



# Newport Pagnell Historical Society

Registered Charity No. 801897  
Chandos Hall, Silver Street, MK16 0EN  
[www.mkheritage.org.uk/nphs](http://www.mkheritage.org.uk/nphs)

## NEWSLETTER NOV/DEC 2019 & JANUARY 2020

**Presentation of Photographs Tuesday 3rd September** Our first meeting of the autumn session was the ever popular topic: "Slides of old Newport" presented by Don Hurst. As always, the 80 or so slides had been gathered from a variety of sources including Facebook and Ken Graham's memorabilia shop just before it closed down. Noteworthy aspects of Newport Pagnell's past history have been floods, fires, pubs, family businesses, the ups and downs of Aston Martin, and the indiscriminate demolition of ancient buildings in the 1950s. All these topics were represented, and at one point Don even apologised for having to keep repeating the phrase "This has now been demolished". Bury Field has had an interesting and varied past, and we learned that it has hosted football and cricket matches, an amazing Red Cross gymnastics display (in 1918) and a fairground roller coaster known as the Holland Dragon (annually up to the 1970s). As usual some slides prompted a dialogue between Don and the audience, which is both an entertaining and educational feature of his slide shows. Don kept his best slide until last – a picture of an elephant walking down St John Street! **RP**

**Lost Language of Headstones – Tuesday 17th September** How often do you wander round churchyards and cemeteries tracing family members or just out of interest? In Newport Pagnell even just walking along the path made from headstones, next to the church of St Peter and St Paul, there are examples of what this illustrated, informative and yet often funny talk by Kevin Varty was all about. Kevin showed us how sometimes the hidden meanings of the symbols which are often carved into the headstones, or statues on the headstones, reveal a lost language from the past and how these symbols have been used by the funeral business especially during the Victorian age. Some examples from the many he showed us reveal the religious ideas of the time. A lamb signifies purity and innocence and is typically found on the grave of a baby or child. An open book can symbolise the Bible or other religious text or the Book of Life. If the pages are blank or dog eared it can signify a story unfinished, a life lost too soon. Angels represent the guardianship of someone's soul and protection of their journey to Heaven. Broken things such as stems of flowers or broken chains symbolise a life cut short, and a circle in the form of a serpent biting its tail represents eternal life. On a more macabre note, the skull is a reminder of our own mortality. A winged skull depicts the fleetingness of life and the journey to the next one.

A most enjoyable talk yet again. Thank you, Kevin. **SD**

**Our Changing Wild Life – Tuesday 1st. October** We had a very interesting and informative talk by Chris Ward on the changing state of the wildlife in the country.

Chris said that although climate change may have caused changes some of it is due to man introducing species from abroad which then damage the indigenous wildlife. An example is the mink, brought here to be farmed for its fur, then released by some people and the mink then decimated the local small mammals such as voles. Fortunately, man has successfully bred voles and released them in nature reserves, so some good news. Another casualty are hedgehogs; many being killed on the roads. They have had to move into towns because of the loss of habitat. They need a large territory covering many gardens, we could help by leaving a 'hedgehog tunnel' so they can move more freely. Many creatures now use man made nesting sites, such as barn owls again because of loss of hunting grounds like grass verges, around 50% now use them. Climate change has directly affected some animals, with seas getting warmer, birds like Puffins have moved their nesting sites, going further north for colder waters.

So it seems there is good and bad news for most creatures, from furry ones to scaly ones, we just need to be more vigilant and be more aware, luckily we have people like Chris keeping an eye on things. **YS**

**Cropredy Bridge – Tuesday 15th October** Geoff Morris gave a talk about Cropredy Bridge which was the site of a Civil War battle on 29 June 1644. The Sealed Knot staged a re-enactment this year. King Charles had his armies in and around Oxford for much of the 9 years of the Civil War, which Parliamentarians found difficult to defeat, even with extra troops from Scotland. The King's advisers persuaded him to march northwards. The resulting main battle was around Cropredy, south of Banbury, Oxfordshire, with substantial loss of life. Armies were not well trained or disciplined at this time, and often disbanded to return home. After this battle, Parliament realised they needed a better army, which eventually won them the war. Everyone suffered at this time, as lands were destroyed, with wealth taken from individuals by both sides. Interesting talk KD

## **OUR FRIEND PEGGY PAGE**

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of our dear friend Peggy. Peggy was a member of the committee for many years until ill health prevented her from continuing. Her quiet, gentle and elegant charm persuaded many shop owners through the town to give generous donations for our Spring Fair Raffle over the years. In turn these raised important funds for the Society. As Publication Officer she was responsible for getting our books sold in several local shops. She will be greatly missed by those who knew and loved her. Goodbye Peggy.

## **MUSEUM AT CHANDOS HALL**

There is a display of photographs relating to the Pioneers in addition to the permanent exhibits.

### **MUSEUM OPEING TIMES**

Sunday 24th November 2pm – 4pm  
Not open in December  
Sunday 26th January 2pm – 4pm

## **MK HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2019**



The extra opening days of the Museum and the activities organised around the two weekends proved very successful. Despite the contrasting weather on the two Sundays, Don's walks were as popular as ever. We had over 150 visitors to the Museum, many for the first time including the Mayor. Paul Day and his wife came on the first Saturday and stayed for over an hour. While he was there, he took some photos which he posted on social media to publicise the event. He was impressed with the exhibits on show and he and his wife even tried doing some of the 'old coin rubbing' laid out for the children. Families enjoyed the Treasure Hunt Trails organised by Kathy and Barbara; some even took a second sheet to try another day. It was a financial success too, many people were happy to leave a small donation as they left. Thank you to those who organised the event and for those committee members who gave up their time to man the Museum. And of course, thanks to Don.



**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL** As you are all aware, the Membership is renewed each January. Bill Watson will have envelopes to put your payment in at each meeting. Just put your name and how much you are paying on the front and give to Bill, along with the yearly fee of course. The cost remains the same as last year (£11 for up to age 59. £9 for 60+) and Bill would appreciate being given the correct amount to speed up the collection on the night. (New members welcome but will need to fill in a form.) Many Thanks.

## **FORTH COMING EVENTS**

Tuesday 5th November	The Diarists
Tuesday 19th November	Quiz Night and Social Evening (Members only)
Saturday 30th November	Stall at the Christmas Lights (Brooklands Centre)
Tuesday 7th January	Maps of Newport Pagnell
Tuesday 21st January	Pictures in the Parlour
Tuesday 4th February	Bawdy Georgians
Tuesday 18th February	The Letters of Walter Croft WW1
Tuesday 3rd March	AGM

**AGM** Each year we request that one or two of our members would consider joining the Committee. It is always good to have new faces with fresh ideas. If you think you could spare a little time, please think about putting your name forward at the AGM.



## **BREAKING NEWS**

Co-op Group's Local Community Fund



Congratulations! **Newport Pagnell Historical Society** has been chosen to benefit from the next round of the Co-op Local Community Fund. The funding round will open on **27 October 2019** and close on **24 October 2020**. During this funding phase, Co-op Members will be able to choose you as their local cause. Every time a member buys selected own-brand products and services, 1% of the money they spend goes to local causes in their community, so it's important you raise your profile and encourage members to choose your cause. To get you ready for the launch, please encourage your supporters, volunteers, friends and family to become a Co-op Member. They can join online at <https://membership.coop.co.uk/new-registration>.

Thanks to Brian Breacher's persistence over the years, since the scheme has been running, we have finally been chosen as one of the beneficiaries of this award. Please think of us when choosing your charity over the coming year.