

Member's Newsletter



This month's photo of the week is a view of All Saints church on a glorious July day last year!

- Photo by Alexander Howes -

Photo of the
week

Northampton's
heritage under
threat!

St James Tram
and Bus Depot
to be
demolished!

VE day in
Northampton

Oak Apple Day

Around the
county with Alex
and Benji

Northampton's heritage under threat!



The remains of the old ex-servicemen's club after the recent fire ripped through the building.

It has been another difficult month for Northamptonshire Heritage. We have lost another abandoned but historically significant building in our town centre, the old ex-serviceman's club on Sheep Street. Before this, the angle hotel was lost to a fire and before that Overstone Hall.

This is highly concerning for those of us who wish to preserve our town's amazing but often overlooked historic and cultural assets. Many of these are already abandoned and in a visibly derelict state. One needs only to look at the old Friendly Society building on Broad Street for an example. These forgotten assets will also be lost if we do not remain vigilant and celebrate their local (and in many cases) national significance.

For this reason, Northampton Together is launching a new long-term initiative to try and catalogue and record the town's forgotten heritage and cultural assets. Do you have a historic (listed or unlisted) building near you that is in a concerning state of disrepair? We would love to know, so please get in contact and tell us about it! You can do this by sending us an email, commenting on our pinned Facebook post or making a separate post to bring it to the attention of us and our community.

As we build our catalogue, it will be available to view on our website complete with photos and a short history of the site or building. We look forward to working together on this big project!

Report by Alexander Howes.



The Angle Hotel on Bridge Street burnt down in August 2023 and was demolished in September 2024.

St James Tram and Bus Depot to be demolished!

Another of Northampton's historic buildings is set for demolition in the near future. Neil provides us with a update on the situation.

The St James Tram and Bus Depot is now in the process of cleaning the site and preparing for demolition. Northampton Transport Heritage have been in constant contact with WNDP over the process, and the plans for the site for houses have been discussed ready to talk to any developers later this year.

NTH have been promised that the façade as you see it from St James Road will be preserved and the houses alignments will follow the roof lines as they are now, with hopefully the remaining tram tracks remaining as part of a feature within the town houses access areas. WNDP have also agreed to allow NTH access to save any more features/property before the demolition contractors start work.



At the present time there is no firm proposal as far as we know on what to use the old Corporation Offices for, NTH managed to get the building graded as a Listed Building, but it needs cleaning inside and some of the damage repaired before a use can be determined. Because of the May 1st elections the Council cannot discuss the process so we await the new administration to see if anything of the plans will change.

Report by Neil Farmer

VE day in Northampton



This year marks the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE). To mark this special occasion, there will be many events taking place across the town and county.

There will be many events organised by different organisations, charities, businesses, and institutions to commemorate the bravery and sacrifices made by the county's people during the Second World War. As time has passed, it is very easy to forget the incredible contribution this town and the wider county made to the war effort.

Not only did the town famously churn out a huge proportion of the boots that landed on the beaches of Normandy to liberate Europe, but the county also hosted many important airfields. Airfields including Sywell, Silverstone, Harrington, Desborough, and Chipping Warden are only some of the many scattered around the county. These were home to British, Commonwealth, and American airmen who defended the skies of Britain and delivered ordnance to the Enemy on the mainland.

In addition to these sites, many of our county's manor houses and estates played their part during the war. For example, Delepre Abbey was acquired by the War Office to house and train soldiers. Many of the county's other stately homes had a similar experience.

For more information on events taking place near you please copy this link into your browser: <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/events/victory-europe-day-80>.

We hope you have a good VE day. We also hope you share what you are getting up to on our Facebook group!

Report by Alexander Howes.



A aerial view of Sywell Airfield taken during the Second World War.

Oak Apple Day - Keep your diary free!

Thursday 29th of May might not usually be a stand out date in your calendar, but I am here to try and convince you to book it off and partake in an old contrywide tradition which has special significance to Northampton.

On the 29th of May 1660 the English monarchy was restored when Charles II came to the throne following the death of the 'Lord Protector', Thomas Cromwell. To mark this event the king declared May 29th to be a public holiday. It was intended "to be for ever kept as a day of thanksgiving for our redemption from tyranny and the King's return to his Government, he entering London that day."

However, the holiday was abolished in 1859 by an act of parliament. Despite this, the date is still marked across the country with festivities and celebrations. It is, for example, kept as Founder's Day in the Royal Hospital Chelsea (founded by Charles II in 1681).



For Northampton, the date has a special significance. It not only celebrates the return of the royal family, but also their part in rebuilding Northampton after a devastating fire (stay tuned for more information on this in our next newsletter). King Charles II aided the town in its time of need by exempting it from the hated window tax and donating timber from the surrounding royal forests of Rockingham and Salcey.

Northampton will mark the event with a wreath laying, service, and parade. It will be a great spectacle unique to the town! Don't miss it!!

Report by Alexander Howes.

Around the county with Alex and Benji - Boughton

This section of the newsletter will be a regular feature in which I, alongside my trusty companion, Benji, will introduce you to some of the amazing places surrounding the county's towns.

Northamptonshire is a stunningly pretty county with many hidden gems. It is home to many landscapes, places, and buildings that hold national and even international importance. I aim to highlight some of these lesser-known places and inspire you to visit and explore some of these sites for yourself.

This month, Benji and I stayed local and paid a visit to the village of Boughton. It is a small but rapidly growing settlement located on the edge of Northampton. The name



Like many of the county's villages, visitors and residents are welcomed with a beautiful village sign.

derives from the Anglo-Saxon Bucca meaning 'he-goat' farm, presumably referencing farming practices that once existed in and around the village.

Human activity on the site of the current village predates the Anglo-Saxon period quite significantly thanks to archaeological evidence of both Prehistoric and Roman populations. Alongside regular reports of Roman pottery being found, multiple lost Bronze Age barrows have even been uncovered as the village continues to expand.

Despite this impressive history, the earliest written record of "Boughton" can be found in the Domesday Book which describes a village comprising



A view down the main high street. If you have time take a chance to visit the historic Whyte Melville pub for a pint and bite to eat.



A lovely quiet place at the centre of the village to relax and enjoy the sight of the 17th century cottages.

39 households accompanied by a motte and Bailey castle! This castle (which now lies beneath the Pocket Park) was likely built for the then landlord, Countess Judith, niece of William the Conqueror. This medieval settlement was located to the Northeast of the current village but had been abandoned by the late 16th century in favour of the village's current, 17th-century, location.



Another view of the old estate cottages.

Naturally, like many large and active settlements of the period, Boughton hosted a large fayer. Boughton fayer was so large that it became known countywide throughout the medieval and early modern period. This made the village a regional economic and cultural hub.

Around the county with Alex and Benji - Boughton

In addition to a large fayer, the village also boasted a large grass maze called 'The Shepherd's Race'. The first mention of the maze was made in 1364, and it appears to have survived all the way up until 1916, when it was destroyed by military training exercises. This maze appeared to play a central role in local customs. For example, a secular matching game saw young men race to the centre where a local unmatched girl would be waiting for them.

In addition to the historic buildings in the village's centre, there are multiple follies dotted across the surrounding countryside. These include The spectacle, the obelisk and the Grotto. Unfortunately, I did not have time to visit them, but they are all worth visiting if you find yourself in Boughton.



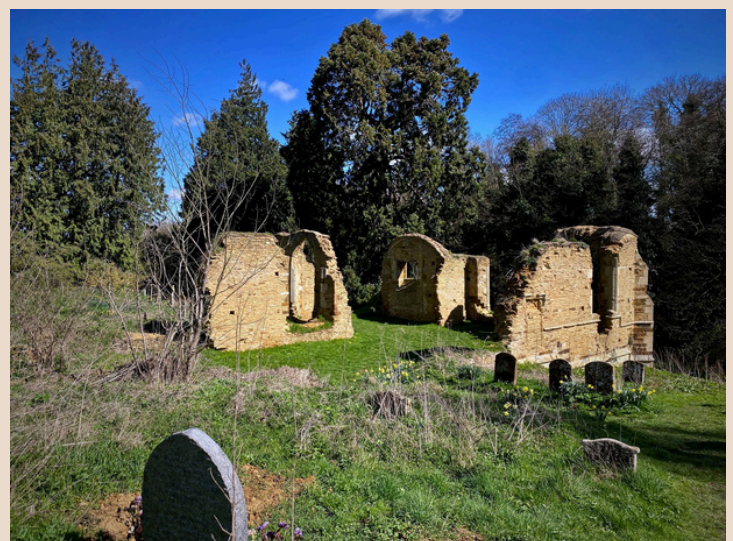
A view up the main high street towards the village's current church.



Benji exploring the historic and dramatic ruins of St John the Baptist.

Finally, the ruined church of St John the Baptist just beyond the limits of the current village is a very special and interesting place in its own right. As a result, I will reserve exploring it for a later date as it deserves its own article thanks to the fascinating history and folklore associated with the site. If you find yourself visiting Boughton, make sure you also explore these enchanting ruins.

Article by Alex Howes



If you visit keep a eye out for the many ghost which are said to haunt this romantic ruin.



Speakers 2025

Humfrey Rooms
10 Castilian Terrace, Northampton NN1 1LD

Please arrive at 7:15 for a prompt 7:30 start so you have time to help yourself to tea and biscuits!

We kindly ask a for a suggested donation of £5 pp to cover the cost of renting the hall

March 17th

A history of St Peter's church

Jenny Rose and Gareth Lugar-Mawson

St Peter's, Marefair is a designated Grade I listed building and, being a redundant parish church, has been under the care of the Churches Conservation since 1998. Considered by some to be the finest 12th Century church in Northamptonshire, this will be a talk covering most aspects of its evolution from earliest origins to present day.

In this spooky talk we explore the rich and mysterious ghosts, legends, and folklore of Northampton! Adrian, or as he is better known, the ghost detective, is the author of a series of books investigating Northamptonshire haunted locations. So who better to take us on a tour of Northampton's haunted past?

May 19th

Haunted Northampton
Adrian Perkins

June 16th

Film from 20th century Northampton
Peter Austin

The Northamptonshire Film Archive Trust is a registered charity dedicated to collecting and preserving cine film and converting the footage into a digital format to screen to audiences around the county. Our visit to Northampton Civic Society will include scenes taken in and around Northampton in the 20th Century.

This month's talk will see us welcome our neighbours from Wellingborough Civic Society, who are offering a fascinating and thought-provoking talk on a major community asset: the Victoria Centre. Through an exploration of its history, we will begin to understand why a multi-cultural community centre is so important for the local community.

July 21st

The Story of the Victorian Centre
Freud Edeltraud

August 18th

The Archaeology of Northampton
Andy Chapman

From the Neolithic, he will move on to the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, with Hunsbury Hill providing the only surviving upstanding prehistoric earthwork. The Romans will get a brief mention before he explores the Anglo-Saxon origins of the town in some detail. He will finish with the rise, fall and eventual demolition of Northampton's royal Castle.

Poplars is a grand house built in 1778 by a wealthy widow, in a prime place at the top of a hill in Wellingborough. Mike's talk will take us to explore the people who called the 50-acre estate home. We will understand where they came from, what they did, where they went and what legacy they left behind. Like the Channel 4 series "A House through time", we will experience how the house adapted to social changes during its first 125 years.

September 15th

Poplars Grand House
Mike Williams



Keep your diary free for our next talk on May 19!



Keep your diary free for our next talk on the evening of May 19th when Adrian Perkins will be visiting us!

Adrian is known as Northampton's ghost detective and is the author of a number of well written books diving into Northamptonshire's myths, legends, and folk tails. This is a must see for anybody interested in, not only the paranormal, but also social history and culture.

Whether or not you believe in ghosts, there is no denying that belief in them has shaped British culture and tradition. Northampton is no different.

We hope to see you there. Please see the events list above or visit our website at the address below for further details. Also, please join our Facebook group for any updates.

Thank you for reading!

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