



Stonehouse History Group
Annual Report May 2023 – April 2024



This year we have 84 paid-up members, the highest number in the history of the Group. This has not resulted in higher attendance at meetings as we have maintained our usual average of 47 per meeting. The high membership numbers reflect a wish to support SHG, several people having joined as a result of appreciating our help with enquiries, even though they live too far away to attend meetings (see below for details of meetings).

We have taken part in several community events in Stonehouse. We exhibited a display at the Canal Spring Festival in May, where we were able to sell Journals and attract new members. We attended the Coronation Picnic in the Park, also in May, with our display on the 1953 Coronation Celebrations in Stonehouse. In September, we took part in the Stonehouse Walking Festival with Vicki Walker, Shirley Dicker and Jim Dickson leading walks with help from other committee members. We offered two new history walks - High Street East and High Street West - and another to St Cyr's Church, the canal and the railway viaduct. Vicki and Shirley have also visited Moreton Hill Care Centre with a presentation about Moreton Hill Farm and Standish Hospital.

We have assisted Stonehouse Park Infant School with the loan of historic maps for the children to see. We have sent information about the history of the area to Great Oldbury Primary School and arranged for Steve Mills to accompany them on a walk to the canal.

Shirley Dicker has continued to manage our Facebook site, which generates many interesting comments and photographs. We have added information to the website and hope to continue to add more as time allows. We have done our best to answer a variety of enquiries about different aspects of Stonehouse history. Vicki and Andrew Walker accompanied an Australian visitor wishing to see where her ancestors, the Beard family, lived 200 years ago.

This year we have received an increased number of requests for help with information and photographs. We provided a collection of photos of VAD nurses at Standish Hospital for an exhibition by the Royal College of Nursing. We assisted Mike Fenton in finding information and photos for his book *The Great Western Railway in the Stroud Valley* which includes a very full, illustrated chapter on Stonehouse Burdett Road station. The book was published in April and is a comprehensive history of the GWR from 1845 to 1917. Mike donated a copy to our Group which may be borrowed.

We assisted Julia Tu with her PhD thesis on Bond's Mill special pillbox which can be accessed on our website. John Parker also consulted us for his article on the history of Doverow Hill and Wood, soon to be published. We were able to help Geoff Bull from the Society of Brushmakers' Descendants with information and photos of W.H.Vowles Brushworks at Upper Mills. Recently we have been asked for information about Dr. J.G. McLannahan from the group who now own his wife's wedding dress. An Ancestry member alerted us to the sale of the Anderson family bible so that a member of the family was able to purchase it.

We have been sent information and photos from the following: Ian Blair (Blair family of Stonehouse), Ian Tindall (railway accident), Tony Lawson (Bradley's Shop), Harry Harrison (Luke Benson, Stationmaster), Arrowsmith family (Leslie Arrowsmith papers), Beryl Baker (Witts family and various), Howard Beard (various), Megan Timbrell (Alfred Mince), and Mel Tarrant (Stonehouse shops). Janet Hudson has been able to help us gain information from the deeds of local houses kindly lent by the owners. Jim Dickson and Steve Mills have provided photographs of the former Hoffmann bearing factory being demolished – the end of an era!

We have worked with the Five Valleys Local History Association to organise an exhibition at Stroud Museum last July. We created two posters on the plaque we sent to Buenos Aires and the Stonehouse brick returned to us by Boris Johnson. We continue to work with FVLHA on arranging this year's exhibition, 'Highways and Byways', about local roads and transport, due to take place in July 2024.

In November we were able to purchase a new projector with the help of a grant from the Government's Build Back Better scheme, facilitated by County Councillor Nick Housden. This projector has been a great improvement on the school's projector. It also enables us to take our presentations out to community groups.

We will not be producing a Journal in 2024. We are working on finding out about old Shops in Stonehouse which will result in short talks and articles on our website. Vicki has been able to talk to Pam Barnett about the Co-op, Derek Hurn about Hurn's Hardware and David Cox and Nigel Moss about Queen's Road shops. Several of our members have also contributed their memories of the shops.

As we did not sell all 200 copies of our 2023 calendar we reduced the number printed in 2024 and sold all 150 copies. We could probably have sold more so we plan to produce a calendar for 2025.

Our Events manager, Kate Quarry, organised a most enjoyable summer trip to Chavenage Manor last summer, where we had a guided tour followed by a cream tea. We are intending to visit Godsell's farm at Leonard Stanley this summer.

Thanks to Simon Lewis for auditing the SHG accounts.

Finally we would like to thank Jim Dickson, who has decided not to stand as Chairman this year, for all the work he has done for Stonehouse History Group since its formation in 2008.

The idea of a history group in Stonehouse was first put forward by Jim Dickson and John and Myra Peters. A meeting was held on 16th April 2008 which was attended by about 20 local residents and a small committee was nominated to set up the group.

Our first committee meeting was held on 23rd April 2008, which led to the Stonehouse History Group's first official meeting on 14th May 2008. At this meeting the committee was elected, the aims and rules of the group were agreed and suggestions made for future events. Jim Dickson's presentation on the World War II pillboxes around the Stonehouse area was the first in the varied and interesting range of events that the group organised during our first year.

John Peters stood down as Chairman in 2015 and Jim took over the role which he has filled admirably since then. He has contributed to every aspect of our work, giving talks, leading walks, writing and editing articles for the Journal, creating displays, recording memories, mending milestones, as well as the more mundane tasks of putting chairs out and transporting tables! We are pleased that Jim has agreed to continue as a committee member, where his knowledge and experience will be most appreciated. Thanks Jim!

Committee, May 2023 - April 2024

Chair - Jim Dickson

Vice-Chair and Facebook manager - Shirley Dicker

Secretary and Website manager - Vicki Walker

Treasurer - Andrew Walker

Events manager - Kate Quarry

Committee - David Bowker-Praed, Linda Collazo, Janet Hudson, Alex Walmsley

Stonehouse History Group
Events 2023-24 (attendance in brackets)

May 10th (46)

AGM followed by: John Parker – *The history and importance of trees in Stonehouse.*

John talked about both the oldest trees in the area and the plans for the planting of new ones in the town.

June 14th (52)

Keith Walker – *Redler of Stroud.*

The history of the Redler company, based at Dudbridge, and its contribution to world industry.

July 12th (42)

Howard Beard – *E. P. Conway, prolific local Edwardian photographer.*

Eustace Price Conway lived in Nailsworth at the beginning of the 20th century. His work included both topographical postcards and portraits. Howard showed examples from his collection.

August 13th

Visit to Chavenage Manor

Thirty members and friends had a tour of the Manor followed by a cream tea.

September 13th (47)

Andy Meller - *Cider Making in Gloucestershire - from Foxwhelps to Firkins!*

Members enjoyed a cup of cider before the talk.

Oct 11th (71)

John Bassett and Spaniel in the Works - *Beatrice Webb – My apprenticeship and my life.*

Beatrice Webb (née Potter) was born in Standish House, Stonehouse in 1858.

The performance covered her early life at Standish and her entry into social reform.

Nov 8th (45)

Malcolm Watkins – *Roberts Brothers of Gloucester, Games-Makers to the Empire.*

A history of Roberts Brothers, including a display from Malcolm's collection of antique games.

Dec 13th (48)

Kirsty Hartsiotis - *Christmas Ghosts - The Tradition of Winter Tales in Gloucestershire and Beyond.*

Christmas refreshments were served before Kirsty's excellent talk.

2024

January 10th (39)

Kevin Ward – *Fundraising for weapons in the Stroud district in World War Two.*

Kevin gave an overview of the history of the Stroud district and weapons of war, before describing some of the community fundraising activities and weapons bought by the district in WW2

February 14th (46)

Short talks by members

Phil Bischler - *A short history of alum, a tale of the Pope, pirates and pee!*

Cresby Brown - *Gloucestershire Wayside crosses*

Alex Walmsley - *Saving Stonehouse Railway Station – Jack Anderson's role.*

Vicki Walker - *Frank Moore 1889-1977*

March 13th (45)

Kate Peake – *The Cotswold Way.*

Kate showed a series of short films - taking us on a journey along the Cotswold Way from Chipping Campden to Painswick.

April 10th (37)

Dr Steven Blake – *The remarkable John Bellamy: the story of a Gloucestershire travelling showman.*

Steve described the history of the collection of models of historic buildings which John Bellamy created and exhibited around the country during the 19th century, using examples from Bellamy's diaries.