

Newsletter Winter 2023-4

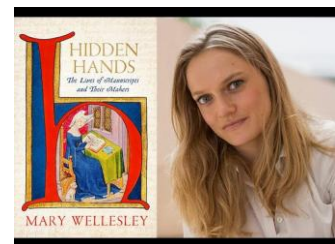
Chairman's report

Winter greetings from the Committee! As you will see from this Newsletter we have had another successful and busy year with high attendance at our events. We are encouraged by your continuing support. Among next year's highlights is a return visit by the ever-popular Alison Neil with her performance of *Mrs Baker's Company*. We also look forward to our Spring History Day. As we have a sound financial basis we are pleased that we are able to support local society in other ways. For example, we have recently contributed towards the Alfred Russel Wallace interpretation board and repairs to the Town Clock.

2023 September History Day Report



If you weren't in Usk's Memorial Hall for Usk Castle Friends' latest set of offerings, you missed a treat. Both Dr Dylan Foster Evans and Dr Mary Wellesley wowed the audience with their enthusiasm for



their subjects. Dr Foster Evans spoke eloquently and movingly about the medieval Welsh poets, while Dr Wellesley fascinated everyone with her illustrated talk on medieval manuscripts. Who knew there was so much of interest in both areas? The mesmerised audience was full of questions and loath to let the speakers leave. Both speakers accompanied the afternoon tour of the Castle so everyone had a further chance to find out more. (Based on Penny Reeves's *Usk Diary* Report)

A MEMORIAL FOR JOHN GROVE (1937-2021)

On a sunny Autumn morning (November 25th), just before the first frost of the season, we planted a tree at the Alfred Russel Wallace Arboretum in memory of John Grove. John, a well-known figure in Usk, founded both Usk Castle Friends and the Usk Diary. John's

contribution was vital. Always energetic and a great delegator! He also founded the now flourishing Mortimer Society of which he was president. Indeed neither the Friends nor the Diary would have got off the ground without him

The tree is a sweet chestnut (*castanea sativa*) at the request of the Family. We had a choice of four local bare-rooted trees donated by Rosie and Henry Humphreys and Ann and Andrew Jagoe. One was selected as the memorial tree and the others were planted nearby. So they can keep one another company! The Arboretum is located between the Athletics Club and the River and visitors are welcome. The land is owned by the Roger Edwards Trust and the Arboretum is managed by the Usk Rotary Club which proposed the idea and began planting in the Autumn of 2021. We are grateful to the Rotarians Nigel Price and Stephen Castling for their advice and help in finding a suitable position for the trees. In the picture (from left to right) are Elizabeth Baker, Chairman of Usk Castle Friends, Naomi Grove, John's daughter representing the Family and Penny Reeves, editor of the Diary and a member of the Friends Committee.



Teddy Bears' Picnic



The teddies and other assorted toys again enjoyed being raised up to the top of the Treasury Tower in a basket and then parachuting down again. Meirion Howells placed the teddies comfortably in the basket to be hauled up and launched off the Tower by Rupert Humphreys. Quite tiring work! It was good to be able to have a Teddy Bears' Picnic again after Covid.

Afterwards Pete Carr, a seasoned parachutist himself, set out a real life parachute on the grass so the children could see how large human-sized ones really are.

The proud young owners then received certificates signed by King Para and Queen Chute (Julie and Pete Carr). Sir Uskalot (Stella) would like to thank the King and Queen for taking over this important duty.

Battle Stamps

Rosie recently came across a stamp commemorating the Battle of Edgecote and wondered why it was issued. In fact it is one of eight marking the Wars of the Roses. The Battles were

Bosworth, Tewkesbury, Barnett, Edgecote, Towton, Wakefield, Northampton and St Albans. The whole set was to mark the 550th anniversary of the battle of Tewkesbury which was one of the most decisive battles of the Wars, resulting in the complete victory of Edward IV over the Lancastrians.



According to Dr Dylan Foster Evans, whose lecture on Welsh poets we heard in September, many Welshmen were involved in the Battle of Barnet, recorded by some of the leading bards of the day.

Spring History Day March 30th 2024



One of our two lecturers for the Spring meeting will be Dr Laura Kalas. Laura is a senior lecturer at Swansea University. One of her interests is in anchorites and anchoresses. She has recently written a book on *Margery Kempe's Spiritual Medicine*. Margery Kempe was a Fourteenth Century mystic who wrote the earliest surviving autobiography in the English language. She undertook pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Compostela.

Details to follow, please make a note of the date.

Visiting times

The Castle will generally be open on Sundays and Bank Holidays. The opening times are 10.30 am to 4.30 pm.

Entry is free to Usk Castle Friends and their families. Other visitors pay £4 per head. Children are free.

Members of Usk Castle Friends wishing to visit at other times should contact the Castle on 01291 672563 or at uskcastle.com. During the Christmas holidays you are very welcome to visit, when the Castle is open, with or without prior notification.