



Stonehouse History Group
Annual Report May 2025 – April 2026



This year we have had 87 paid-up members, our highest ever. Average attendance at meetings has increased from 49 to 57 as we are attracting visitors from other groups as well as our own members. Twice we have had audiences of over 80 people. Our events manager, Kate Quarry, has organised speakers for eleven monthly meetings plus a summer trip to visit Berkeley Castle, including a cream tea.

Community events

We have taken part in several community events in Stonehouse. We took a display on the history of the Ship Inn to a *Stories from the Ship* event in July. Shirley and Paul Dicker placed crosses for two Stonehouse soldiers at the Remembrance Service on November 11th. We have sponsored a bunny in aid of Park Schools. We have contributed articles and events to every edition of Stonehouse News.

On July 6th we hosted the Gloucestershire Local History Association's Summer Afternoon at the Community Centre. Around 60 people attended and were able to view our displays, including the history of St Cyr's Church, local industries, and historic houses around the town. The committee and volunteers organised an afternoon with a choice of 4 different walks - High Street, Court, Church and Viaduct, Stonehouse Arboretum, Shaping Stonehouse, or a talk on Stonehouse in WW2, followed by a delicious tea.

Walks and talks

We have continued with our walks and talks with Janet, Shirley and Vicki leading three different walks around the town for the Stonehouse Walking Festival. Vicki and Shirley have presented six talks – Stroud Visually Impaired Group (Stonehouse in World War Two), The Pensioners' Club (Stonehouse in World War Two), Sherborne House residents (Stonehouse Then and Now) Moreton Hill Care Centre (3 talks). We also led a small group on a walk round Stonehouse Court, church and canal.

Research

We are still working on finding out about old Shops in Stonehouse which has resulted in short talks and articles on our website. We talked to Derek Hurn about the history of Hurn's Hardware shop and Nigel Moss about The Curiosity Shop in Queen's Road.

We received memories and documents from several people as part of our Hoffmann's evening and interviewed Mike Cooke about his time working there.

We continue to respond to requests for help with information and photographs. We assisted Mike Fenton in finding information and photos for his books *The Great Western Railway in the Stroud Valley* Volumes 1, 2, and 3. We have assisted the Town Council with information about the ownership of the Greens. We have found information about street names at Great Oldbury, the Hignell family in Burdett Road, the burial site of Bridgend Hostel refugee Jan Masny, the history of Grove Farm, Leslie Hill's garage, John Vick's coal business, Vowles Brushworks, beeboles at Stonehouse Court, Richard Nash's family and more.

Facebook and website

Shirley Dicker has continued to manage our Facebook site, which generates many interesting comments and photographs.

Vicki has added information to the website and will continue to add more as time allows.

People often send us old photographs digitally via the website and Facebook, as well as original documents. We have a collection of photographs from Park Schools which we are scanning prior to depositing at Gloucestershire Archives. Plus a file of documents from Stonehouse Probus and various items from the Hoffmann's evening.

Five Valleys Local History Association

SHG is a member of this group of local history societies in the Stroud Valleys. In July 2024 the Association organised an exhibition at Stroud Museum with the topic of Highways and Byways. This proved so popular that a book was published in 2025, including contributions from SHG. We helped to sell copies in Stonehouse. Profits from the book have been donated to Stroud Museum. We took part in the FVLHA exhibition in the Stroud Subscription Rooms on the theme of Local Memories of World War Two to which we took our displays and a show of photographs.

Glos Local History Association

We are also members of GLHA, with Vicki and Janet being on its committee. Both of us have now resigned from our posts – Vicki having been secretary for 14 years and Janet a committee member for 13 years. We hope this will give us more time to work on projects with SHG.

Accounts

We are in a good position financially (see Treasurer's Report). We sold all 175 copies of our 2026 calendar and intend to produce one for 2027.

Thanks to Simon Lewis for auditing the SHG accounts.

Committee, May 2025 - April 2026

Chair – Alex Walmsley

Vice-Chair and Facebook manager - Shirley Dicker

Secretary and Website manager - Vicki Walker

Treasurer - Andrew Walker

Events manager - Kate Quarry

Committee - Jim Dickson, Janet Hudson, Colin Matthews, James Walmsley

Stonehouse History Group Events 2025-26 (attendance in brackets)

May 14th (50)

Annual General Meeting followed by:

Vicki Walker – *Some history of the Post Office in Stonehouse* - showing the various buildings which have housed the Post Office and the people who ran it. Including a contribution by ex-postman Paul Dicker.

June 11th (46)

Shepherd's Crook Folk Choir - *Songs from the Workhouse* - a talk on life in the workhouse and traditional songs.

July 9th (40)

Kirsty Hartsiosis - *Arts and Crafts stained glass in Cotswold Churches*.

Beautifully illustrated talk with examples from local churches.

Sept 10th (49)

Andy Meller – *Tolkien and the Cotswolds – the shaping of Middle Earth*.

Historian Andy Meller gave an intriguing illustrated talk uncovering Tolkien's life-long passion for archaeology, myth and the Gloucestershire landscapes that brought Middle Earth to life.

Oct 8th (54)

Kevin Ward – *The History and work of the Museum in the Park*

Museum Manager, Kevin Ward, talked about the history of Stroud museum, from the early days when it was in a couple of rooms in Stroud, through to the Museum in the Park we have today.

He highlighted some of the objects and stories from the museum collection that have a connection to Stonehouse.

Nov 12th (87)

Mike Fenton – *The GWR railway in Stonehouse*.

Mike has recently published 3 books about the GWR railway which include Stonehouse and the men who worked on the railways there. Mike talked about his research and some of the fascinating information he has uncovered.

Dec 10th (72)

Vicki Walker- *The history of the Woolpack Inn*

Vicki outlined the history of the building and some of the landlords from 1816 to today.

We all enjoyed Christmas refreshments before the meeting and afterwards.

2026

Jan 14th (44)

Dr Phil Bischler – *Two polymaths, two visits and one hero*

Phil talked about the history of submarines, their inventors and some links to local history.

Feb 11th (51)

Gareth Howell - *Pancake day: the Linby Pancakes, a Viking army and the history of pancakes and their Day*

March 11th (50)

Simon Draper - *Lines in the landscape: decoding boundaries (with a Gloucestershire/Wiltshire focus)*

Dr Draper explored the rich archaeology and history of the boundaries in our local area, from those of manors and parishes to hundreds, shires and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. He looked at how boundaries were marked, and explained some of the oddities caused by features in the landscape.

April 8th (83)

The history of Hoffmann Gloucester Ltd.

Vicki Walker outlined the history of the factory from its building at the start of WW2 to its final closure in 2021 and demolition in 2024. Andrew Walker and John Wilkins talked about their Hoffmann apprenticeships in the 1960s and Mike Cooke talked about working in the drawing office and running the Apprentices Association, as well as observing the trains running past the factory on the Midland line! A display was created from memories sent in by former workers and their families, along with documents and objects from its history.