

Redditch Local History Society

March 2020

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Newsletter...

Latest meeting

The final meeting of our 2019/20 season of the Redditch Local History Society was held on Monday 9th March 2020 at the Oasis Christian Centre, Plymouth Road. Our next meeting, our April Annual General Meeting, will be the first meeting of our 1920/21 season.

For the March meeting we had an excellent attendance of 46 members and 20 visitors, which was a total of 66. The meeting was opened by the Chairman who welcomed members and visitors.

Presentation

Our presentation today was entitled 'Off to the Workhouse – the poor are always with us' and was given by Dr Richard Churchley. Richard is an experienced historian, specialising in areas of Worcestershire, Warwickshire and North Gloucestershire and in this talk he looked at the problems of looking after the poor from Tudor times to the 20th century using local examples.



Alcester Workhouse

In Tudor times charity was provided by wealthy individuals and the church to help the neediest members of society. However, the passing of an Act for the Relief of the Poor in 1601 made parishes legally responsible for looking after their own poor. Parish poor relief was dispensed mostly through "out-relief"; grants of money, clothing, food, or fuel, to those living in their own homes. However, the parish workhouse gradually began to evolve in the seventeenth century. as

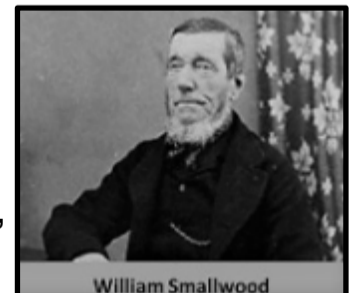
an alternative form of "indoor relief", both to save the parish money, and also as a deterrent to the able-bodied who were required to work, usually without pay, in return for their board and lodging. Richard illustrated how quite respectable people due to illness or death of the family breadwinner could be forced to seek Parish relief as they could not support themselves.

In the late 18th Century Parishes began to combine together to create a Union Workhouse which covered several parishes. This became the standard and there are numerous examples in the area. Those admitted to the workhouse were expected to work to earn their keep.

There were also rich benefactors who supported the elderly and poor in their parish. A local example is William Smallwood, and his brother, who generously supported almshouses in Alcester and Redditch, and the Smallwood Hospital in Redditch.

Workhouses continued up to WW2 in the UK, but the post war government's creation of the Welfare State and the NHS, removed the need for such a system.

The talk obviously covers much more than can be mentioned here and Richard recommended a visit to Southwell Workhouse, which is a National Trust property, which illustrates this later type of Union Workhouse.



William Smallwood



Southwell Workhouse and kitchen garden.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-workhouse-southwell

Richard, as always, gave an excellently researched presentation of our local history and we always welcome his talks which are always appreciated by the audience.

In his talk he referred frequently to an interesting website which gives resources and information on the workhouses. This is well worth visiting and can be found at www.workhouses.org.uk/

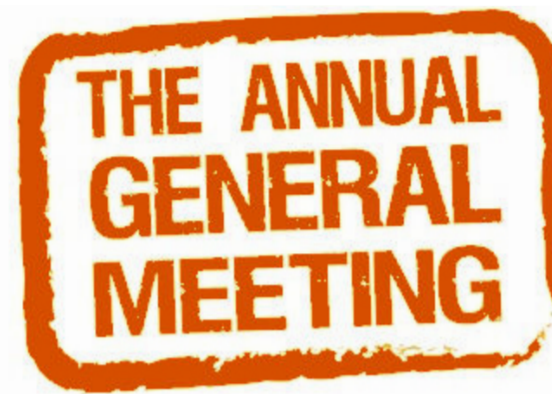
Next meeting

Our next Meeting at the Oasis Christian Centre is on Monday 20th April 2020 and is our Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The AGM, although it probably has the lowest attendance of our meetings, is an important occasion for members and visitors to provide input to the direction of the Society. Here we elect our officers for the next year (April 2020 to March 2021) and decide on our activities and programme for the year ahead.

This meeting begins our next year of membership April 2020 to March 2021, so members will need to renew their membership and receive their new membership card.

After the AGM business, we will have some interesting short films of local area history.



Exhibition at Forge Mill Needle Museum 2020/21

Our exhibition for 2020 commemorates 75 years since the end of WW2. This takes place at Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch in the Exhibition Gallery during normal opening times. It runs from Wednesday October 28th to Sunday November 22nd, 2020. Details can be found at <http://www.forgemill.org.uk/web/exhibitions>



We are now looking for an exhibition for 2021. When choosing a topic we are searching for subjects where there is sufficient material to produce a satisfactory exhibition and also for someone, or a group of people, who are prepared to organise the exhibition. If we cannot find this then we will need to decide if we do a 2021 exhibition.

Our Meetings 2020/21

We meet from February to December, on the 2nd Monday of the month (except our Annual General Meeting 2020, which is on the 20th April, due to Easter weekend). Meetings begin at 2.00 pm and last for approximately 2 hours, it begins with a presentation, which lasts about one hour, and this is followed by refreshments and society business, event news and project reports.

Our meetings programme can be found at <http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk/meetings.htm>, where you can also download the leaflet in pdf format.

Non-members are welcome for whom there will be a £3 entrance charge. This is refundable against the membership fee if subsequently joining the society the same day.

We are now looking at our Speaker Programme for 2021 following our generally successful mix of 8 speakers (a mix of Members and outside speakers), the Annual General Meeting in April with some short history films afterwards, our 'members read local history stories' and our Christmas Social. Eleven meetings, February to December.

If you are interested in being involved as a speaker or reader, or if you have recommendations for outside speakers, please contact me, Anthony Green, the RLHS secretary, at anthony.green@RLHS.org.uk.

We are always ready to help members who wish to give a talk in producing a presentation.

Contact

For details of how to join the Redditch Local History Society or to contact us:

email: contact@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk

Visit: www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk

Telephone: 01527 61434 (Anthony Green, Secretary) or 01527 404365 (Derek Coombes, Archivist)

