

## **Marple Local History Society**

### **Visits Organiser Report**

#### **Society Year 2023-2024**

We hoped that by summer 2023 we had left all the restrictions of covid far behind, and that we could resume the normal pattern of Society outings, with a coach trip to the little Derbyshire town of Wirksworth in May. The town nestles attractively at the head of the Ecclesbourne valley. Romans had a presence there, and the parish church dates from Saxon times. This is where the law court controlling lead mining in Derbyshire has sat for hundreds of years, and it is also where they used to make all the red tape used by lawyers! After morning refreshments in the Heritage Centre café, there was an introductory talk and time to explore their exhibitions. In the afternoon we had a guided walk around the town. Unfortunately, this visit did not attract as much interest as anticipated. Despite dropping down to a smaller coach, to save on hire charges, the visit made a loss. It's not known whether there was lack of interest because many had never heard of Wirksworth, or reluctance to use group transport post covid. However, it has been decided for the time being to concentrate on local venues which can be easily reached by car or public transport, and avoid the capital cost of a coach which has to be paid even if not filled. This has not been a drawback as there are so many interesting local attractions.

Having discovered that Robinsons will be moving their brewery from the site in the centre of Stockport (where it has been since 1865) in 2025, we decided to make a valedictory visit in November 2023, and 18 climbed the 54 steps to the top of the building and spent an interesting afternoon following the brewing process as we gradually descended. Back at ground level we were offered the choice of a bottle of beer to take home, or a visit to the Ardern Arms on Millgate for a drink in the pub. Everyone seemed to enjoy the visit, and we now know all about how beer is brewed.

A Society member suggested a visit to Southern Cemetery, the largest cemetery in this country, and with graves and memorials to many notable Manchester citizens, so we asked Blue Badge guide Jonathan Schofield to take us round one afternoon at the beginning of March. It was a lovely day, and we caught up with many of the great and the good of Manchester, as well as enjoying the peaceful surroundings.

Our summer visit will again be a local one. The last time the Society had a visit to Bramall Hall was in 1996, so it's time for a return. On 17 May we will have a morning guided tour of Stockport's timber-framed mansion, started in Elizabethan times, but embellished and beautified in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. There are still a few places for this visit. Please see the Visits Organiser afterwards if interested.

Evening strolls on the third Mondays of May, June and July were as popular as ever last summer, and will be available again this year on May 20, June 17 and July 15. Details are still being finalised, but will be announced in the monthly newsletters.

Visits are an integral part of the Society's activities, and it is hoped they may continue. Ideas are welcomed from members. Please let the Visits Organiser have your suggestions.

**Judith Wilshaw,**  
**Visits Organiser**