SANT Library Report for 2018

We have to report another active year in the library. 167 items were added to our collection, more than a half by donation from the following: J M Almond, Mike Barke, David Breeze, Ian Bower, Philip Brooks, Ms E J Browne, Howard Cleeve, Keith Elliott, Bill Griffiths, Bridget Gubbins, Dave Harker, Alan Hart, Brenda Heywood, Stephanie Jefford, Colm O’Brien, Denis Peel, John Thornborrow - via his bequest - and John Tribe. A list of new additions from August 2018 is on SANT Website together with a list of all books and other items held, and their location. The books added this year covered all periods from the first Celts around 10,000 BCE to wartime rationing in Dewsbury, still a recollection for some of us.

The Library continues to be well used by members, students and visitors. Library loans are restricted to Society members who borrowed 232 items, compared to 386 last year. There were no loans to other libraries. Periodicals constituted 36%, (55% last year) of the borrowing. This is interesting as students, and apparently members, now make less use of the Library’s periodicals as they have on-line access to many via the University Library. Similarly, Society members also have access via our website to an increasing number. Of course although it is possible to read the text on line, here the feel and smell of the volume has yet to be replicated!

The big event of the year was the Great Exhibition of the North which was primarily a Museum event, but Ian put out displays of rare and interesting books for visitors who made it to the Library. Our Committee member, Chris Walton, has donated two book display boxes and is hoping to put on a rotating display of SANT books in the library as most of our collection is hidden away in compact storage. Other events arranged by Ian were displays for a Heritage Open Day in September, on the theme of 500 Years of the Book, for an evening in late September, Science Uncovered, and a contribution to Local History Month in May.

The details of all new SANT Library books are eventually added to the University Library Catalogue, but there is still a backlog of older, more obscure material where accession involves input from a specialist cataloguer from the Robinson Library. Notwithstanding, all the Library material is listed on the SANT Library webpage.

This year Ian advised that TWAM resources might be available to the Library from funds in a budget earmarked for conservation, which could be used to store more appropriately some of our material. Howard submitted a successful bid to meet the cost of the purchase of 65 acid free A5 archive boxes which have now been used for the storage of tracts; comprising a range of documents from a single sheet of paper to thin paper-backed booklet. It will be noted that our tracts have now been re-catalogued by size: I (A5), IA4 and IA3. During the year a number of books have been repaired commercially, and several were repaired by Georgina Peel.

Mike Barke continues to sort and list the maps donated last year by Stafford Linsley and other maps in the collection at GNMH. Eric, a joiner by profession, repaired the map cabinet which had been sagging under the load. A full report will be forthcoming from Mike when he emerges from the sea of maps.
In addition to books and printed material the library now holds an increasing volume of digital material, both text and pictorial. The ever-expanding list of items, too numerous ever to appear on our website, is being collated by Howard. Currently included are:

- Digitized, searchable jpg copies of the slide collections of John Thornborrow and the Geoffrey Briggs; each collection with an introduction and searchable catalogue.
- Photographs of the pages of the first SANT Monthly Meeting Minute Book and Cash Book. Both these books, still in our Archive at Woodhorn, are very delicate, apparently fire-damaged, and have been photographed so as to limit the need for handling for research in the future.
- Photographs of all letters and documents in Transactions of the Society of Antiquarian Society of Newcastle upon Tyne – with introduction and complete transcription. This bound volume, at one time in the Library of SANT founder member Thomas Davidson, was purchased in 2017 from the Society of Antiquaries of Sunderland. Many items are collected and bound here; reflecting the organisation of the first ten years of the Society.
- Photographs of all the SANT archival material used for research for the article in AA 2017; An account of the first part of Archaeologia Aeliana.
- The current SANT library book/material list.

The above are available to view on a dedicated laptop at the library – but please make an appointment beforehand with Ian to gain access to it.

With the announcement that the Bayeux Tapestry might come (home) to Britain for a few years we decided to have our 19th C copy looked at by Michael Lewis from the British Museum. It might have been that J C Bruce’s copy did not exactly mirror the current Tapestry in every detail, possibly with the differences of some historical significance. Perhaps unsurprisingly this was not found to be the case, which means questions need to be asked now about the on-going storage of our dirty facsimile some sections of which are in a poor condition. Currently the sheets are lying unlived in our basement store in the Discover Museum. Denis did wonder about mounting it on a single roll and moving it along a frame a day like a slow motion news reel, but has found the original is already available to view in this way on the Internet.

Earlier in the year Philip Brooks a notable local historian, died and his wife, Barbara, has given us his local (Wylam) slide collection and allowed me to select for the Library a number of his books. Details of all these items will follow when they have been listed.

The Library Committee, chaired by Howard Cleeve, met twice during the year and discussed all of the above-mentioned subjects.

Our thanks go to Ian Bower, GNMH Librarian, Eric Waites, Mike Barke who continues to list the large collection of maps, Peter Nichol who works with Ian on Mondays, Chris Walton and Georgina Peel for her continued book repair work which is sadly reduced owing to eyesight problems.

Howard Cleeve (Chairman SANT Library Committee), Denis Peel (honorary Librarian SANT)