



THE CHRISTCHURCH ANTIQUARIANS

Newsletter, July 2016

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Roger Donne

Welcome to the July 2016 issue of our occasional newsletter.

In this issue, David Eels discusses the highlights of his latest book, soon to be published, on the Lords of Christchurch. This book results from many years of painstaking research by David amongst contemporary records, and TCA is especially grateful that he has chosen to devote royalties from sale of the book to TCA funds.

There are two articles in the issue which highlight current projects. Mike Tizzard has provided an update on the ongoing excavations at Little Millhams, while I have provided a summary of the three geophysical surveys conducted on the lawn to the south of Priory House using a variety of equipment kindly loaned and operated by our friends and supporters.

Mike Tizzard recounts interesting observations dating from 2002 of preserved roofs and timbers under the modern roof of the Santander building in Christchurch's High Street, and laments that later refurbishment seems to have destroyed these unique features without any record being kept. He has also provided a report on a welcome initiative by Bournemouth University's geophysics group to support local amateur archaeological societies by loaning out items of equipment – Project LoCATE.

Finally I have provided a piece on the focus on heritage in the Town Centre Strategy for Christchurch, adopted by the Council in December 2015–'Our Heritage Guides Our Future'–noting that there are still a few loose ends to be tied up.

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. If you have a suggestion for an article for future newsletters, please contact me as the acting editor, using the Secretary's contact details listed on page 16.

THE LORDS OF CHRISTCHURCH, 1331 TO ABOUT 1480 – AN HISTORICAL PUZZLE SOLVED

David Eels

As those who have been TCA members for a number of years will know, during the late summer and autumn of 2003 we carried out a fairly comprehensive geophysical survey of Christchurch Castle with emphasis on the motte and the area close to it. We also did some work on the bailey area and tried to locate the ditches. When we were preparing our report on the survey in the following year, I was asked to provide a list of the owners of the castle during the medieval period, but I was reluctant to do so as I was not confident about much of the fifteenth century. When the rest of the group persisted, I gave way but insisted on inserting a footnote stating that there was much uncertainty about the fifteenth century and more research was necessary.

My uncertainty was due to the fact that some local books were contradictory; even some statements in Ferrey and Brayley's 1834 book

seemed to contradict each other for the early years of the fifteenth century. Furthermore, some books referred to Christchurch being held in the 1450s for the annual rent of a red rose. When I located this document, dated 1454, in the 1990s it was printed in Latin and the late Arthur Lloyd kindly translated it for me. It stated that Christchurch was being granted to the Earl and Countess of Salisbury for a period of twelve years for the annual rent of a red rose. I found this very puzzling as Christchurch had been held by the ancestors of this countess since 1331, so what had happened to it since the death of her father twenty-six years earlier? None of the possibilities I came up with, including forfeiture and being dower lands of the previous earl's widow, fitted the information I had already accumulated about these people and there was nothing significant about 1454.

By 2007 I had at last found all the documents necessary to piece together the story of the ownership of Christchurch and its castle from 1397 and was surprised at the number of names which appeared and how complicated was the ownership. During the next two years, interrupted by writing my *Markets and Fairs* book, I wrote this up as part of my much larger work on medieval Christchurch. After one local historian had seen this section he said that this deserved to be published separately as it was original research, so I decided to add extra chapters covering the period from 1331 to 1397 in order to explain the family background, how the 1st Earl of Salisbury came to obtain Christchurch and how his son and daughter-in-law were connected with the founding of the Order of the Garter. The resultant book, entitled *The Lords of Christchurch 1331 – 1480s*, is due to be published by Natula during the late summer of 2016 and I have decided that all my royalties will go to The Christchurch Antiquarians to help finance their work.

In the book I have included enough background information to explain how and why the ownership changed hands so many times from 1397 through to 1485, especially during the Wars of the Roses. As with my previous book and the many articles I have written, much of this book is based on contemporary documents and includes events in and around Christchurch which, as far as I know, have never appeared in books. As an example, October 2015 was the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt and I include documentary evidence to show that some of Henry V's army was mustered at Christchurch. In addition, I have included material of general interest such as the rates of pay for soldiers and sailors and how this was financed, including the long time it took for the Crown to settle its debts, with documents showing that sometimes very large sums of money were still owing to individuals a few years later. Finally the book shows

how much local history can be linked to important people and important events in our nation's past, with some of these featuring prominently in our school history books.

THE SANTANDER PREMISES IN CHRISTCHURCH AND THE STRANGE CASE OF THE ROOF WITHIN A ROOF

Mike Tizzard

Some years ago, (I've been told it was 2002 but can't believe it was that long ago!) Sue Newman and I along with the then Council Conservation Officer, James Webb, (I can't remember why or how we got involved), were given permission to go into the loft space of the building housing the Santander Bank in Christchurch, 24 High Street.



The nondescript modern façade of the Santander premises in Christchurch High Street conceals an historic core.

We were taken up the stairs which were then at the back beyond the counter, through an office and then through a door in a partition wall towards the front of the building, to an area that had been used as a store for cardboard boxes and other unwanted items. There in the dim light of a single light bulb was a very unusual and quite unique sight of two complete and tiled 18th century roofs side by side that once must have covered an extended range of rooms at the back of the original building! The roofs were complete and undamaged with all their tiles and ridge tiles but now housed under a modern roof and further extension that I guess must have been done during the 1960's or early 70's.

On further investigation we moved into the roof space of the main building on the High Street. Outside, from the front, the building looks of no consequence with its lower modern Santander frontage and the upper part of concrete panels with a modern concrete tiles roof behind. Inside was a different story as there was the original 17th century timber roof structure.

Furthermore at the gable ends on both sides were the remains of part of a medieval roof structure. The timbers were in a very poor state but someone in the past had tried to conserve them with some sort of resin.

The floor of the roof, or in other words, the ceiling of the room below, was still partly intact and was a rare survival of 'reed and plaster' as opposed to 'lath and plaster'.

With the use of a torch, peering down through gaps in the ceiling we were met with another strange site, the floor of the room below was only about three or four feet from the ceiling! On climbing down through the gap to the floor below, parts of room divisions and doorways could still be seen, though all cut down in height. It became quite clear that at some time in the past, probably when the 18th century roofs were roofed in, the floor of the first floor, had been jacked up and set in position presumably to give the ground floor more head room. This is now hidden behind modern ceiling panelling.

Looking around the jacked-up floor, we found a number of papers relating to the building's former use which Sue luckily collected and now has in her collection. The building has had various uses over time including being the Union Jack Club during the First World War. In earlier times in the late 18th century it was connected to the silk stocking trade and dyeing being owned by the Aldridge family.

At that time the plot of land the house stood on ran all the way down to the Millstream and there was mention of a dye house probably somewhere down near the stream. This is interesting since in 2000, there was a trial excavation of three trenches on the ground where now stands the Cloisters development in the corner of Millhams Street beyond the Congregational church. Here all three trenches turned up archaeology but one near the Millstream came down onto a wooden tank running into the side of the trench. The tank had been sealed with clay on the outside and had clearly been used for the processing of red ochre since the inside was full of ochre and large beach pebbles. Unfortunately this was not investigated properly as the person running the excavation thought the ochre was brick and dismissed the tank as being a Victorian latrine!

Interestingly, quantities of red ochre have also turned up during our excavations at Millhams which could indicate that the mill we have been excavating in Little Millhams over the past few years appears to have also

been processing ochre. This was used for making pigments for paint to use in wall paintings and can also be used in the process of tanning and dyeing.

To return to the main point of this article, as some of you may have noticed, Santander's interior was refurbished in 2015. I had thought they were just going to do the ground floor but going in some time ago (I bank there), I enquired about the upstairs and to my dismay was told that the upstairs had also be refurbished and that the preserved roofs had gone! They were apparently removed with the consent of the council and as far as we know weren't recorded.

When James Webb, the former Council Conservation Officer originally saw the roofs, he said they should be listed because they were of national importance and should be preserved at all cost. Well, they never were and it appears that his file on the building has gone. Yet again, a small piece of Christchurch heritage lost forever!

SEARCHING FOR THE PRIORY – GEOPHYSICS ON THE PRIORY HOUSE LAWN

Roger Donne

In 2014 TCA was given the opportunity by the trustees of the Priory House Charity to conduct a series of geophysical surveys of the grounds of Priory House. The aim of the surveys was to see if geophysics could locate with certainty any remains of Christchurch Priory which may still exist below the soil, particularly under the lawn of Priory House. The Priory fell into ruin following Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries with only the magnificent Priory Church surviving to act as the parish church of Christchurch. A few upstanding remains of the Priory can still be seen, such as the section of the garderobe wall facing the Millstream. However, a rare sketch made in 1765 by antiquarian Richard Gough and now housed in Oxford University's Bodleian Library shows extensive ruins to the south of the church which have now disappeared, perhaps demolished when Priory House was constructed.

Priory House was built by Gustavus Brander circa 1780 and he reported several interesting observations and discoveries during its construction by letters to the Society of Antiquaries. The grounds to the south of the House appear to have been built up against the relatively modern retaining wall which may mark the southern boundary of the Priory precinct. Infilling of the area behind the wall appears to have taken place to form a flat garden

area which today is laid to lawn but which I assume formerly sloped down naturally to the level of the Millstream, as it still does in the south-west corner of Priory House grounds.

Priory House is a Grade II listed building and it lies within the boundaries of an extensive Scheduled Ancient Monument which also includes the grounds of the Priory Church and the adjacent Norman motte and bailey castle to the north. Any investigation of the grounds even by



Priory House from the south-west, showing in the foreground the ruined structure shown on some maps as 'The Tower'.

non-intrusive techniques such as geophysics requires the permission of Historic England (formerly part of English Heritage) in the form of the so-called Section 42 licence. We are grateful to Historic England for expediting the issue of these licences when we have been offered the loan of survey equipment often at very short notice. TCA does not own any geophysics equipment and we rely on the generosity of our friends and supporters for making available equipment and donating their time.

As mentioned in our last newsletter the first opportunity for survey was provided by Dr. Richard Bates of St. Andrew's University when he was staying in Christchurch en route to survey work at Durrington Walls. In July 2014, he carried out a survey at Priory House using a Ge Instruments electromagnetic conductivity meter (CMD Explorer) interfaced with

differential GPS equipment to provide centimetre accuracy position fixes



Dr. Bates in action on the Priory House lawn with the CMD Explorer

without the need to lay out a grid on site. This instrument operates by generating an electromagnetic field from a coil at one end of the beam, which in turn induces circulating currents within the soil which are detected by a receiving coil at the opposite end of the beam. The instrument is able to measure soil conductivity and simultaneously provide

an indication of its magnetic properties; using the instrument in various coil configurations allows the effective depth of penetration to be altered.

Our second opportunity occurred in March 2015, when our member Mike Gill who is also a member of the Avon Valley Archaeological Society borrowed the AVAS resistivity meter and carried out a survey on the Priory



Member Mike Gill working in Priory House Gardens with two assistants from AVAS

House lawn and also in the Priory House Gardens which are looked after by Christchurch Borough Council and outside the boundaries of Priory House. Mike has successfully used the AVAS meter to map shallow archaeology such as the ditches around a tumulus on a project in the Avon Valley area.

We are grateful to AVAS for the loan of the meter as well as the welcome assistance of two AVAS volunteers, Vanessa and Rachel Golton, who assisted Mike in the survey.

A third surveying opportunity was provided with a return visit of Dr.



Bartington Gradiometer in use by Dr. Bates on the Priory House Lawn

Bates in June 2015. On this occasion he came armed with a magnetometer, or to be precise, a Bartington gradiometer so called because it contains two magnetic sensors arranged one above the other to provide a reading of the vertical magnetic field gradient. Furthermore the instrument is configured such that the operator carries

two such detectors. In this case the survey was carried out using a series of grids laid out on a north-south alignment but with a Leica differential GPS used to tie in the grid origin to Ordnance Survey coordinates. The grid was laid out with non-magnetic tapes and bamboo canes and the operator had to be careful to divest himself of any metallic objects which would have distorted the collected data.

So, what has been the outcome from our three surveys? Unfortunately, not a lot! We had hoped that we would have seen rectilinear features within the data which would have indicated the remains of walls or their foundation trenches from monastic buildings which formerly stood on the site. The site has been infilled quite extensively with the depth of made-up soil amounting, we estimate, to 2 to 3 metres at its southern extent by the southern boundary wall, where a large drop to Priory Gardens outside the wall is apparent.

We hope to continue this intensive investigation of the grounds of Priory House by deploying other geophysical techniques, but these depend on the availability and good will of our friends and supporters in the academic world. Other techniques which we consider worth using if the opportunity presented itself would be ground-penetrating radar and resistivity imaging, both targeted at discovering structure hidden beneath the deep overburden on the site. At the time of preparation of this newsletter, we are in the process of applying for a Section 42 licence from Historic England in order to take advantage of an offer from Dr. Bates to carry out a resistivity imaging survey on the site.

COMMUNITY GEOPHYSICS PROJECT WITH BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Mike Tizzard

An idea under discussion with local amateur archaeologists and the geophysics team at Bournemouth University, with the object of lending out some of their equipment to local groups, has finally come to fruition with the scheme known as LoCATE - Local Community Archaeological Training and Equipment.

Towards the end of last year, Dr. Kate Welham from the geophysics team at Bournemouth, together with some of her colleagues, put out an invitation to all the groups in the area who may have an interest in using their equipment. An initial meeting was set up one November evening last year in the museum and visitor centre at Lyndhurst which was attended by Peter Fenning and myself together with about a dozen people from other groups.

We were given a presentation for what they intend to do which initially is just to loan out a spare magnetometer (Geoscan FM36) which they have, although eventually they will have more equipment to loan as and when some of their current in-use equipment is renewed and replaced. During the presentation we were shown the capabilities of the magnetometer, the setting-up procedure, and the sort of results you would expect from that type of equipment. At the end for those that were interested, there was mention of a training day to be organized at some future date for the setting up and use of the magnetometer.

The training day took place on 10 December 2015 and was held in the pavilion and football field at East Boldre. On the day about six or seven people turned up representing various groups in the area including myself and another of our members Mike Gill who in this instance was representing AVAS.

The day started off with an in-depth presentation on the technicalities, use, setting up procedure and the type of results that can be gained from this type of equipment. Later in the day a grid was set up on the adjoining football field and, while this was being done, we were shown the procedure for setting up the equipment which had to be done near to where we were about to do the survey.

First we had to be scanned for any magnetic material (iron/steel) that we might have been carrying as the machine is so sensitive that the presence of such material would cause spurious readings. I thought that I was magnetic-free but the magnetometer said otherwise, and eventually I found a very small nail in my pocket! After this, the magnetometer had to be set between certain readings on north/south, east/west axes and then we were ready to go.

The magnetometer is automatic and takes readings every half-metre although this can be varied depending on the type of survey required. The tricky part is getting the pacing just right. Once you have pressed the start button when crossing the grid line, the machine beeps (in this case) every half-metre, so in a 10 metre grid it beeps twenty times. You have to pace yourself just right to finish on the line on the other side of the grid.

Once the whole grid was finished, the magnetometer was plugged into a computer for the data to be downloaded; this then plots the varying readings on the grid set-up on the screen of the computer and hopefully some buried features may come to light. As it turned out, there did seem to be some sort of archaeological feature under the football ground! There was no intention of seeing what it was but it showed the equipment was working well.

I have been told recently (June 2016) that LoCATE is up and running and that the magnetometer is available for loan. I would like to try it on the Millhams site to see if we can pick up any more features that seem to be increasing the more we look down there.

FURTHER EXCAVATIONS AT MILLHAMS MEADE

Mike Tizzard

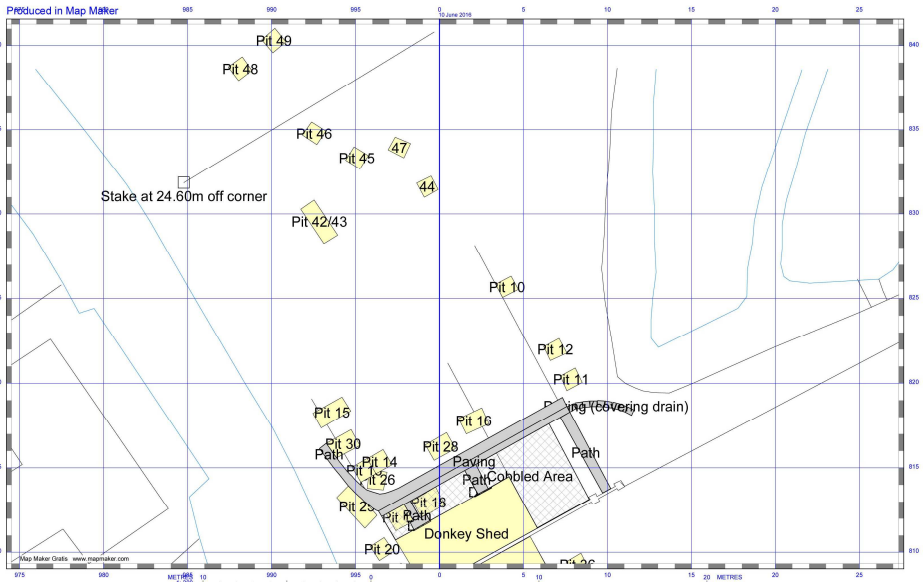
Back in 2014 we decided to take another look at the beam in Pit 20 as explained in last year's newsletter, as it became clear from exposing other parts of the mill that the beam that ran between pit 19 and 20 with its various features, appeared to be a principal part of the mill's operation. In 2015 we had planned to investigate the beam further and take a sample from the newly found 'extension' for tree ring dating as it looked as if this part may have been older as it appeared to be damaged.

For one reason or another we didn't really get round to this operation other than cleaning it up a bit and extending the 'tunnel' under the tree roots a little more. At present the pit is still open albeit full of water and covered with a tarpaulin. Hopefully this year we will get round to finishing the job.

In the mean time last year we thought it may be an idea to investigate other parts of the main north garden as most of it hasn't been looked at before.

The first of the new excavations was a 1m x 2m trench (Pit 42/43) dug on the corner of the rough overgrown patch of ground, quite close to the Millstream and about 30m north of the mill site. At a depth of approximately 1m a thick layer of dark sandy silt was encountered which contained a fairly large amount of medieval domestic pottery of a similar date to that found before on the mill site, typically 12th to 14th century plus one small piece of possible Saxon date. The pottery was a mixed assemblage of un-glazed cooking pot and glazed and decorated shards including two pouring spouts from jugs.

At a depth of 1.3m, directly under the dark sandy-silt finds layer, there was natural light orange/yellow silt or clay mixed in with bands of white-ish (sometimes slightly green) quartz sand. Cut into the sub soil was a narrow



Plan of the test pits dug at Millhams showing the 2015/2016 excavations to the North of the site

gully or drain running in a more or less east/west direction. No pottery was found in the gully but there was a quantity of animal bone, some with signs of being chewed!

We tried to follow the gully with the next pit (Pit 44) a short distance away to the east but instead came down onto a completely different set of layers leading down to what appears to be another water channel running diagonally across the site, with similar layers of silt and sand to what had been found in the channel laid down over the remains of the mill, including organic matter in the form of leaves and twigs. At the bottom, the silt came down onto concreted river gravel where we found a small quantity of medieval pottery shards and red ochre.

Some of the pottery and gravel had attached deposits of calcareous tufa; this is usually created from water emanating from a spring with high amounts of calcium dissolved in it. This is quite interesting as there was water running into the pit from a small narrow gully running parallel to the water channel and to the side of it. The water was coming in quite fast filling the bottom of the pit very quickly. It's possible that there is a spring nearby that we haven't got to yet.

Several other pits were dug in the same area to establish exactly what direction and where the water channel was coming from and what purpose it had. This has not been concluded yet but hopefully will be this year.

To conclude, the concentration of pottery found earlier may be an indication of a house nearby. There is a house recorded in the area that the miller once lived in so hopefully that's something we may be able to find this year. The new water channel is also very intriguing; it may possibly be connected to the Millstream and discharge into the creek on the eastern side of the garden, there is also the possibility that its use was to operate another mill. This is something we will have to investigate!

CHRISTCHURCH'S TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY PLAN – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HERITAGE?

Roger Donne

Those members who keep an eye on local affairs are no doubt aware of the adoption by the Borough Council of the consultant's report on the development of the town centre, with its strapline 'Our Heritage Guides Our Future'. The latest version of the plan was recommended for adoption by the Council at the Community Services Committee on Wednesday 18 November 2015. While TCA would naturally welcome any plan which supports our mission to uphold and preserve Christchurch's heritage, we were disturbed by the lack of public consultation on this version of the plan,

unlike the well-publicised consultation and presentation in the Mayor’s Parlour of the preliminary version which had appeared 12 months previously. In fact so alarmed were we by the lack of consultation and the apparent remaining errors in the Plan that the TCA committee wrote to the chairman of the Community Resources Committee expressing our concerns – unfortunately from our point of view this produced no satisfactory response apart from a minimal acknowledgement of receipt of our letter.

Our letter noted the immaturity of the plan noting that ‘it is surprising that after the expenditure of so much time and money [the Council] seem to have been presented with a report which is still in the concept stage, seems to have no feasibility studies attached to it and which still contains some notable errors and misconceptions’.

Among the misconceptions, we noted that the consultants propose that the Old Town Walls should be ‘exposed and restored where possible’. However, we pointed out that the evidence from archaeological excavations of the 1970s (see the publication ‘Excavations in Christchurch 1969-1980’, Jarvis 1983, Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society Monograph No. 5) had shown that any remains are fragmentary, no more than a tumble of stones, and are likely to be at some depth, circa 2 metres. While we would welcome further archaeological investigation, restoration and exposure seems completely impracticable though marking the supposed course of the town defences on the surface would be useful and informative to visitors.



The section of Hiscock’s ‘Waterloo Bridge’ wall adjoining Druitt Gardens is overgrown and fenced off due to fears about its stability (photographed June 2016).

We were also concerned by the photograph entitled ‘Existing overgrown land burying the scheduled monument at the Druitt Gardens/ Bank Close boundary’. The impression given was that this is extant stonework from the town walls. In fact, this section of the walling dates to circa 1820 when it was constructed around the

garden of a local contractor (William Hiscock) from the stones he had recovered from the rebuilding of what is now known as Waterloo Bridge. This section of walling, unfortunately now in disrepair, does have listed status because it contains dressed stonework which is probably of medieval date recovered from the predecessor to Waterloo Bridge. We pointed out that the north-south section in Druitt Gardens may well lie along the line of the Saxon burghal defences but the stonework is definitely not of that date.

A third issue which we have with this particular part of the report is the extent of the proposed 'Old Town Walls Trail Extension'. The extension shown in green on the plan gives a misleading impression of the supposed extent of Saxon defences, but could be integrated with the existing Millenium Trail to form a much more satisfactory impression of the extent of the Saxon burh of Twynham. From evidence of excavation contained in the reference cited above and elsewhere our understanding is that on the western side, the defences extended from Druitt Gardens as far south as the Priory Church. On the north they turned through Bank Close and continued to the Mill Stream with the burghal gate on the line of the High Street. On the east, they may have turned and continued south just west of the Mill Stream, though some authorities contend that the marshy ground to the east would not have required additional defence.

Of course, the Town Centre Strategy addresses other important planning issues, such as traffic management in and around the town centre, as well as heritage. For those interested, the Strategy document adopted by the Council may be found on the dorsetforyou website, appearing as Appendix n1 to the agenda for the meeting of the Community Resources Committee of 18 November 2015.

We welcome the highlighting of heritage in the Strategy but it is important to get it right, particularly before any approach is made to regulatory bodies such as Historic England who would need to sanction any work within the scheduled monument area. We now understand that the Council have set up a group of 'experts' to advise and flesh out the heritage aspects of the Plan – we await their deliberations with interest.

BOOKSHELF

‘Roman and Saxon Christchurch’, Michael A. Hodges (Natula Publications)

We are pleased to have received a complimentary copy of Michael Hodges’ latest book on the history of Christchurch in which Michael discussed his theories on the history of Christchurch in the first millennium AD. While the evidence for Saxon involvement in the burh of Twynham is indisputable, Roman remains are sparse and in the book, Michael presented the evidence for Roman activities in and around the Christchurch area. Michael Hodges was a prolific author on local history and was a longstanding member of TCA who served on the committee: it is with sadness that we record his death in April 2016, after bringing this, his last book, to publication.

TCA CONTACT DETAILS

If you would like to know more about The Christchurch Antiquarians or about any of the articles in this newsletter, please contact either the Chairman or the Secretary, as below.

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If you would like to join TCA, please contact either of the officers noted above.

TCA website & blog: <http://christchurchantiquarians.wordpress.com>

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