March 2024.

Minutes of Members Meeting held on 19/03/2024

The Chairman was very pleased to introduce Ken Hines to deliver his talk, "Newcastle Building Society: Lock, Stock & Barrel – Is someone trying to steal your money". With more than 30 years experience in the financial services sector Kenneth has been with Newcastle Building Society (NBS) for 20 years and is currently Community Development Specialist. He was accompanied by Laura Thomson (Branch Manager in Stokesley) and Charlotte Mellor (Member of Staff).

Following several questions, and thanks from the Chairman for such a fascinating, very well delivered, and very useful talk Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Kenneth in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

Business Meeting Minutes

The Chairman informed Members that Wilf Elliot's Memorial Service will be held on Friday 22nd March 2024 at Acklam Crematorium followed by a reception at the Stokesley Masons' Lodge. The Service will be 'streamed'.

1. Attendance and apologies: Members in attendance 23 Apologies: 17
2. New Members and Guests: pending
3. Minutes of last Meeting held on 20th February 2024: Accepted
4. Matters arising: None
5. Committee Reports

Treasurer: Accounts up to date and Club's finances are in healthy situation.

Secretary: Nothing new to report.

Website Manager: Website up to date.

Speaker Finder: Some rescheduling has taken place and the 2024/2025 programme is now fixed. This has required reprinting by Stephan Barnes. (At time of meeting Stephan unwell and all wished him well).

6. Committee Membership

At upcoming AGM the following Committee Members will come to the end of their terms:

Keith Bell – Keith is willing to stand again, and being a General Member there is no requirement to stand for election.

Chris Lee – Chris is willing to stand again as Treasurer. This appointment is subject to election, therefore, any Member also wishing to be considered can put their name forward. To date, no Member has done so.

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7. Trips

Two trips are under review this year:

Marske Sewage Works – proposed by Stefan Barnes.

Land of Iron, proposed by Graham Howard, followed by lunch at Grinkle Park Hotel proposed by the Chairman.

Keith Waller and Chris Lee made a circular tour by car to assess the merits of the visit.

It was proposed that car sharing be adopted for some trips where appropriate.

The Treasurer presented the result of his exercise to compare the costs of coach and car options for a Land of Iron 50-mile round trip. Assuming 25 attendees, cars carrying 4 passengers, the cost of entry £7.50, and lunch at the Grinkle Park Hotel £20 the result was:

(i) by coach, £41, (ii) by car, £35.

For further debate at next meeting.

The provisional date for this trip to The Land of Iron is 31st July 2024.

8. Members' Lunches

Lunch at the Blackwell Ox on Thursday 7th of March 2024 was attended by 18 Members, and very much enjoyed by all. It is now on list for a return visit.

The next lunch will be at The Crown at Kirklevington on Tuesday 4th June 2024, arrive 12.30 to 1.00pm. Details will be issued in due course.

Wednesday 25th September – the venue is yet to be decided.

Thursday 31st October – The Panda.

Keith Waller and Peter Robinson visited both the Arcadia Garden Centre and Five Houses, both proposed by Norris Wilson, to assess their suitability for future lunches. Arcadia was too informal and lacked the layout and ambience for a club lunch. Five House was far too busy and had limited menu. Both venues were ruled out.

Venue proposals from Members welcomed.

9. AOB

The Club's Elder Statesman, David Bryson, celebrated his 96th Birthday on the day of the meeting. Unfortunately, David was unable to attend the meeting. In anticipation of his attendance, the Chairman brought a card, a present, and this splendid home-made birthday cake:

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The Chairman was to deliver these to David later in the day.

Fun Draw: The Chairman brought three copies of the RHS handbook, "A Nation in Bloom".

The lucky winners were Peter Robinson, Bob Blakey and Brian Sturrock.

The next Meeting will be the AGM on Tuesday 16th April 2024.