

August 2022 Meeting

Hi All,

We had an excellent talk by the Hanbury Hall Head Gardener Neil Cook entitled 'The re-creation of the gardens at Hanbury Hall'. Neil has been the Head Gardener (official title Gardens and Park Manager) at Hanbury Hall (National Trust) since 1988 and the talk was well presented and much appreciated by the audience. A summary of the talk can be found on **pages 3 and 4**.

We had 45 at our August meeting made up of 38 members and 7 visitors, which was a good recent attendance level and very encouraging for the future.

Sadly at the meeting I had to announce the death of our Chairman Don Vincent, In this newsletter I wished to record his passing and I decided that I could do no better the appreciation which I delivered at his funeral. This can be found on **pages 7 and 8**.

We have for our November meeting a talk by Don entitled 'The Story of the Gatehouse Chapel at Bordesley Abbey'. Don's nephew, Rupert, has managed to find his work to date on the presentation and I intend to complete this and present it at the meeting. It is a lot of work but I do not want to just erase Don from our listing.

Rebecca (Becky) Smith is a citizen of the USA, but has roots in Redditch which she is researching. She is planning to visit Redditch in September and I hope to meet her. I asked if she could provide a few words on her research/story and she has given me enough information for two editions of the Newsletter. Part 1 of her story can be found on **pages 5 and 6**.

In September we have a volunteer organised event at Forge Mill Needle Museum as part of the National Heritage Open Days. This has a wide range of support from local organisations and is always well attended. The event involves many members of the History Society as organisers, guides, exhibitors and volunteers in the shop/cafe. The event is free and more details can be found on **page 2**.

Take care and stay safe

Anthony Green, Society Secretary e-mail: anthony.green@rhs2020.org.uk Tel: 01527 61434

**Our next Meeting is on Monday 12th September at 2.00 pm and is
'Mr Mitchell's quite wonderful Wall' by Michael Loftus.**

Our Next Meeting is on Monday 12th September and is 'Mr Mitchell's quite wonderful Wall: The Great Wall of Kidderminster' by Michael Loftus.

The Kidderminster Ring Road built in 1972/73 required a significant retaining wall to be constructed. William Mitchell was commissioned to design and cast a series of elaborate panels to decorate the wall.

The meeting will be, as always at the Oasis Christian Centre, 4 Plymouth Road, Redditch, B974QB

(location details <http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk/location.htm>).

Entry for Society members is free and there is a small charge £3 for non members. If joining on the day the £3 is refunded. There will be tea/coffee with biscuits (50p) after the meeting.



Coming up.....



Forge Mill Needle Museum



Heritage Open Day



Sunday 18th September 2022

On Sunday 18th September 2022 from 10.00am to 4.00pm we have our annual volunteer organised Heritage Open Day.

ADMISSION FREE

The event has steadily increased in terms of local groups and volunteers since we began, and we, the volunteers at the Museum, appreciate the continued support given by 'Rubicon Leisure' to our efforts in supporting our local museum.

Amongst the wide range of local activities which we will have are:

- A range of iconic motorbikes from the Royal Enfield owners Club
- Meticulously built model boats from the Little Radford Model Boat Club
- Live music from Indigo Arts, our local community charity supporting young people.
- Display from AIR (Arts in Redditch), a charitable organisation promoting and supporting arts.
- A display by the Redditch History Society/Friends of Forge Mill Museum in the meeting room.
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust will be promoting wildlife in Worcestershire.
- Free entry to 'FOUND' an exhibition by Art Textiles: Made in Britain in the Museum gallery
- Free entry into the museum - the only existing water powered scouring mill.
- Tours by experienced volunteer guides of the Needle Museum and the Bordesley Abbey Ruins.
- Access to the children's play area.
- Activities for children.
- Refreshments and light lunches will be available from the Mill View Coffee Bar

Heritage Open Days celebrates England's fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to places that normally have an admission charge. Our event has steadily increased in support from local groups since we began, and we, the volunteers at the Museum, appreciate the continued support given by 'Rubicon Leisure Redditch' to our efforts.

Report on August presentation 'The re-creation of the gardens at Hanbury Hall' by the Head Gardener Neil Cook

The August presentation was 'The re-creation of the gardens at Hanbury Hall' by the Head Gardener Neil Cook. Neil has been the Head Gardener (official title Gardens and Park Manager) at Hanbury Hall (National Trust) since 1988.

In his talk Neil took us on a journey through the re-creation of the gardens from 1993 to today.

He also included snippets of the Vernon family's history at Hanbury Hall and the Park surrounding it and concluded with a quick trip over to a property in Holland.

However, in this meeting report I will concentrate on the gardens.

All the images I have used are 'screen grabs' from a recent National Trust YouTube video which you can find at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4VSjH6jWCw&t=14s>



Hanbury Hall was the home of the Vernon family and was built by the wealthy chancery lawyer Thomas Vernon.

Importantly the house and gardens were built at the same time and reflected the elegant fashion of the time.

The property has been in the care of the National Trust since 1950.

The main house is in the Queen Anne style, and has two storeys plus an attic. It has red Flemish bond ashlar brickwork, with a tiled hipped roof, and large brick chimney stacks.

The original gardens were designed in 1705 by George London. He was the most celebrated garden designer of his time creating gardens for royalty and nobility at Chatsworth, Hampton Court and Kensington Palace.

George London's plans of the garden were a very detailed view of the garden around 1730.

The planting style of the day was all about control and order. Nothing should be as of nature and plants and hedges were planted to provide a rhythmic pattern.

George London and his partner Henry Wise designed hundreds of gardens throughout the country but there are few restored today.

So, Hanbury is a very unique example of the period.

So, the trust set out to restore the garden as best they could.



Report on August Presentation cont.....

As the Landscape movement gained momentum through the mid-1700s, formal parterres and closely trimmed topiary gave way to more relaxed, Brownian landscapes. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the gardens at Hanbury were also swept away, replaced with wide open spaces and uninterrupted views. They remained as such for the next 200 years.

In 1993, thanks to a bequest Neil, and his team, started work on the sunken parterre, the fruit garden and the wilderness. Subsequently they went onto the vegetable garden, the grove, the bowling green with other bequests as time went on.

With the plans they had of the garden and the documentation for the garden, they had to do some archaeology to see if the plans were ever actually carried out. They looked below the ground and dug about 14 trenches because everything you could see at that time was just lawn, there were no features to see. They found enough to show that the gardens had been there and the plans were accurate.

Neil worked with a team of experts to determine the layout of the topiary and hedge framework that made up the stunning structure of the Great Garden. Historic planting guides were also used to select appropriate plants to fill the parterre and surrounding borders with colour and scent throughout the seasons.

On 28th July 1995, the gardens were officially opened and since then, the gardening team at Hanbury have lovingly and patiently maintained this recreated historic gem.

Hanbury's garden is now one of just three of its kind in the country.

This is just a brief overview of the presentation. Neil was a personable and amusing presenter and his discourse was appreciated by the audience.

An excellent presentation.



Tracing my Roots from Redditch and Beyond (Part 1) by Becky Smith



Charles Henry Crow



*Doris Crow before she left
for the college*

When I was a small child, I thought everyone in Redditch lived in a palace.

My Redditch born grandmother sounded just like the Queen.

On his birthday, when I spoke with my great grandfather on the telephone, he also sounded very regal.

She told lovely stories of her youth in Redditch.

(By the way, when I finally visited Redditch as a teenager, I found the house was "terraced" just like Boston townhouses or "row" houses.)

My grandmother, Doris Crow, was born in Redditch in 1900; the daughter of Charles Henry Crow and Isabel Parker both born in Redditch as were their parents. I can trace the Crow and Parker families back to the 1500s in Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

Doris was very young when her mother died. When she was a teenager, her father remarried. To put it mildly, the relationship with her new stepmother was not a happy one. Fortunately, she had an aunt, May Parker Lolley, who with her husband, Albert Lolley, had emigrated to Amherst, Massachusetts.

The family agreed it was a good idea to send the teenage Doris to the US to attend college. At college, she met a WWI veteran on a college scholarship, married him and stayed.

It was a true love match. My grandfather, Herbert William McCave, was a quiet man with an accent that the family identified as Scottish. Aunt May stood in for Charles at the wedding and her daughter, Ethel, was my grandmother's bridesmaid. A proper gentleman, Herbert had written to Charles for permission to marry his daughter.

My grandmother was a "hoot"; smart, talented and with a great but very dry sense of humor. She referred to the Revolutionary War as the War with the Colonies. When I was an undergraduate in college, I wrote a history thesis on the War of the Roses and asked Doris which side was the family aligned. I was kidding. She looked straight at me as said that of 'course, we were with the House of Lancaster'.

She taught me how to bake: Yorkshire pudding, scones and Christmas pudding.

Tracing my Roots from Redditch and Beyond cont....



C H Crow Dressed for the annual Redditch event



Grandmothers favourite aunt, Florence Crow Greenhill and husband George in Redditch

(After all the parents and grandparents had passed, my sister and I started working with Ancestry. She was a systems analyst in Silicon Valley and a great researcher. Advise: when you start working on your family tree you may find surprises and mysteries that need to be solved.)

The first major thing she found was that our grandfather wasn't Scottish.

He was born in Rugby in England and became a British Home Child after his mother died. He was illegitimate.

An orphanage put him on a ship and sent him to live with a family in New Brunswick, Canada.

Thank Heavens he was with a really nice family who encouraged his education.

While studying in Maine, WWI broke out and he joined the US Army and fought in Germany.

After the war he went to college in Amherst.

There were no records of the names of his mother or father.

(The subject of British Home Children is a long, sad one. There are still lawsuits pending in Britain, Canada and Australia. Families were split up and in Canada it was found that a brother and sister married as they had no idea of their parentage. There was so much child physical and sexual abuse. I was so glad to know that my grandfather was with a very nice family.)

Another mystery we found.

Our third great grandfather, William Crow, was the son of Eliza Crow. But who was the dad?

After my sister passed away in 2014 of cancer, I put the Ancestry work away. A year later I started again determined to solve some of the family mysteries.

DNA was the next step.

Not a surprise that I am 72 percent Scottish and English; 21 percent Irish and 7 percent Danish and Swedish.

My maternal side was English, Scottish, Danish and a smidge of Irish.

But 21 percent Irish meant that my paternal grandfather's mother was probably Irish.

Becky's story is continued in next Newsletter.....

Don Vincent 1935 - 2022

I was asked to say a few words about Don at his woodland burial, and this is the result. Don was a good colleague and friend and he will be missed by many.

Anthony Green.

Don's death was a shock.

He was chairing the History Society meeting only 2 weeks before and he did a group tour at Forge Mill after that.

Last time I saw him he was telling me that he had obtained additional information from Jo-Ann at Forge Mill on the Abbey Gateway Chapel and so he had started again from scratch preparing his talk for the History Society in November.

He was also producing a short article for me for the August History Society Newsletter.

It was this latter item that alerted me to the situation, as I had e-mailed him a couple of times and had no reply.

So, I looked on his Facebook page to see if he was still active and I found the sad news from Lorraine.

Social Media is often criticised, but it does have its uses.

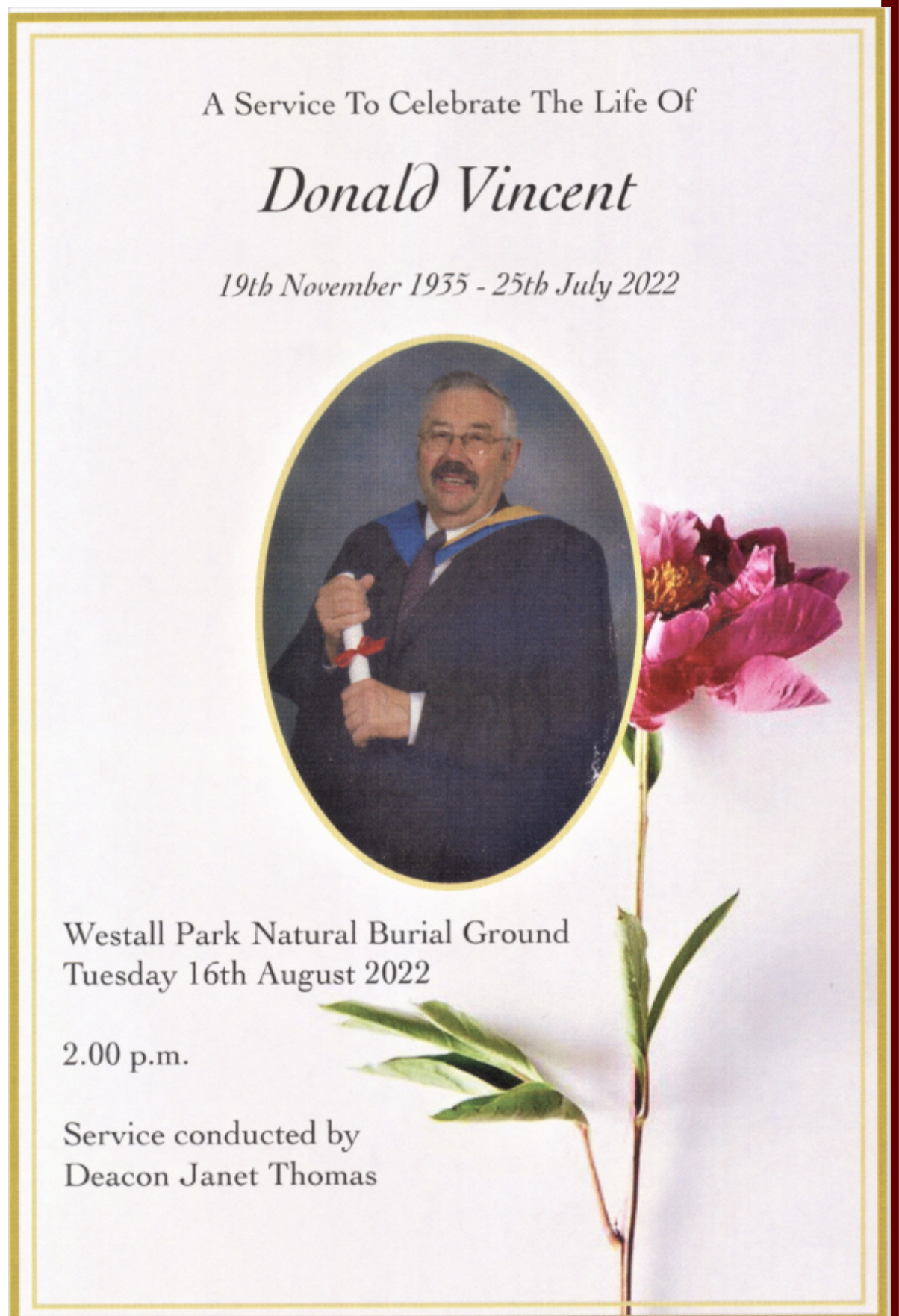
I first met Don 15 years ago when I volunteered at Forge Mill Needle Museum. He was already a volunteer there. He was then seventy-one and I was sixty-four.

As most volunteers are female, Don and I naturally gravitated together, and we became colleagues and friends.

Don had an amazing knowledge of local history, particularly needles and Bordesley Abbey.

He had carried out a lot of research into the needle industry in Redditch, and he did a thesis 'The Needle making industry of Warwickshire/Worcestershire in the Nineteen Century' for his external MA at Birmingham University in 1997.

This was how Jo-Ann met him as he went to the Forge Mill to access their archives and it was the beginning of his long association with the museum.



Don Vincent cont....

However, in later times, his interest moved to Bordesley Abbey and Abbeys in general. He often used to tell me how he had made a visit with 'our kid' (his cousin) to local, or not so local, Abbey ruins.

You could always rely on information supplied by Don; he was a serious historian. He was Chairman of the Open University History Society, and he wrote a monthly Chairman's report in their Newsletter.

In the volunteers meeting, Don and I had a standing joke concerning activities. If any involved children, we always said 'we don't do kids'. However, Don was very good with children.

We always did the gate together for events – collecting money, giving out stickers, leaflets etc, and he was great with children.

It was good fun with Don on the gate. We had a good laugh and a joke with visitors. I was always surprised how many people Don knew from the past, some he hadn't seen for years.

Don was very kind hearted and we sometimes made, what Don called 'executive decisions' at the gate.

For example, a young mother with a child might arrive simply to use the play area (which was normally free) and, it was obvious that she could not afford to pay to go into the event. So, we used to just wave them through. As Don always said – we're volunteers, they can't sack us – as if they would!

Anyway you can't buy good will.

When we formed the Redditch History Society in 2009, Don was one of the original members. Initially he was not a regular, as he had many other activities.

However, in later years he became an important part of the group, often giving talks, and in more recent years he was the Society Chairman.

He was a mainstay at Forge Mill being one of the principal guides for Mill tours and Abbey tours. In fact, Don and I were the only volunteer guides to do Abbey tours.

When Don and I shared a large group split into two, when we passed, he always used to shout out 'my group's better than yours'. It always got a laugh and that what it is all about.

Don was both a colleague and a friend. He will be missed by many.

Personally, I am gratified that he went the way that he did. He was fit, for his age, right up to the end and he enjoyed what he was doing. He would have hated to have lingered.

Rest in Peace, Don. We're going to miss you.

Anthony Green 16th August 2022

