

April 2023 - Annual General Meeting

Hi All,

We had a successful Annual General Meeting' (AGM) with an attendance of 38 including 2 visitors who joined. Members have until the June meeting to update their membership without having to complete a new membership form.

We had two apologies from members who were unable to attend.

The elections were followed by three short films related to Redditch History. These were quite diverse and included a short film of Queen Elizabeth II visit to Redditch to open Forge Mill Needle Museum 40 years ago. The films were appreciated by the audience and, so, the search goes on to maintain this standard for the 2024 April AGM..

We followed the film with membership renewals and refreshments were also available.

For our next meeting, and the rest of the year, we will be returning to the main Church hall for our meetings as our membership and numbers now justify this change.

On the remaining pages of the Newsletter, we have:

On page two is the 'Coming Events' section.

Our next Meeting is on Monday 15th May 2023 and is a presentation 'Winterbourne House and Garden, Edgbaston: General introduction and history.' given by Henrietta Lockhart, Curator (Museum Collections)

Also on page two there is an important announcement concerning our August meeting. Due to circumstance beyond our control, we are moving this to December.

Pages three, four, five and six have the report of the Annual General meeting.

Pages three and four are the officers reports

Page five has a copy of the accounts.

Page six has the results of the elections and results of the special resolution.

On page seven and eight,

Graham Smith has produced the third, and final part, of a series of three articles inspired by the BBC television series by David Olusoga 'A House Through Time'. In this final part Graham concludes his story of Webb house.

Next Meeting...

Our next Meeting is on Monday 15th May 2023 and is a presentation 'Winterbourne House and Garden, Edgbaston: General introduction and history.' given by Henrietta Lockhart, Curator (Museum Collections). There is more on this presentation on Page 2.

The meeting will be, as always at the Oasis Christian Centre starting at 2.00 pm.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

E-mail: tony.rhs@btinternet.com Tel: 01527 61434

Coming up.....

Next Meeting Monday 15th May 2023

Winterbourne House and Garden, Edgbaston: General introduction and history. Presentation by Henrietta Lockhart, Curator (Museum Collections)

Winterbourne is a rare surviving example of an early 20th century suburban villa and garden. The house was built in 1903 for John and Margaret Nettlefold, of Guest, Keen & Nettlefold.

Nettlefold was a pioneer of town planning who carried the ideas seen in his own home to the less wealthy areas of the city.

Originally designed as a small country estate with rustic outbuildings and large gardens, Winterbourne followed the style of the Arts and Crafts movement with examples of local craftsmanship throughout the house.

Margaret Nettlefold designed the garden, inspired by the books and garden designs of Gertrude Jekyll. After a period of restoration, the garden was Grade II listed by English Heritage in 2008.

John MacDonald Nicolson was the last private owner of the house and a keen gardener. He developed many new areas, including a scree garden and small alpine features around the garden.

Nicolson died in 1944 and bequeathed the house and garden to the University. The garden became the University's Botanic Garden and new areas for teaching and plant conservation were developed within the historic layout.

The garden today is still used by students but is also open to the public to be enjoyed by everyone.

Text and image taken from <https://www.winterbourne.org.uk/>



Important advance warning....

*****Change of Date for our August Meeting*****

This year, the Oasis Christian Centre is having a major electrical upgrade, when they change to a 3-phase supply. The electrical supplier have notified them that this will take place in August this year, but cannot say exactly when in August it will take place, or how long it will take.

As a result Oasis cannot guarantee that the venue will be available for our August date.

We have therefore decided that we will move our August meeting to December and Oasis have made some changes to allow us to have our second Monday of the month slot in December. Our speaker, William (Bill) Macham, has kindly agreed to move to the December slot and will be giving his talk 'From Brum to Bringsty Common - tales of a Wartime Childhood' on Monday 11th December.

The leaflets are being replaced and the website details has changed to reflect this.

<http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk/meetings.htm>

Annual General Meeting Report

Executive Reports

Chair's Report

Following the sad death of our previous Chairman, Don Vincent, I present this report to you for the 2022 year of activities. Don was a very active member of the Society for many years and his wit and knowledge are missed by all.

We carried out a full programme of meetings.

In June we held a very enjoyable presentation from Pat Witherspoon on the 'Wag Lady'. This was her last presentation to the Society, as sadly she died last month. She will be missed by many in the Society, as she was a big supporter of our local history.

In November Tony Green provided the talk on the Gatehouse Chapel at Bordesley Abbey, using material which Don had been planning to use. This provided a fitting tribute to Don and his knowledge of the Abbey.

Sadly our speaker Ron Gallivan was indisposed last December and I am pleased to report that Graham Smith stepped in at short notice to provide a seasonal presentation. It is hoped that we can get Ron back in the future to present his lecture.

At a recent Committee meeting we have been discussing the viable future of the Society and this will be discussed in more detail at the AGM.

I would like to thank all the members of the Committee for their valuable contributions to the Society. I would particularly like to thank our Hon. Secretary for all his hard work as he is the beating heart of the Society.

Our Hon. Treasurer has been regularly updating us on our financial position, which keeps us on track.

I would also like to thank our new Speaker Organiser, who is providing us with some very interesting speakers, on a wide range of topics.

Elizabeth Simpson

Chair, Redditch History Society.

Secretary's Report

After all the problems in previous years, we began last year with some trepidation. We had quite a slow start and so we agreed at the AGM for 2022 to reduce our meetings to ten per year, February to November, and to move into the Reeves room which was more suitable for our smaller audiences.

The Oasis Christian Centre had had to increase their charges due to much higher energy costs and they offered us the Reeves room on particularly good terms.

This is a good venue for us, it is convenient for many members, and the overhead monitors give a good visual presentation which can be seen by everyone.

However, this year has shown an increase in numbers, and we need to return to the main hall. This will, obviously have a cost increase.

We have put forward a proposal, we hope you will support which will ensure the future of the Society.

Internet:

Visitor numbers to our website www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk typically has about six hundred visitors a month.

60 to 90 of these were to the newsletter download. About 25% were from the UK, 35% from the USA and about 20% from Germany! On a continent basis Europe and North America make up 95% of our traffic.

Our Redditch History Society Facebook page has 1,800 followers, post interest varies from a few hundred to a few thousand. Our most recent Newsletter post reached 240 visitors.

Continued over.....

Annual General Meeting Report

Secretary's Report..... continued

I was delighted that Pat Bushaway offered to take on this difficult role and I think that we can agree that this year's programme has a wide range of speakers.

Pat has also done an excellent job in producing press releases for the local press. It is good news that Pat is happy to continue in this role. I know how much 'behind the scenes' work is necessary for this.

I cannot finish my 2022 discourse without mentioning our Chairman Don Vincent. Don was one of the original members of the Society when it formed in 2009 and was a fellow volunteer at Forge Mill Needle Museum.

He gave a number of professionally researched presentations talks at the Society. He is sadly missed.

However, I am delighted that Elizabeth, despite her other commitments, has agreed to continue in the role of 'Chair.'

We cannot dwell in the past and our plans should ensure the successful continuation of our Society in providing a venue, at a reasonable cost, for those interested in the history of the area.

Please support our proposal.

Anthony Green

Secretary, Redditch History Society.

Treasurer's Report

(to be read in conjunction with the account sheet)

2022 was the year we began to get back to normal. We had a full programme of speakers over eleven months. Our membership increased to 58 from 49 in 2021 when subscriptions had been reduced to £10 because of the shorter year. Half price membership proved popular with 14 joining this way.

Our income from subscriptions was £765.00. 61 visitors over the year brought in an additional £183 and the profit from refreshments was £59.00 This gave a total income of £1007.00.

Our largest expenditure is on room hire. In 2022 this was £711.00. A further £186.00 was spent on speakers. Subscriptions to the Worcestershire Local History Forum and the British Association for Local History cost a further £85.00.

The former provides us with information about events and other history societies in the County as well as a useful list of available speakers. The latter provides regular history periodicals and insurance for our meetings.

Our total expenditure was £982.00 giving a surplus for the year of £25.00.

The bank balance on 1st January 2022 was £1197.47 and on 31st December it was £1222.47. Adding in the petty cash the Society had total funds of £1265.57 by the end of the year.

I have recommended to the Executive an increase in subscriptions in 2024. This is largely to cover any increase in room hire costs and especially the cost of speakers.

The latter have risen substantially and we are ever more dependent on outside speakers.

I am indebted to Gilbert Barlow who was again happy to be our accounts examiner.

A copy of the Income and Expenditure Accounts to December 2022 is given on page 5.

Graham Smith

Treasurer, Redditch History Society

Annual General Meeting Report

Income and Expenditure to December 2022

REDDITCH HISTORY SOCIETY
Income and Expenditure Account
For the year ended 31st December 2022

2021 £	INCOME	2022 £	2021 £	EXPENDITURE	2022 £
490.00 (£10.00pa)	Full Membership (44) @ £15.00	660.00	63.00 One month	Room hire: £315 + £396	711.00
-	Half Price Membership (14) @ £7.50	105.00	-	Payment to Speakers	186.00
57.00	Visitors to meetings (61):	183.00		<u>SUBSCRIPTIONS:</u>	
-	Refreshments	59.00	10.00	WLHF	10.00
			75.00	British Association for Local History	75.00
					(982)
			399.00	Deficit/ SURPLUS of Income over Expenditure	25.00
547.00		1007.00	547.00		1007.00

2021 £	Balance Sheet as at 31 st December	2022 £	
798.47	Bank at 1 st January	1197.47	<p>I have examined the Account Book, receipts, bank statements and vouchers presented to me by the Treasurer.</p> <p>I confirm that in my opinion these accounts show a true and fair view of the income and expenditure of the Society for the year ended 31 December 2022.</p> <p><i>S. R. T. Barton</i> 05.02.2023 Accounts Examiner Date</p>
399.00	Deficit/ SURPLUS end of year	25.00	
1197.47	Balance c/fwd at 31 st December	1222.47	
1197.47	Represented by: Bank Account at 31 st Dec.	1222.47	
37.88	Plus Petty Cash	43.10	
235.35	TOTAL SOCIETY FUNDS	1265.57	

Annual General Meeting Report

Election Results

Election of Officers:

Executive Posts

Chairman -Elizabeth Simpson was re-elected unopposed.

Secretary - Anthony Green re-elected unopposed

Treasurer - Graham Smith re-elected unopposed

Non-executive posts:

Newsletter Editor - Anthony Green re-elected unopposed.

Speaker Organiser – Pat Bushaway re-elected unopposed.

Website Administrator/Social Media - Anthony Green re-elected unopposed.

Refreshments Organiser - Graham Smith re-elected unopposed. Graham is looking for volunteers to support this activity.

Management Committee

The Management Committee consists of the 3 executive members, Chairman Elizabeth Simpson, Secretary Anthony Green and Treasurer Graham Smith plus non-executive posts, Speaker Organiser Pat Bushaway, and additional elected members .

The current member representatives Dave Spyer and Sue Tatlow were re-elected unopposed.

This brings the Management Committee to six members.

(Note that there is no limit to the size of the Management Committee, so if anyone wishes to be involved please let us know)

Accounts Examiner:

Gil Barlow was re-elected unopposed.

Executive Committee Resolution

Increase Membership and Entry Fees from 2024

The Executive Committee at their meeting on Monday 27th March 2023 had a discussion on ensuring that the Society continues to be financially viable and decided to propose the following resolution.

The Society needs to move back into the main hall due to meeting numbers and we need to increase the number of outside (paid) speakers. Due to energy costs the cost of the main hall has increased, although it is still good value for the location and size, and outside speakers are increasing in cost.

We propose, therefore, that we should increase our annual membership subscription to £20, from April 2024, (which works out at £2 per meeting), and the cost for visitors to £4, from our first meeting in 2024 (February).

This proposal was passed unanimously by the meeting.

A House Through Time

A Series of three articles by Graham Smith

Part 3 : The Webbs

1887 was a momentous year. Queen Victoria had been on the throne for 50 years and on Midsummer Day, 21st June, the country was set to celebrate. In Redditch the day started with a thanksgiving service in St. Stephens with the choir leading the singing of God Save the Queen. Afterwards the town band played on the Green which was thronged with excited people. At 1pm 500 of the most aged and poorest were entertained with a feast in the Fox and Goose and Drill Hall. The afternoon saw a procession of 3,500 school children march around the Green, all wearing the medal specially created for the occasion. This was the biggest celebration the Green had ever seen.

That same day William Webb and his family were moving into their new home and business premises at No 17 Church Green East. William had forged a successful bakery and confectionary business with his father - who had died ten years previously - in Evesham Street and when he saw the opportunity to rent this new building he jumped at it. William(46) and his wife, Sarah (34), had four children and they needed more living space. The property had come onto the market following the death of Benjamin Sarsons. William had advertised in the Indicator that the business was moving so that all his customers would know of the change.



William and Sarah Webb

NOTICE OF REMOVAL.
—
WILLIAM WEBB
begs respectfully to inform his customers and the public generally, that the Business carried on by him for the
LAST FOURTEEN YEARS at
NO. 33, EVESHAM STREET,
REDDITCH,
Under the style of WOODMAN & WEBB, will be
REMOVED AT MIDSUMMER, to
CHURCH GREEN EAST.
The Residence of the late
MR. BENJAMIN SARSONS. 554

(Source: www.webbsredditch.co.uk)

There would have been all sorts of plans for the expansion of the business and the children would have been very excited in their new home. But, barely two weeks later, tragedy struck. On 2nd July William took his own life. It was the servant who found him in the bedroom with a shotgun besides him. This would have been a huge shock for Sarah and the children.

Sarah was still struggling after the loss of their two year old daughter, Emily Gertrude, in May. The town was also shocked by this news as William was well respected by the business community. The inquest reported that William had committed suicide 'while in an unsound state of mind'. He had suffered from neuralgia and had 'been in the hayfield in the sun a good deal and that morning had complained of the heat and severe pains in his head.'

Suicide was against the law in the nineteenth century and remained so till the law changed in 1961. A few weeks before William committed suicide a previous occupant of No. 17, William Palmer, had also committed suicide after committal to the asylum in Rubery. Those who committed 'self-murder', as it was called, could be refused a Christian burial. But, if it was declared that the deceased was mentally ill, they could be pardoned and receive the burial their family wanted.

It was clear that Sarah and the children would have to leave number 17. They eventually moved into a house in Mount Pleasant and Sarah's mother joined them to help with the children. William's older brother, Thomas Edward (50), and his wife, Catharine (35), decided to return to Redditch to take over the business. They had left Redditch in about 1877 to live in London and later moved to Aldershot but now saw the possibility of continuing an already successful business in Redditch.

The move was made in 1887/8 but there still seems to be a period where they were still not quite settled back in Redditch.

A House Through Time Part 3 cont.....



By 1890 the move was complete and the business up and running. The house in the 1890s would have been a busy and noisy place as there were now seven children living there.

The Webbs worked hard to develop and expand a business that became one of the best in the town. Catharine took an active part in running the business and earned a reputation as a formidable woman.

They owned fields around Easemore and she once threatened to run an employee through with a pitchfork if he did not call one of their sons 'Master'.

Left: Catharine Webb in the garden at no 20

(Source: www.webbsredditch.co.uk)

Things did not always go according to plan. A local paper

reported in 1910 that Catharine had been fined 10 shillings for moving two pigs from Redditch to Ipsley without a license.

It is not clear if the pigs were kept at number 20 (as it was by then) or in an Easemore field. In 1911 Catharine was advertising the sale of the pig store maybe as a result of the fine.

Thomas died in 1917 and Catharine was a widow till her death in 1948.

During the first half of the twentieth century the business flourished, with Thomas and Catharine's eldest son, Ernest Edward, helping to run the business, and their eldest daughter, Clara, managing the shop.



No 20 in the early twentieth century

In 1913 one of the first Model T Fords to be seen in the town was a T. E. Webb and Son's vehicle, and by 1959 the firm had a fleet of 13 vans covering over 3000 miles each week. Ernest continued to manage the business until his death in 1960.

After 1956 there were no Webbs living at the premises, and with the advent of supermarkets selling mass produced bread, the business had to change. The business had always sold corn, meal and seed to the local farmers but by the 1960s this took on more importance and eventually garden equipment and pet supplies were also sold.



In 1988 Bullivant Enterprises bought the property and began to restore the interior. This was 100 years after William Webb had first leased the property from the heir of Benjamin Sarsons. Today it is the home of the Redditch Standard.

The history of the residents of Webb House is not just about them but of all the people in Redditch they interacted with.

It is about all the changes that happened over the last 250 years: changes in work practices, physical changes in the town with new houses and roads, and changes in the shopping habits of the town's people. It is to be hoped that Webb House will continue to fulfil a useful purpose for many years to come.

This painting was commissioned by descendants of the Webb family when the property was sold to the Bullivant family. It was painted by local artist RJ Sarchet and is now in the Hive in Worcester. Courtesy of Rosemary Fisher.

Much of the material for this article has been taken from the excellent website created by Rosemary Fisher, who has spent many years researching her family's history. Rosemary is the great granddaughter of Thomas and Catharine Webb. For further information about the history of the Webb family please see the website: www.webbsredditch.co.uk