

NOTES OF THE SHS MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: 21 SHS members, no guests.

Apologies: Ruth Oliver, Celia Baly, Anthony Bianco, Mel Dearing, Margaret Brown, Pam Baker, Liz Sykes, Adrian and Clare Clarke, Douglas and Yvonne Faulconbridge

Welcome: Sheila welcomed people to the meeting. She reported that Pam Baker had offered to add the extra cost of the 1921 Census to her own Find My Past subscription, and look out the records for us, so the kind offer of the Earlsdon History Group was turned down. Pam was also collaborating with Lisa to create an display to mark Charles III's Coronation. The current display, created last year for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee would remain, and Pam's "Coronation Christenings" smartened up.

Members were reminded that the March meeting would be the AGM. Reports would be circulated nearer the time, and but it was time for the re-election of the Committee and nomination forms needed to be submitted to Sheila by 7 March. Forms were available at the registration desk, and it was hoped that members would consider whether they could contribute to the SHS in this way. It was vital that there should be a new Secretary as Margaret felt she needed to retire due to ill health. She would be greatly missed.

Sheila then introduced **David Fry to speak on 'Coventry's Canal: a hidden history in plain sight'**

This lively talk was illustrated by numerous maps, postcards and sketches, some of which are included in publications by the Coventry Canal Society.

The peak canal-building in the UK was 1760-1850. First preparation for Coventry Canal was the demolition of Bishop Street Gate in 1761. Canal Offices were established at the top of Bishop Street c1910. Unlike many other straighter different types of traffic canals, development followed a circuitous route, as it was necessary to avoid several existing important industrial and other developments along a 38 mile stretch and had a huge impact on existing communities, notably along the Foleshill Road. (Before this, the old route into Coventry was along the Kingfield Road). Cash's Lane Bridge was widened in 1912 to take account of increasing types of traffic. Some of the remaining bridges were quite dangerous. Wherever canal crossings crossed main roads there were commercial opportunities – pubs, wharfs, boat yards, shops, industrial concerns such as Courtaulds. Canals were a brilliant way of transferring materials around the country; inevitably where was a lot of dumping of toxic waste.

Longford was an important area of development although it was quite complicated. Sydnall Road has not change much. Old photographs show that canalside provided allotments, there was an off licence, pub round the corner, a smithy and woodyard.

In 1802 Hawksbury Junction was linked with the Oxford Canal and locks were established, with pub, boatyard and canal workers cottages e.g. Tusses Bridge in 1907. (NB In 1976 Hawksbury Junction was made a conservation area).

Changes in 1850-1890

Fewer landowners were willing to sell or lease land to heavy goods makers. Regular supplies of coal and water were needed, but just outside the city centre so not as highly taxed. Brick and lime works, cotton mills (later motor mills) followed.

Later decline 1890-1950

Decline was unexpected but slow. A wide variety of engineering projects followed. The cotton mills site became home to the Daimler Motor Company. Cash's Factory, Nelson's depot for cement, Coventry Electricity Station, various-cycle and car factories.

The establishment of Ordnance Works in 1907 in the middle of the country. was somewhat of a surprise. There are photographs of a huge naval gun crossing Stoney Stanton Road by rail. Eventually the Works were bombed.

Canals were nationalised in 1948 but later became Canal Waterways, then the state-owned Canal and River Trust which was launched in 2012, taking over responsibility in. England Wales for canals, rivers, reservoirs and docks.

(A link to the Arts Trail for the Coventry Canal Society is below – thanks to Ian Harrop for forwarding.)

http://covcanalsoc.org.uk/?page_id=53

Following next month's AGM our talk will be on "Early Allotments in Warwickshire", given by Anne Langley.

MSW/1/03/23