

LOCAL HISTORY 2014

JANUARY 2014

This month we caught up with research. Members have been busy on a range of topics. We received feedback on the history of Park House in Carlton, the experiences of a Netherfield head teacher during the early 1900's, and an account of Sandford Tatham Davison, a highly regarded local surgeon of the early to mid-1800's, including reports of the murder trial in which he was an expert witness. Buried along with other family members in the old Carlton cemetery, research began with the information on his gravestone and from there many details of his life and that of his descendants were discovered. Many thanks to Maureen for bringing us his fascinating story.

Others have been looking into World War One. Anecdotes and photographs of family members in uniform were shared. We also heard about local Nottingham heroes. Additionally it was pointed out that often the emphasis tends to be placed on the horrors of trench warfare on the Western Front. While it is true that four-fifths of losses occurred there, we must also remember that the theatre of war extended to Turkey, Africa and beyond and that battles were also fought at sea and in the air. Many, many volunteers were also involved and the war changed British life for ever, not least because of the roles played by women.

If you have any tales you would like to share about your family's involvement in the Great War, we would love to hear about them and to see any photos you might have. We would also like to add any stories to the website to help us to celebrate their contribution.

If you are interested in finding out more about the war, check out the BBC coverage and their dedicated web pages bbc.co.uk/ww1. Locally there will be many events and activities: trent-to-trenches.co.uk gives a full list along with information and photographs.

FEBRUARY 2014

Another interesting session with a range of topics. Some studied old local maps and we discussed changes to the area. Due to our current emphasis on events related to World War 1 we looked at some maps of the area dated 1914. At that time Gedling was still a rural agricultural area with farms and orchards although Gedling station was starting to carry commuters into the city.

Netherfield of course was already a busy railway town and Carlton was also developing rapidly. Members brought along information to share about local involvement in the war and we found additional resources in the library. One member even discovered a record of the names of family members killed in the Zeppelin raid of 1916.

Some of us had also visited the extensive 'Trent to Trenches' exhibition at Arnold Library, which had a large collection of photos and family histories of service personnel, nurses and volunteers. There was an extract from a local newspaper dated July 1915 which recorded an inspection of the local Voluntary Aid Detachments at Willow Farm in Gedling. Apparently the farm acted as one of thousands of small, temporary, privately run field hospitals during the war, staffed by volunteers. Wounded soldiers were transported from Arnold Station.

On arrival, the Gedling Church Scouts helped with the personating (what a wonderful old word - means stretcher bearing) of the wounded. We can only imagine how harrowing this must have been for the young scouts - a horrendous introduction to the war. Incidentally, hospital trains arrived at night, so that the general public would not see injured soldiers! If anyone has any further information about the Willow Farm hospital, please let us know.

MARCH 2014

At the last meeting we caught up with various aspects of research that members have conducted. Topics included the history of Park House and further research into the history of people who were buried in the old Carlton cemetery.

One thing always leads to another, so the mention of Park House led to a discussion of health treatments prior to the widespread use of antibiotics. For instance, many children used to die from Scarlet Fever. Isolation hospitals existed but children were often nursed at home. We were told that they would be screened off from other family members by sheets resting in containers filled with disinfectant. I wonder how effective these seemingly primitive methods were? - Particularly as we are now seeing further outbreaks of the disease.

We continue to look into how the Great War affected the area and members shared family stories and memorabilia. We are collecting this information and will be adding it to the website for all to share. Please let us know if you have any information, photos or stories to include in our commemorations. We are also working with a local contact from the Sherwood Yeomanry on their World War II project and hope to support both their exhibitions and one organised by the library. So your contributions are much sought after!

APRIL 2014

During the session we compared notes on current research. Continuing the WW1 theme, some of us attended the event at Carlton Central Junior School. Pupils in WW1 uniforms sowed poppy seeds and a very interesting display of photos, maps, artefacts and memorabilia was organised by Martin from the Sherwood Yeomanry, who looked resplendent in his authentic (& apparently very itchy) infantry uniform. The event was filmed so hopefully some of you saw the local TV news footage. This was part of a number of commemorative events being held in the borough. Brochures are available in libraries, etc or see www.gedling.gov.uk/wwone.

The session continued with us looking at maps of the area in 1914 to see how things have changed. Netherfield had of course developed rapidly as a railway town and there was a fair amount of development around St Paul's Church in Carlton. But Gedling was still fairly rural, although the railway had sparked some development as commuters began to settle in the area. How very different life was in these 3 very distinct communities 100 years ago!

JUNE 2014: WATSON FOTHERGILL WALK

The first of our summer walks took us around the City Centre to look at some of Watson Fothergill's buildings. After our discovery of the former laundry he designed in Carlton, we wanted to find out more. A local man, he was an extremely successful Victorian architect with a flamboyant style, which once you recognise, you will soon spot throughout the city.

Incorporating a mixture of Gothic and Old English styles, he used red brick and black timbering, often relieved with horizontal bands of blue/black brickwork. Towers, turrets, tall chimneys, pinnacles and elaborate carvings of foliage, fruit and mythical beasts adorn his more important buildings.

As we walked we compared these to the plainer, more functional style of the warehouses he designed in the Lace Market. Sadly, though, some of his iconic buildings have been demolished, including the Black Boy Hotel, which some of us will remember.

There is a dedicated page of photos and descriptions, along with some background information on the man himself, so click on the link to see more details, especially some of the carvings, including a grumpy Queen Victoria and a couple of "mortgage monkeys".

[Local History Trail: Watson Fothergill](#)

We took our inspiration for the walk from the Nottingham Civic Society book written by Ken Brand, which gives information on many more Watson Fothergill buildings. There is also a dedicated website (watsonfothergill.co.uk).

Many thanks to Barbara for the research and support regarding the walk.

AUGUST 2014: LACE MARKET WALK

Our latest walk took us through the Lace Market. Now a conservation area, this was once the site of the old Saxon town. Later, in the 1700's, the area was known as 'Garden City', where the gentry, including prosperous wool merchants, owned elegant houses with formal gardens. As the wool trade gave way first to the hosiery industry and then to lace, these disappeared or were converted, and the huge lace warehouses sprang up.

Traces of the different eras can be found - the spot outside Shire Hall, now the Galleries of Justice, where public executions were held; the old St. Mary's burial ground where 'grave clubs' were formed to protect against body snatchers; the magnificent Adams building and Broadway. If you would like to follow in our footsteps and learn more about the area's fascinating history, you can see all the details by following the link:

[Local History Trail: The Lace Market](#)

Two other new pages cover the research that Maureen has been conducting into family histories of local people buried in the old Carlton cemetery and of those who gave their lives during the Great War. We will be looking at these family histories at our next meeting, as they give a snapshot of life in Carlton at that time.

SEPTEMBER 2014

After our summer walks we have returned to Carlton Library for our meetings. This time we welcomed several new members, a couple of whom had joined us for the walks. After a general re-introduction and recap, Graeme brought us up to date on the information he has placed on the website.

We then explored a variety of topics. Christine told us about Harold Cottam from Lowdham, radio operator on S.S. Carpathia. He was in contact with the Titanic as it was sinking and therefore enabled the ship to race to the scene and rescue over 700 survivors. We also discussed the cave network under Nottingham. Apparently these are interlinked and you can walk through them for a fair distance, as a couple of members who have explored them can testify! We then looked at Maureen's research into the families of WW1 casualties remembered on the memorial at St Paul's Church. Census data gives us a glimpse of Carlton life at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thank you to all who contributed information, photos, even property deeds, that help us to learn more about our history.

OCTOBER 2014

We welcomed some new members and discussed the remit of the group. Currently the overarching theme is the Great War, with specific reference to our area. Several of us have visited various local exhibitions. Graeme has provided links to some of these, you will find them on the group pages. If you have any information, photos, etc. concerning family members, please let us know so that we can add them to our website to honour their memory. We would like to remember not only those who gave their lives, but also those who survived the war, and those who supported the war effort on the home front.

Today we were told the story of "Woodbine Willy", the Rev Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy. Not a local man, born in Leeds, but nicknamed this because he gave out Woodbines as well as spiritual aid to injured and dying soldiers. At that time, of course, tobacco was believed to be good for your health... He was also a poet and was awarded the Military Cross for valour.

We then noted that The Railway Hotel, in Netherfield, known to locals as Jackie Bell's (the well-known landlord), has now been converted to flats. This seems to be happening to more and more of our local landmarks. However, hopefully some of our buildings can be preserved in this way.

Maureen also gave a short presentation about local surgeon Sandford Tatham Davison, commemorated on a gravestone in the old Carlton cemetery. He came from a very interesting family, numbering amongst its members local mill owners, various surgeons, an admiral and even a knight of the realm. Earlier references to him in the newsletter prompted a couple of readers to contact us with more information, which will be added to the website soon. An illustrious local family that no-one in the group had come across before. You never know what you'll find out when you join the local history group!

NOVEMBER 2014: WORLD WAR ONE AT HOME

This month we talked about WW1 at home and how it affected local people. We heard the family histories of two uncles who were killed 19 days apart at the Somme and some examples of the medals awarded to those who served were passed around.

Life was difficult for those at home. Women joined the workforce as local firms turned production to the war effort. Raleigh began to manufacture bespoke khaki cycles, Lewis gun magazines and pioneered a new kind of fuse. Boots had 900 women producing gas respirators and by 1915 a quarter of hosiery machinery was producing socks, underwear, pullovers, balaclavas and gloves. And, of course, 1000's of women were employed at the gun factory in the Meadows and on the Chilwell site, where in July 1918 a massive explosion killed 134 workers and injured 250. These women were nicknamed the "Canary Girls" because the chemicals used in the manufacturing process turned their skin yellow. Women also became nurses, land girls, drove ambulances and worked on the trams, the railway, the postal service and the police.

Raising a family alone was hard. There were food shortages and prices rose. Food rationing was introduced but public spaces were turned into allotments and everyone was encouraged to grow vegetables. Children often worked on the allotments, attending school part-time.

Meanwhile, bawdy music hall songs had to have some of their words changed and did you know that it became illegal to buy a drink for anyone except yourself in the pub? Apparently at the start of the war, Lloyd George was more worried about the problems of drunkenness than he was about Germany or Austria. Beer was watered down and prices went up (and never came down). By 1918 convictions for drunk and disorderly conduct fell dramatically, although how much of this may have been due to the millions away fighting?

What do you know about Burton Road Jubilee Park?

The Local History group is working with Gedling Borough Council to look into the social history of the park. The council is hoping to erect information boards on the site. The park was sold to the council by the Earl of Manvers in 1911 and has been used as a recreational ground since then.

Did you use the park when you were younger (perhaps you still do)? What was it like then? What sort of games or activities took place? Apparently there used to be a bandstand: the Railwayman's Band and the Lilac Dominoes performed, with shire horses pulling drays loaded with equipment.

So please search your memories, ask family members what they can remember and let us know, or come along to a meeting and tell us all about it. If you have any photos, etc. that we can copy for the information boards, all the better. Any information, from early days right up the present could be helpful.

DECEMBER 2014: CHRISTMAS PAST

Our theme this month was "Xmas Past". We explored the origins of Xmas from early Pagan traditions through the Roman festival of Saturnalia and via the medieval period and the Victorian age until the present day. Our "Santa Claus" is based on the early Christian bishop St. Nicholas, born in Turkey. Through the centuries St Nicholas (not actually made a saint until the nineteenth century) gradually gained legendary status. He 'moved' via Italy to Scandinavia adopting the pagan customs attached to the Norse god Woden, who flew through the heavens on a horse.

Nineteenth century writers added the elves, the North Pole, etc. and, of course, Coca Cola introduced the jolly, chubby, red-suited Santa we all recognise today. What is interesting is that, right from the earliest times, this winter festival has been associated with feasting, merriment, mischief-making and general mayhem. But also with gift-giving and generosity to those less fortunate than ourselves. Not so different from today then!

We couldn't recall any particular celebrations in our local area, for instance whether there has always been a tradition of Xmas trees or lights, can you? However, some remember the nativity scene in the market square in Nottingham city centre along with the Xmas tree, and particularly the Burton's Arcade decorations, a source of wonder to some of us as children.

We then turned our attention to exchanging information about the Burton Road Jubilee Park, or the "cricket ground" to most of us. Thanks to all for the facts gathered so far. We hope to find out more. We had a look at some old maps of the area but couldn't glean anything useful. The maps were fascinating and triggered more questions about our local history.

By the way, we have had an external enquiry about a possible visit by a Maharajah to Gedling Lodge with Edward VII. Anyone know anything about that?