



# NEWSLETTER

## February 2020

### - Friends News -

#### Managing Our Memberships

We shall shortly begin trialling an on-line membership management system, which will allow new members to join the Friends or existing members to renew their memberships online if they so desire. Don't worry—if you do not want to make use of this facility, you will still be able to renew your membership using the existing method.

We hope that the system will be up and running in time for the April round of renewals, and more details will be sent by email before then. Details will also be available on our web site, where there will be a link to the new system.

It is our intention that payment for joining or renewal may be made through PayPal, as some may find this more convenient, although cheque or cash payments will still, of course, be catered for.



#### **Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Tamworth Castle and Museum**

This year's AGM will take place in the Great Hall of the Castle on Friday April 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 7:30 pm (note that this is a change to the date originally shown on our website)

As always, this is the most important of the Friends events you could attend: it is where decisions are made regarding the running and operation of our organisation, and where you can make your opinions known. So please put this date in your diary and resolve to help us, the committee, make those decisions.

## - Talks -

### **The Secret Life of the Magician**

**By Neil Roberts in The Globe Inn, Lower Gungate  
on Thursday February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 2:00 pm**



One of the best kept secrets of magic is the fact that most towns and cities have their own magic club or society. There are currently over one hundred magic clubs in the UK alone. Award winning magician Neil Roberts reveals this clandestine world from its earliest beginnings to a discussion on the current magic scene. His discussion will be full of anecdotes from his backstage career and even a few tricks performed live.

### **Gymslips and Chalkboards**

**By Kath Reynolds in The Globe Inn, Lower Gungate  
on Thursday March 26<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 2:00 pm**

We all love reminiscing about our childhoods, our schooldays, and “the good old days” in general.

Kath could be regarded as a professional reminiscer: while working for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent libraries, she helped develop a course called “Delivering Reminiscence”. She is keenly interested in people, their lives and their communities and her talks reflect a great many years of collecting stories, memories and musings from the people of Staffordshire and surrounding counties. This particular talk is an interactive schooldays reminiscence session recalling the “best days of our lives” - uniforms, books, time-tables, inkwells (remember them?) and playtimes. So pump up your memories, get out the rose-tinted spectacles and prepare to enjoy this talk!



## **Shot at Dawn**

**By Michael Byrne in the Great Hall, Tamworth Castle  
on Friday April 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 (after the AGM)**

Between 1914 and 1920, more than 3,000 British soldiers were sentenced to death by courts martial for desertion, cowardice, striking an officer, disobedience, falling asleep on duty or casting away arms. However, only 346 were actually executed, with 37 of these having committed capital crimes such as murder. The remaining 309 are the subject of this talk.

Michael will explain the background to how these events unfolded and he will pick out a handful of examples and tell their stories, explaining how they were finally pardoned after 90 years of disgrace to their families

This talk will immediately follow the Friends Annual General Meeting (see the front page).

## **Wrong Sex, Wrong Instrument**

**By Maggie Cotton in The Great Hall, Tamworth Castle  
on Friday May 8<sup>h</sup> 2020 at 7:30 pm**



Maggie Cotton was the first female to play as a percussionist in a UK professional Orchestra. She studied for one year at the Royal Academy of Music in London, not receiving a grant from her local authority as she was told that she was the wrong sex playing the wrong instruments: all those ‘boys toys’ at the back of an orchestra. Her interest in music began with piano at the age of 6, but eventually orchestral music became an all-consuming passion.

She has travelled world-wide as a member of the City of Birmingham

Symphony Orchestra (18 years with Simon Rattle). Now retired from playing but reviewing concerts for the Birmingham Post after a substantial spell teaching youngsters, writing articles and three books. A quirky sense of humour reaches out to non-musicians with instrumental illustrations giving much food for thought in her talks.

Maggie was awarded the ARAM (Associate of the Royal Academy of Music) in May 2018 – the first female percussionist to be awarded this recognition.

## **Music Hall: the Singers and the Songs**

**By Dr Ann Featherstone in The Great Hall, Tamworth Castle  
on Friday June 12<sup>h</sup> 2020 at 7:30 pm**

Music hall programmes included many acts, from comedians to jugglers and performing dogs, but the stars of the halls were almost always singers: Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, Albert Chevalier. This talk is about those singers (and many others) and the songs they sang, from anti-war ditties to those about marriage, holidays and working life.



Ann Featherstone is a retired university lecturer and teacher, as well as a writer. Her particular interest is the 19<sup>th</sup> century: popular entertainment, theatre, music hall, circus and literature. She has appeared in a number of TV shows and documentaries, and her talks have received much-deserved praise.

Ann illustrates her talk with slides and also by singing some of the songs herself!

## **Two Ships in the Night**

**By Mike and Wilma Watkins in The Great Hall, Tamworth Castle  
on Friday July 10<sup>h</sup> 2020 at 7:30 pm**

This talk is about the stories and parallels of two ships that sank in the Atlantic, two years apart. One of them, the Empress of Ireland, you will probably never have heard of: the other, the Titanic, you most definitely will have. More passengers were lost on the Empress of Ireland, yet it is the Titanic story that has endured. Why? Mike and Wilma will tell the story and why you will have heard of one but not the other.

# - Reviews -

## Festive Meal

Friday January 17<sup>th</sup> 2020

We enjoyed an excellent meal at The Globe Inn, and everybody thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment provided by local ladies' choir "Impromptu",



who sang a selection of Christmas and popular songs and treated us to a number of comic monologues.





## Friends Events for 2020/21

- 27/02/20 \* Talk "Secret Life of the Magician" \*
- 26/03/20 \* Talk: "Gymslips & Chalkboards" \*
- 17/04/20 AGM
- 17/04/20 Talk: "Shot at Dawn"
- 08/05/20 Talk: "Wrong Sex, Wrong Instrument"
- 12/06/20 Talk: "Music Hall: the Singers and the Songs"
- 10/07/20 Talk: "Two Ships in the Night"
- 14/08/20 Talk: "Saddlers & Loriners to Queen Elizabeth II"
- 24/09/20 \* Talk: "Historical Lock-Ups"
- 29/10/20 \* Talk: "56 Years in Showbusiness: the NOT so Secret Agent"
- 26/11/20 \* Talk: "The History of the Midland Red"
- 28/01/21 \* Talk: "21 Years Behind Bars"
- 25/02/21 \* Talk: "101 Great British Curiosities"

\* These talks will take place following the monthly lunch club meeting at The Globe Inn: all other talks will take place at the Castle

### Contact Details

For details about any event mentioned in this newsletter, please contact Roger Ashford on **0790 0088960** or by email at

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If you have any questions or suggestions regarding newsletters, please contact Roger Ashford by phone on **0790 0088960** or by email at

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