



Southampton Archaeology Society

January 2022 Newsletter

Dear members

Now the new year is well under way - though the weather is hardly spring-like, in fact with the warmest New Year on record we seem to have gone backwards! Like Shelley we should perhaps reflect "*If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?*" So we look forward to better times now there are fewer Covid-19 restrictions (although for now we prefer to advise wearing masks at open meetings).

I'd like to look back for a moment to two meetings from last year: Jo Bailey's November talk: **2020 – a Year to Remember**, a fascinating account of Jo's first year as SCC's Monuments and Memorials officer, ending with the announcement of a £6.5m programme of repairs scheduled for Southampton's heritage buildings, such as the Weigh House (French Street), Westgate Tower and Walls, and the Bargate. The talk was very well-attended and a report can be found on the website www.southamptonarchaeology.uk. And then we had a most enjoyable **Christmas Social** on 14th December (report included in this newsletter). Our January talk was given on Zoom by Dr Marta Diaz-Guardiamino, about the Montelios tholos in southern Spain, the chance discovery of a Copper Age tomb which revealed the remains of a number of young women dressed in elaborate beaded garments. This is a fabulous story, and a report will soon be made available on our website.

We're making plans for a Study Day to be held in June 2022: with a nod to SO 25 (Southampton's bid for City of Culture 2025) this will focus on the city's historic buildings and their archaeology. Many thanks to John Langran for his piece on **SO 25**, and to Mandy Kesby for her article on the site of the former **Rolling Mills** at Weston, an interesting look at 20th century industrial archaeology and subsequent uses of the site.

We're looking forward to our next lecture on **The Victorian Discovery of Palaeolithic Southampton** with Francis-Weban Smith and colleagues, to be held on **Tuesday 8th February** (for details see poster attached). Then on 8th March we'll hear from Dr Paul Everill of Winchester University about on-going Anglo-Georgian excavations at the site of **Nokolakevi**, in Georgia.

We hope to see you at St Joseph's very soon!

Sarah



60th Anniversary of Southampton Archaeology Society

On 14th December 2021 after the Society's Christmas Social, the band and dancers joined SAS members and their guests in a buffet and glass of wine. At the end of the evening Martyn Dowell cut the cake to mark Southampton Archaeology Society's 60th Anniversary. Sadly, a few of those who booked places weren't able to come on the night, and I hope the report (see below) will give you a taste of the evening.



Martyn Dowell cuts the 60th anniversary cake. Photo – Matt Garner



For our Christmas event last year we were entertained by the local folk band **Jigfoot**, with dancers Simon and Jo Harmer, and Deb Lewis to tell us the story of folklorist, poet and author Alice Gillington. She lived in the New Forest about 100 years ago, where she collected songs and dances from Romany and Traveller families that she befriended (*see poster, left*).

Alice Gillington was born in 1863, one of four children in a clergyman’s family. After her father’s death her mother, Alice and her brother John moved from Surrey to Bitterne, Southampton, and she came to know several Romany (Gypsy) families living on Sholing Common and in Botany Bay, Sholing. She was drawn to their songs and dances and began to write them down, at a time when there was a lot of interest in recording folk tunes. Some of the Romany families befriended Alice but others took longer to accept her. She described the christening of a baby to whom she was to be godmother, when the family arrived late for the ceremony, all wearing bright clothes. Another time Alice described the funeral of an elder woman: the coffin borne by six sombre men

was followed by the whole camp community, who encircled the grave. After the coffin had been placed in the ground the woman’s caravan was burned.

In 1909 Alice’s mother died in 1909 and she had to choose: whether to stay and keep house for her brother John, emigrate to New Zealand or perhaps live with an aunt. But Alice wished to live as a gypsy, and she and John purchased two caravans and set off, living for several years at



Jigfoot and dancers applauded by the audience Photo – Matt Garner.



Thorney Hill north of Christchurch (now Dorset).

They practised traditional crafts such as broom-making, although life in the open wasn’t always idyllic as they grew older. After 1918 Alice lived in Bramsgore, New Forest, and later she moved to a village near Poole, which had two facilities necessary to her: an Anglican church and a post office! Alice died of a stroke in May 1934, after an accident while step-dancing (a traditional dance using the seat- board from the caravan, when parked for the night).

Simon Harmer demonstrates the Broom Dance. Photo – Matt Garner.

Alice was a great campaigner for Gypsy rights and supported rights for women, protesting against the harsh treatment of suffragette prisoners. She and John once stayed at Burley in the New Forest where they camped beside the estate of Lady Ryder, which had been recently landscaped. The lady objected to their caravans being nearby, which led to ‘words’ between them: a poem *The Hither Side of the Hedge* was read, expressing Alice’s belief in the freedom to live without the hedge. Highlights of the evening were the traditional Gypsy songs, demonstrations of step-dancing, poems and readings, bringing Alice’s story to life: the performance was much enjoyed by thirty four SAS members and guests.

Jigfoot play music for dancing, with a repertoire mainly from southern England and Hampshire. With dancers Simon and Jo Harmer they develop inspirational English step dancing routines. See www.jigfoot.com

The Rolling Mills Site, Weston, Southampton

From Mandy Kesby

The Chamberlayne family has been a long-established Southampton family, first appearing in the records in 1424, and by the 18th century they had entered local politics. In 1802 William Chamberlayne (later MP for Southampton) built Weston Grove House near Archery Road, Weston on the Weston Grove estate east of Southampton. At that time the only lanes in the area led from the House to Woolston and Wrights Hill, (probably where Weston Lane is now). In 1909, a compulsory purchase order was raised by Southampton Corporation for 89 acres of land near Weston Grove House, to be sold to London & South Western Railway for construction of a massive dry dock. The White Star Line "Titanic" and a sister ship were being built in Belfast and the proposed dry dock was to be for their use at Southampton; but an alternative offer of land within Southampton on the River Itchen was made, so the Weston project did not go ahead.

The site was subsequently sold to the Ministry of Munitions and in 1914 construction of the Rolling Mills began, completed in two years at a cost of £1m: it was built rapidly because of the urgent need for more ammunition during World War I. The Mills were situated directly below Weston Grove House, obscuring its view of Southampton Water, but the house stood empty for 26 years before being demolished in 1940.



Looking at the picture (left) you will see the main entrance to the site (1) just before the bend in the road as it turns along Weston Shore at the end of Weston Lane. The road in the front of the picture (2) was the drive/roadway which led to The Seaweed public house, named after a small, ancient seaweed covered shack on the edge of Weston Shore (near where the Rolling Mills Café now stands). Fishermen used the shack to store nets and other necessary items. (pictured below).

There was a 2m high boundary wall around the main Rolling Mills site, which ran along the shore and was bounded by Archery Road and Swift Road on the landward side. Originally, it was intended that the Mills should produce steel for Russia, but this contract was withdrawn and the factory then produced brass shell, bullet cases and bullets for the British Army. The main building foundations were 12 feet thick but the roof was made of wood, to ensure that any accidental explosion would be directed upwards and cause less damage. The building was half a mile long and comprised a foundry, rolling mills, cupping area (for drawing shell and bullet casings up from solid brass discs), laboratory and canteen. There was a pumping station and a coal burning power station, a plant producing both coke and gas, and a gas holder. This facility supplied gas, steam and electricity to the factory and was more powerful than the Southampton Gas Works. Within the Rolling Mills there were several gantry cranes and a small gauge railway, which linked with an external standard gauge railway running the length of the depot and out along the jetty, to enable loading of ammunition and the off-loading of coal, coke and other raw materials. The jetty was built at Weston Point in 1916 and served the Rolling Mills and the later Electric Control Gear Factory; it was still present in 1950 but was demolished by 1971, when a new jetty was constructed in approximately the same location.



The Rolling Mills employed many women during World War I, driving the gantry cranes and using machine presses to produce the brass discs for shells. Employees worked a 65 hour 7 day week (with a half day on Saturday), and could be required to do overtime, possibly working up to 11pm. They earned £3 for a flat week, £4 with maximum overtime; but within five minutes of the cessation of war being announced most of the women were dismissed. After the war the machinery was sold off and the factory building became

run down. A group of local businessmen hoped to develop the site and buildings, but this did not happen, and the site was subsequently used for numerous military and industrial purposes, as described below.

In 1928 Simmonds Aircraft Company rented part of the site to produce a 2 seater bi-plane. The company later became the Spartan Aircraft Co. Ltd, and soon after moved to the Isle of Wight. In the same year, a Right of Way was granted for British Mexican Petroleum Co to run oil pipes along the north side of Archery Road, across the depot site to the jetty for refuelling ships etc. The Mills were sold in 1933 to Alan West Ltd for £63k, for the manufacture of electrical switch gear and control boxes; and after they left in 1937 the Ordnance Survey rented part of the site until 1939. At this time, Alan West Ltd sold 45 acres of the property to the Crown, including the factory and use of the bridge and jetty.

On their departure RAF Air Stores used the premises for packing and storing parachutes, and to store aircraft engine and airframe spares, employing a staff of ~600 throughout World War 2. Supermarine also used a small part of the site to manufacture aircraft jettison fuel tanks for Fairey Swordfish, Hawker Hurricane and Sea Fire aircraft, moving out in 1946. The building was bombed during 1940 destroying the main entrance, office, garage and buildings to the rear of the garage. In 1941 several more areas were gutted, but it is unclear from records whether these areas were repaired. In 1942 Air Stores moved out to Melton Mowbray and the Royal Navy moved in, with Allied Forces using the Mills as their base from 1943, while the foreshore outside the depot was used to build part of a Mulberry Harbour.

Between 1950 and 1963 the depot was used to hold motor transport spares, until this was dispersed to other depots. The site then stored furniture for armed forces Married Quarters from across the south, disposing of unwanted items by periodically holding large sales at the Post House Hotel in Southampton. Finally in 1966 3.7 acres were sold to the GPO for £26k; and in 1970 one acre was sold to Southampton Corporation for £1.8k as a car park. In 1981 the remaining staff were told that the Depot would close in 1984, which actually took place in 1986. The site was badly contaminated from the dumping of asbestos building materials and degreasing agents and from the liquid used in the metal annealing process. It was earmarked for new housing but this project was delayed until the area was deemed to be safe.

Part of the site near the shore has been landscaped for leisure use and includes a pitch and putt course, and an asphalt path which is popular with dog-walkers, cyclists and runners. The foreshore is designated an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) as it is visited by flocks of wading birds during the winter months. A local group, The Friends of Weston Shore now care for the area to ensure it is kept free of litter and other hazards.









Weston Shore looking west towards Southampton docks. The Rolling Mills were situated right, in the middle distance. Photo - Friends of Weston Shore

Linda Pritchard 1942 - 2021

Many of you will have known our member Linda Pritchard who passed away last November after a few months' illness. Linda was a long established member of SCMAS/SAS and could be seen at most of our meetings before she became ill, often making relevant comments. She was born and raised in the London area and excelled at languages as a child, but after leaving school Linda wished to start work so she trained as a secretary. She married her childhood sweetheart, Alan, and moved to Southampton with her family, where they set up several business ventures. Linda became involved in local heritage and amenity groups and would record many of the lectures. Her funeral was held at Southampton Crematorium in mid-December 2021, attended by members of her family and many friends, including representatives from City of Southampton Society; Southampton Archaeology Society; Friends of Southampton's Museums, Archives & Galleries, among others. Linda will be missed, and we send our sympathy to her family and friends.



By the time you read this Southampton will have submitted its final bid to become the **UK City of Culture 2025 (SO 25)**. The bid team crossed one hurdle in the Autumn by being accepted on the “Long List “ of applicants. The UK City of Culture 2025 will need to articulate a vision using culture to transform a place through social, cultural and economic regeneration, making it more attractive to live, work, visit and invest in. Therefore SO 25 is expected to offer more than just the ability to run a programme of events: indeed, the record suggests that successful cities generate significant economic and social benefits. Southampton Archaeology Society has been involved with other Heritage organisations in “Zoom” consultation sessions to shape the bid. We also submitted a letter of support for the city’s original expression of interest, stressing Southampton’s long history, significant heritage assets and the embodiment of our cultural diversity in those assets. We believe this may have helped to form the themes featuring in the SO 25 bid.

THE FACTS	
 HUGE economic & social benefits for the winner £multi-million investment in Southampton's future 	
 Deadline for submission: 2nd February 2022	 Winner announced: MAY 2022
 Long list competitors: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Bradford, Cornwall, Derby, County Durham, Stirling, Wrexham County Borough	 Previous Winners: DERRY HULL COVENTRY

After February the Longlist will be reduced to a Shortlist of four, and the final decision is expected in May. One aim of the competition is to ensure that the process of bidding itself generates benefits for the individual cities. You may have noticed that during the last few months the Council has been “sprucing up” various parts of the city – not before time! This is obviously not coincidental. A firm specialising in heritage buildings was engaged to audit the condition of the city’s heritage assets, working in conjunction with Andy Russel and Jo Bailey. They have identified immediate priorities at the Weigh House and Town Wall by Westgate; with high priority for work at the Bargate, Westgate Tower, Holyrood Church Castle Bailey Walls, Castle Vault and Conduit House. Work has already commenced on the Weigh House.

We look forward to Southampton’s being successful in bidding to be City of Culture 2025. The city’s built heritage is already benefiting from the process, and we will continue to engage with the SO 25 team and support their endeavours.

From John Langran

Celebrating Southampton - an event to be hosted by University of Southampton

In support of Southampton’s bid to become **UK City of Culture 2025** we invite you to join us on **Tuesday 15th February** as we bring together a panel of guests to celebrate Southampton’s rich diverse and inclusive culture. They will discuss Southampton’s City of Culture 2025 ambitions, the bid journey so far and the importance of our city’s partnerships and diverse communities. You will have the opportunity to put your questions direct to our panel.

Details: Tuesday 15th February 2022; **Time:** 18.30 – 1930 GMT; **Location:** online (booking: eventbrite.com)

TELLING OTHER HISTORIES: Early Black History in Southampton c1500–1900 by Dr Cheryl Butler.

Cheryl Butler's new book is the result of many years of research into the lives of ordinary people from Southampton's history, arising from the author's interest in past migration to the city, and a growing awareness of the long history of black people in Britain. Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, Cheryl created a series of talks based on the lives of black people in Southampton from 1500. These proved popular and led to collaboration with a local group, The United Voices of Africa Association (TUVA) in a film about some of the stories: *Six Characters in Search of a History* (<https://youtube/T6cKDsHDp0k>).

Beginning with the Southampton Foundation Myth of *Sir Bevois and the Giant Ascupart*, the book's first chapter looks at the Medieval Town, followed by chapters on Black Tudors: Early Exploration; Spa Town: East India Company, West Indian Families and Slavery; Victorian Era: Empire and Migrations; Postscript: Dawn of the 20th Century. Each chapter contains illustrations from ancient (and later) manuscripts, engravings, paintings, and photographs, and includes case histories of black people from each era. The earlier case histories are fragmentary as they may be taken from legal documents such as wills or court proceedings, but by the 19th century it is possible to follow longer stories such as that of (William) Rollo Ross, an escaped slave from Annapolis, Maryland, who joined the Royal Navy in the early 19th century. He married a Southampton woman, and their graves can be found in Southampton's Old Cemetery.

It is well-known that many of the large 18th century mansions overlooking Southampton Water and the Solent were owned by families whose wealth depended upon the trade in enslaved Africans transported to the West Indies and America, or upon plantations in the West Indies. Recent research into Southampton's 18th century shipping records has discovered that a small number of ships engaged in that trade had sailed from the port in the 1780s and -90s. The chapter on the 18th century lists residents of Southampton who made claims for compensation after the emancipation of slaves in the 1830s, mostly from West Indian plantations – and Southampton is among many British cities with a similar record.

The book is completed by a Migration Timeline for Southampton, an extensive bibliography, and suggested trail leaflet for Old Southampton featuring many buildings linked with the stories. A final section features poems and art work from a children's workshop organised by The United Voices of Africa Association, which movingly speak for today's generation of black families in Southampton.

TELLING OTHER HISTORIES: Early Black History in Southampton 1500-1900 by Dr Cheryl Butler, ppbk 112pp; price £10.00.

Published 2021 by Diaper Heritage Association, ISBN 978-0-9557488-6-8. Available from the author. *Review: S Hanna*

Website contact: southamptonarchaeology@gmail.com

Facebook group: Southampton Archaeology Society

Our lectures normally take place in St. Joseph's Hall, Bugle Street SO14 2AH, 7.30pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, subject to restrictions as current. Refreshments are available from 7.00pm. Talks are free to paid-up SAS members, £3 to guests.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Subscription Rates 2021/22</u></p> <table><tr><td>Individuals</td><td>£10.00</td></tr><tr><td>Senior Citizens</td><td>£8.00</td></tr><tr><td>Juniors/Students</td><td>£8.00</td></tr><tr><td>Family</td><td>£14.00</td></tr></table> <p>If you or a friend wish to join SAS (or to renew your subscription) please contact the Hon Treasurer for an application form, or visit our website to print off a copy.</p>	Individuals	£10.00	Senior Citizens	£8.00	Juniors/Students	£8.00	Family	£14.00	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Contact us</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.southamptonarchaeology.uk</p> <p>Mandy Kesby, Hon Secretary. 29 Abercrombie Gardens Lordshill SO16 8FQ amandybutt@aol.com Phone: 023 8073 5360</p> <p>Sue Davies, Hon Treasurer. 32 Arlott Court SO15 2RZ suedavies64@btinternet.com Phone 023 8022 1587</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>2021-2022 SAS Committee</u></p> <p>Chair – Martyn Dowell Vice-Chair – John Langran Hon Treasurer – Sue Davies Hon Secretary – Mandy Kesby Committee Members – Rowan Bright, Chris Evans, Karen Wardley, Sarah Hanna, Matt Garner. Co-opted: Sam Edwards. Archaeology Advisor: Dr Andy Russel.</p>										

We would love to receive contributions to the Newsletter – by email to sarahvhanna@hotmail.com, or by post to Sarah Hanna, 346 Hill Lane SO15 7PH. We reserve the right to edit as necessary.