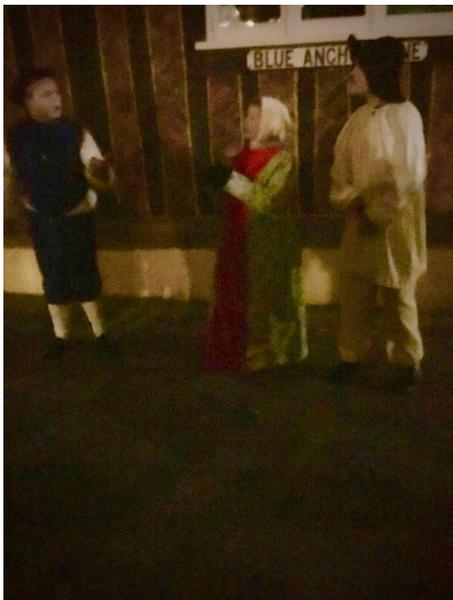


SAS Christmas meeting Tuesday 11th December

We had a great Christmas meeting on Tuesday last week, with Cheryl Butler talking about *'Me, Mrs. Siddons and the Pursuit of History'*. She's an inspiring speaker and tells fascinating stories about her passion for history and drama, especially her love of the Tudor period in Southampton, and for the time of Jane Austen. Cheryl's research into the records, such as *The Mayor's Book of Fines* from sixteenth century Southampton, resulted in several publications in the Southampton Record series. She has written books for general interest for instance Jane Austen and the Spa Town, and her interest in the Tudor period inspired to her write a blockbuster novel about the Southampton people of those times, *'The Theatre of the World'* (2017) – a really good read. There was wine and a buffet and about 40 members and friends attended, and a raffle raised £56 for the Southampton Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC).

Cheryl has long experience as a founder member of Southampton Tourist Guides and is involved in training for them; and from this grew a drama group, who put on walks matising events in the city's history. She has organised festivals such as the *Tudor Revels* (2014), *The Road to Agincourt* (2015), and in 2017 a Jane Austen Festival (known as *Stinking Fish of Southampton*). These involved street theatre performances with Sarah Siddons Fan Club for whom Cheryl writes, directs and also acts. She had many graphic and amusing anecdotes about the perils of street performance including a quick change of costume (in the wrong car!), 'stop and searches' by the police, or members of the public trying to help a 'wounded' or even 'dead' actor!

During last week Sarah Siddons Fan Club presented a new Christmas Ghost Walk, *Strangers, Foreigners & Aliens*, which I saw on the Friday night, 14th December. It was bitterly cold and the players must have been frozen, but despite the weather 'the show must go on'. Following the town walls (impressive by night) we heard of many groups immigrating through Southampton – the Norman invaders; Italian merchants with wine and cloth; the notorious 14th century French Raid; Huguenot silk weavers; and New World plants (tobacco, potatoes). Often local people felt the newcomers were competing with their own products (beer, woollen cloth) which gave rise to complaints and civil unrest, but Southampton folk over time became accustomed to the 'aliens' and welcomed the new goods they introduced – and valued opportunities for trade!



Street Scenes – Left: conflict over foreigners with a from Romsey large household taking over Tudor House. [apologies for poor light quality]



Right: Market in St Michael's Square – people denied permission to trade!

Sarah Hanna