



Newport Pagnell Historical Society

Registered Charity No. 801897
Chandos Hall, Silver Street, MK19 0EN
www.mkheritage.org.uk/nphs

NEWSLETTER JUN/JUL/AUG 2019

A Landscape History of Olney – Tuesday 7th April If you wander down the wide High Street of Olney you might be forgiven for thinking it was once a prosperous town which grew up in the Georgian period. It might have done, but that same High Street conceals a past stretching back to the Ice Age. Olney was mentioned in a Charter of 979AD as Ollenage, thought to mean Olla's Island due to the number of streams surrounding it, when Olney belonged to the Kingdom of Mercia before becoming part of the Danelaw. Olney does however have remains dating from Roman and Saxon times. Indeed, the High Street itself is believed to follow the line of a Roman road. It is also thought that the river developed a route here when the road was left unrepaired when the Romans left. Eventually a causeway was built and maintained by a charity leaving room at the side for a packhorse and man to walk. Hence the very wide street. Surrounding areas have produced many early Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age finds. Having developed through the Middle Ages with its open field system, and survived through the years of Enclosures Olney became a centre for lace making and in the 18th century was a stage post town as new turnpike roads developed. However, it was a relatively poor town until the development of the railways in the 1800s which gave rise to the growth of a Victorian housing development at the north end of the town. Shoe making had taken over from lace making by this time as the main means of employment. From a population of 2 -3,000 in the 1920's Olney has grown to a population of around 7,000 today. It is now a pleasant market town where many of its houses display a Georgian facade which welcomes its many visitors.

Thanks to Tom Jones for an interesting and informative talk enjoyed by a full house. **SD**

Royal and Dergate Theatres – Tuesday 16th April Richard Brailey, the archivist for the theatres, gave a very informative and entertaining talk on the development of the Royal and Dergate theatres in Northampton, from the beginning in 1884 to the present day. The Royal was the brainchild of Henry Martin, a businessman and hotelier, who hoped visitors to the theatre would also use his hotel. Nothing changes, as the original estimate was £4,500, of course the final figure was £10,000. The first show was 12th Night performed by the Thompson Travelling Company on 5th May 1884. Disaster struck in February 1887 when fire destroyed the stage, curtain mechanism, orchestra pit and some of the stalls. Amazingly, it only took 10 weeks to reopen. A Repertory Company began in January 1927, with a different production every week. A star in the making was in the Christmas pantomime in 1933, a Mr Errol Flynn, who played the prince. The story goes that there are still some outstanding bills!!! The Golden Jubilee in 1977 saw the design and construction of a new safety curtain, the designer was Henry Bird, the curtain finally installed in 1978. The safety curtain is a magnificent work of art, separate panels created and then attached to the metal curtain. The curtain is in need of restoration and people are busily fund raising to be able to do the repairs. In 1983 the Dergate opened, built by and around the Royal. There has been varied types of productions over the years, weddings and dances being held as the floor can be levelled and a jazz/comedy club in the small theatre underneath the main theatres and the cinema is thriving. A very entertaining evening. **YS**

The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry -Tuesday 7th April The Corps was founded in 1907 to provide assistance to civil and military authorities in times of emergency. And today, over 100 years later, the purpose remains exactly the same

The British were reluctant to use their assistance but during the First World War their value became apparent while working in France. Although they were initially set up to aid the sick and wounded their role became much more. Communication, transport and later, during the Second World War, freedom fighters. Three of their members were arrested and tortured, Violette Szabo, Odette (Churchill) Hallows and Noor Inayat Khan. Violette and Noor were executed but Hallows escape death by convincing the Gestapo that she was related to Winston Churchill. The ladies were all awarded the George Cross, Violette and Noor posthumously.

HRH The Princess Royal is the Commandant in Chief. Since 1999, when Her Royal Highness kindly gave permission to use her title, the Corps has been renamed: FANY (Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps). They are the world's longest established uniformed 'military' voluntary organisation for women - and today, the only all-women unit left in the UK. The Corps is on the Army list, but not part of the Army. They use the Army Rank structure. They work with the Army Reserve, but also have a civilian role with the City of London and Metropolitan Police. Unlike the Army Reserve, they are unpaid; in fact, they pay an annual subscription.

The numbers reached over six thousand during the war but have since fallen to just under 200. They are a London based organisation with all members living within the M25 belt. They play a vital role in times of crisis as they can be mobilised quickly. They have no affiliation to any other force. Therefore their views are always impartial. They perform a crucial role, manning the telephones in crisis centres, insuring that people receive up to date information and assistance. There have been there to help during recent appalling events, terror attacks, bombings and latterly, the terrible Grenfell Fire. As you can see their role is still vital today. Thank you to Commander Alex Milne for such an interesting talk. **DH/SP**

Memories of Newport Pagnell – Tuesday 21st May

The first presentation, was **“An Interview with Joan Rose, on CD”**.

This took place at The Brooklands Centre, where Joan spends a good deal of her time. She was interviewed by Richard Parker and Carol Walker, for NPHS.

Joan is 94 years young and was born at Plymouth. After her mother died in a fire, she was taken, as a young child, from a Children's Home in London to Coventry, where she met her new parents, who had moved there from Newport Pagnell. Joan was handed over at Coventry Railway Station; the paperwork having been completed beforehand.

The family moved back to Newport Pagnell just before the 'Blitz' which seriously affected Coventry City. The family lived in Newport Pagnell with friends for a short time, until they managed to buy a small cottage in Chandos Court (where our Museum is located). Joan's father belonged to the Oddfellows that owned the Museum building at the time. The water tap and toilet at Joan's new home, were outside facilities shared between neighbours. Food was cooked on an open fire grate. Very few people had cars; Joan's family never owned a car. Rent for the cottage was 1 shilling and 9 pence per week (less than 20p). (Everything else would have been relative, including wages!).

When Joan's parents returned to collect some of their furniture from Coventry, the streets were full of bomb craters everywhere.

Joan did not become aware of being adopted until she was 16 years of age.

From Newport Pagnell, they often saw enemy aircraft flying northwards, on the way to Birmingham and Coventry.

When Joan became married, they moved to a cottage at the same location.

Joan left school at the age of 14 years, just at the end of the war, and went to work in Woolworths, where she was later joined by her younger sister. Both Joan and her sister enjoyed this experience.

After her father died, her mother took in lodgers.

Joan said that many of the old established shops in town have closed down, or moved away. There were several other Coop Departments that no longer exist here.

For teenagers, there were often Barn and Ballroom Dances in the town. Mainly at The Ambulance Hall, situated where the Medical Centre now stands. Sometimes they also cycled to Wolverton Dances; and to Bedford, for something different, where American Servicemen also visited!

Joan married aged 23 years. They had 5 sons and a daughter. Joan's first-born son will be aged 70, next year! Joan's husband died when he was aged 64.

Joan has been a committed member of the Congregational/URC Church, since she was 16 years of age. As the end of the war neared, Joan particularly looked forward to tasting bananas. Her happiest times in Newport Pagnell, have been spent at Brooklands, where she is still a keen 'Volunteer'. For it is an extremely pleasant, active, progressive and welcoming facility, for local people to visit. Joan has been awarded accolades for being "The Queen of Brooklands" and "The Golden Girl of Newport Pagnell." Joan is also mentioned in a booklet, published about 'Brookland's Memories'.

Thank you, Joan, for such an enlightening insight into your personal journey; your interests and your unyielding commitment.

Secondly, Roger Kitchen took us on a sentimental and inspiring journey, with the creative activities of The Living Archive, with '**Newport Pagnell Pioneers**'.

This imaginative group of entertainers had been set-up in the not so distant past, by entirely local talent. Many of the Pioneers who featured in this talk, were known to our members. At least one former lady 'Pioneer', was actually present in the audience! She also really seemed to enjoy the talk, with accompanying DVD.

The production, direction and arranging. The authors, discussion and reviews. The actors and actresses; the soloists, instrumentalists and chorus. The costume, wardrobe, scenery, props and lighting. The transport and labour; all came from the local community. The variety of shows was extensive, with scenes set both in-doors and on a variety of other location.

Productions included: The Pied Piper, Rumpelstiltskin, Not Now Darling, Aladdin, Queen Elizabeth Slept Here, Just Sir William, Count Your Blessings, Holiday Spirit, Our Secret and Caught-At-Last. There was Drama, Pantomime (Oh no there wasn't!), Intrigue, Mystery, Who Done It, Comedy, Family Fun and Variety.

Membership came from the huge resource of hard-working, skilled and talented people living here, contributing various levels of imagination, creativity and confidence. This included men who even managed to transport a piano and take it up and down a flight of stairs, on almost every occasion.

Newport Pagnell town, was extremely lucky to have this pool of energetic, popular, public spirited and refreshingly talented people, located right here! **BB**



The Spring Fair and Book Sale on the day raised about £900 including sale of 28 books. Since then we have had another £160 for plants and another £20 for sale of 2 more books.

Once again a big thank you goes to all those who worked hard producing the plants, collecting raffle and tombola prizes, baking cakes and supplying the man power on the day. And thanks to all those who supported us on the day. A special mention to the businesses in the town for generous donations of prizes for the raffle.

Don's book will again be available on the NPHS stall in Brooklands on the 8th September

MUSEUM AT CHANDOS HALL

The new exhibition is "1940"

MUSEUM OPEING TIMES	Saturday 8 th June	Vintage Day	10am-4pm
	Sunday 30 th June		2pm – 4pm
	Sunday 14 th July	Soap Box Derby	10am-12am
	Sunday 28 th July		2pm - 4pm

Museum closed during August

On the 23rd of May the 5th Newport Cubs visited the Museum. Carol and Sue, two committee members, had devised a quiz for the cubs to do, to encourage the Cubs to look around the Museum while they were trying to answer the questions, which they did enthusiastically.

I am sure a good time was had by all and the Cubs were a pleasure to meet.

Thank you to Bill and Yvonne for supervising the visit

FORTH COMING EVENTS

Tuesday 4 th June	WALK - Linford Lakes	Parks Trust
Saturday 8 th June	Vintage weekend - NPHS Stall in Brooklands	10am – 4pm
Tuesday 18 th June	WALK – Homeworld Exhibition	Dianne Sutton
Tuesday 2 nd July	WALK - Forgotten Streets of Newport Pagnell	Don Hurst
Tuesday 16 th July	WALK - Gt Linford Manor Restoration Project	Darrell Cavin
(Details of walks are shown below)		
No meetings during August meetings restart in September with		
Tuesday 3 rd September	Presentation of Photographs	Don Hurst

Linford Lakes -- Assemble at Bury Field car park at 6.20pm to arrange lifts. Proceed towards Wolverton. 500yds beyond the turning for Great Linford (look out for brown sign) and assemble at 'The View' at 6.40pm.

Homeworld Exhibition - Assemble at Bury Field car park at 6.10pm to arrange lifts. Then proceed to Bradwell Common Boulevard and meet outside the Countryman pub at 6.40pm. Please do not park in the pub car park – there is on-street parking nearby

Forgotten Streets - Assemble at the entrance to Castle Meadow at 6.40pm.

Gt Linford Manor - Assemble at Bury Field car park at 6.20pm to arrange lifts. Then proceed to the Nags Head pub, Great Linford, to arrive at 6.40pm. *There is on-street parking in the High Street*



VINTAGE EVENT

**THE SOCIETY IS HAVING A STALL IN
BROOKLANDS PLEASE POP IN AND SHOW
YOUR SUPPORT 10AM – 4PM**

SATURDAY 8TH JUNE

There is also an opportunity to visit the Museum, as this too will be open 10am to 4pm
