

A Word from the Editor...

So, here we are at the end of another successful season of History Society meetings, and so we move into Volume 8 of the Newsletter.

This also marks the move to a newly designed Website which I have created as the version I produced ten years ago is beginning to look a little dated.

As you have arrived here via the link you will now be in the new website.

This is an entirely new design of the site and produced using WordPress, which is quite a learning curve, and I have moved it to a higher-level domain, <https://redditchhistorysociety.org/> with a different hosting provider.

However, to ensure legacy issues I have created a divert from <https://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk/> which brings you here.

There is much that I can say concerning this site, but I will leave this, for those who are interested, to future editions of the Newsletter.

April AGM Meeting

We had a strong turnout for our April Annual General Meeting, with 48 members attending. Of these, 47 renewed their membership and we welcomed 1 new member, giving us an excellent start to the new membership year.

We were also grateful to receive a £30 donation from Michael Davis, made on the day to celebrate his birthday, which allowed us to offer free refreshments at the meeting. The meeting itself ran smoothly, with the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer presenting their reports, including the annual accounts. All officers were re-elected, and the formal business was concluded promptly.

Following the official proceedings, members enjoyed two 20-minute films, both of which were very well received.

This meeting marked the beginning of our new membership season, running from April 2026 to March 2027.

Full details of the proceedings and the results can be found on Pages 3, 4 and 5, for the reports from the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, and Pages 6 and 7 for the results of the voting. On Page 7 there are also some details of the short films shown.

Coming up....



Forge Mill Needle Museum is now fully open

The coffee bar is currently being upgraded, and the existing unit has now been moved 'round the corner' facing the childrens play area. There will now be a new larger concrete base installed to facilitate the installation of the new coffee bar. This will allow a wider range of food/drinks to be offered.

At the same time, the refurbishment of the mill wheel and sluice is nearing completion. This has been a major restoration of this historic site which is so important in the history of our area.

Details of events and activities can be found at <https://www.forgemill.org.uk/web/> and their leaflet, outlining events/exhibitions can be obtained at the museum, our reception desk and various local outlets.



Our next meeting on 11th May 2026.

ART goes to WAR 1939 – 1945 Henrietta Lockhart

Henrietta Lockhart is Curator of Museum Collections at Winterbourne House and Garden and is a regular, and welcome, speaker at our meetings.

We first had Henrietta as a speaker in May 2023, when she gave us a general introduction to Winterbourne House. In February 2024, she gave us 'Plants preserved for Ever': Tales from the University Herbarium and then last year, in July, she gave us an fascinating talk entitled 'Ten Birmingham Women'.

Whatever the subject, we are guaranteed a well researched and presented talk. In many cases the speaker is as important as the subject and, if we find a good one, we hang onto them!



I am pleased to report that during 2025 our membership has remained strong, with 61 full members and another 6 joining half-way through the year.

We ran a full programme of presentations during the year, with a wide range of topics presented and for this I wish to thank our enthusiastic Speaker Organiser, Pat Bushaway

The topics covered started with 'Merry England's Folklore Calendar' a presentation from Richard Churchley, In March we learnt about 'The Lunar Society' from Peter Borg-Bartolo and in May we heard about the landscape of Hewell Grange from David Whitehead. We had another interesting talk by Louise Robinson on 'Surgery in the Nineteenth Century' and in July, Henrietta Lockhart returned to tell us about 'Ten Birmingham Women'. After our summer break, Tony Green told us about 'Redditch 1939 to 1945 and how our town supported the War Effort and this was followed by Chris Jackson showing early postcards of Redditch Town Centre and the Postal History. Richard Churchley gave another interesting presentation, this time on 'Needlemaking in Worcestershire and Warwickshire 1640-1940 and the year closed with another very lively presentation from Max Keen on 'Richard III, Murderer or Loyal Brother, in full costume. He is a very popular presenter and will return in 2027 with further talks.

I would like to wish a very warm thank you to all our contributors for a successful series of presentations. If anyone would like to make a presentation in the future, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

I would like to pass on my thanks to all the members of the Committee for their valuable contribution to the success of the Society. I particularly want to thank our Secretary, Tony Green, for the huge amount of work he carries out throughout the year, including keeping our online presence modern and up to date. One of the very notable ways he adds to the standing of the Society is through the very readable newsletter he produced throughout the year, with many interesting articles. If anyone would like to provide an article for the newsletter, rather than make a presentation, we would love to talk to you about this. Graham Smith, our Treasurer, keeps us up to date on membership attendance and our financial position throughout the year, which is very helpful in try to plan for the future. As I mentioned before Pat Bushaway provides us with a great selection of speakers and topics and Richard Watson provides support on the Committee. I would also like to thank Malcolm Acton for the work he has carried out this year as our new Independent Accounts Examiner. In addition, I would like to thank some of our members, who don't want to be committee members but provide regular support on both the door and with the drinks. Once again, thank you for all your contributions.

I hope all our members have enjoyed the work of our Committee and will continue to support the growing strength of the Society
Elizabeth Simpson, Chair, Redditch History Society, April 2026

I have the advantage of seeing the reports from our Chair and Secretary prior to the meeting, so I will not repeat what is already being covered. Instead, here are a few updates on our information and publicity output, much of which quietly continues in the background.

NEWSLETTER

In October 2025, I changed the Newsletter format from portrait (better for printing) to landscape, which is far more suitable for viewing on laptops and smartphones. I also standardised the page layout: Page 1: A Word from the Editor (that's me!) and a short report on the previous meeting.

Page 2: Details of our next meeting and local history activities (usually Forge Mill), Pages 3–4: Report on the monthly presentation. Pages 5–7: Local history content, Page 8: A selection of historic Redditch photographs

I am always looking for material to fill pages five to seven, and I would be delighted if a volunteer stepped forward to write the monthly presentation report.

AGENDA

In June 2015, I also changed the agenda from portrait to landscape to align with my plans for the Newsletter.

LEAFLET

Although not strictly a 2025 activity, I have redesigned our leaflet for 2026 into an A6 folded format. This provides a more convenient, easily stored document and supports my aim of creating a cleaner, more consistent visual identity. Aligning the Newsletter, Leaflet, Website, and Facebook page also makes updates more efficient.

WEBSITE

Visitor numbers to our website — www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk — exceeded 1,400 last month, an increase of around 50% on last year.

Europe and North America account for roughly 70% of our traffic, with the remaining 30% coming from the rest of the world.

For 2026, I have launched a completely redesigned website (as of today). However, this is this year, not last year, so I will say no more.

FACEBOOK

Our Redditch History Society Facebook page continues to hold steady at around 1,900 followers. While not large by Facebook standards, it remains a respectable and engaged audience. I expect to redesign the page during 2026 to bring it in line with the cleaner look of our other publicity materials.

THANKS

I would like to conclude by expressing my appreciation for the work done by Elizabeth, Graham, and Pat, who contribute so much to keeping the Society active and thriving. My thanks also go to the many other volunteers who support the Society in countless ways. Whether you help in the tearoom from time to time or contribute your memories for the Newsletter, every contribution is valued.

Anthony Green, Secretary, Redditch History Society, April 2026

Redditch History Society's finances remain on a firm footing. In 2025 the Society had a greater income than expenditure and this was a repeat of the situation in 2024.

Income

Our main source of income is, of course, subscriptions from our members. 61 members paid the full subscription of £20.00 and a further 6 members paid the half year subscription of £10.00. We ended the year with 67 members. This brought in a total income of £1280.00. The number of visitors continues to grow. In 2024 we had 113 visitors over the ten meetings, but in 2025 this increased to 137 giving an income of £548.00. It is likely that our press releases about forthcoming meetings to the Redditch Standard are the reason for this increase.

The small profit from our refreshments was £79.00, down on 2024 due to the increasing prices on supplies. A donation of £15.00 was also received. Total income came to £1922.00.

Expenditure

Our main expenditure is the hire of this room and the Reeve's room. This goes up slightly each year and in 2025 it cost £753.50 for the ten meetings. The cost of speakers is also increasing each year and in 2025 we spent £460 on our guest speakers. We are grateful to members who give talks as this helps to keep this cost down. Subscriptions to the Worcestershire Local History Forum (£10) and the British Association for Local History (£90) remained the same. The former provides a list of speakers and keeps us in touch with other local history societies and events as well as advertising our meetings. The latter provides us with insurance and periodicals which members can borrow.

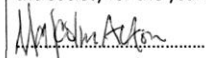
Total expenditure was £1313.50. This gave us a total surplus of £608.50.

Our bank balance at the start of 2025 was £2264.52. With the surplus of £608.50, we ended the year with a bank balance of £2873.02. We had £41.08 in petty cash. Total society funds were £2914.10.

Your committee are proposing that the subscription remains at £20.00 and half year subscription at £10.00. Refreshment charge also remains at 50 pence.

I wish to thank Malcolm Acton for examining the accounts. Thanks, too, to Pat Bushaway for organising the speakers. Also, thanks must go to Nova Leighton and Richard Watson for helping on the door. Thanks also to Malcolm for taking the lead with refreshments, but also to all those members who have helped with serving refreshments over the year. Graham Smith, Society Treasurer., April 2026

2024 £	INCOME	2025 £	2024 £	EXPENDITURE	2025 £
1160.00	Full Membership (61) @ £20.00	1220.00	731.50	Room hire: £376.75 X 2	753.50
18.75	Family Membership (2023 price)	-	410.00	Payment to Speakers	460.00
7.50	Half Price Membership: (2023 price)	-		<u>SUBSCRIPTIONS:</u>	
30.00	6 at £10.00	60.00	10.00	WLHF	10.00
452.00	Visitors to meetings (137) at £4.00	548.00	90.00	British Association for Local History	90.00
90.00	Refreshments (banked)	79.00	(1241.50)		(1313.50)
106.50	Book sales	-			
18.00	Donation	15.00	641.25	SURPLUS of Income over Expenditure	608.50
1882.75		1922.00	1882.75		1922.00

2024 £	Balance Sheet as at 31 st December	2025 £	
1623.27	Bank at 1 st January	2264.52	I have examined the Account Book, receipts, bank statements and vouchers presented to me by the Treasurer. I confirm that in my opinion these accounts show a true and fair view of the income and expenditure of the Society for the year ended 31 December 2025. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>  Accounts Examiner </div> <div> 05/03/2026 Date </div> </div>
641.25	Deficit/ SURPLUS end of year	608.50	
2264.52	Balance c/fwd at 31 st December	2873.02	
2264.52	Represented by: Bank Account at 31 st Dec.	2873.02	
40.72	Plus Petty Cash	41.08	
2305.24	TOTAL SOCIETY FUNDS	2914.10	

Annual Reports

The meeting began with the annual reports from the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The treasurer also presented the accounts for the financial year ending December 31st 2024.

In 2024 the Society made a surplus of £641.25. At 31st December our bank balance was £2264.52, and we had £40.72 in petty cash. Total society funds were, therefore, £2305.24.

The accounts and the minutes of the April 2024 AGM were approved by the meeting.

Election of Officers:

All the current officers and committee members are willing to continue in their current roles and so, election of officers becomes something of a formality. We are grateful that the membership has confidence in our organisation and our direction. However, none of us are getting any younger and there is no barrier to anyone involving themselves in the organisation of the Society.

Executive Posts

Chairman -Elizabeth Simpson was re-elected unopposed.

Secretary - Anthony Green re-elected unopposed

Treasurer - Graham Smith re-elected unopposed

Non-executive posts:

Newsletter Editor - Anthony Green re-elected unopposed.

Speaker Organiser – Pat Bushaway re-elected unopposed.

Website Administrator/Social Media - Anthony Green re-elected unopposed.

Refreshments Organiser - Graham Smith re-elected unopposed. Graham, as always, is looking for volunteers to support this activity and there are a number of members who are prepared to help.

Annual General Meeting Minutes of Meeting April 2026

Management Committee

The Management Committee consists of the 3 executive members, Chairman Elizabeth Simpson, Secretary Anthony Green and Treasurer Graham Smith plus non-executive posts, Speaker Organiser Pat Bushaway, and additional elected members .

The current member representative, Richard Watson was willing to continue as a member of the Committee and was formally elected.

This brings the Management Committee to five members.

(Note that there is no limit to the size of the Management Committee, so if anyone wishes to be involved, please let us know).

Accounts Examiner:

Malcolm Acton has agreed to continue in this role.

Any Other Business

There were no additional motions and there was no action brought up in 'Any Other Business'.

Film Show

The meeting concluded with a film show consisting of two films, each about 20 minutes, so lasting in total of about 40 minutes.

The first video is part of a series called Lucy's Lens, where an amateur historian, Lucy Scott, with in interest in Social History, goes to different sites records her visits. She is a bit effusive but quite a good presenter. This is a visit she made to Forge Mill Needle Museum where I have been a volunteer for 20 years in December. What fascinated me is what someone who has never been before made of it. I contacted Lucy, and she was happy for me to use this at our meeting.

This second video as it the other end of the scale. Made in 1947, nearly 80 years ago, it is a promotional video for Birmingham and the surrounding area. It was renovated and made available by the British Film Institute.

and finally....

Sketches by JM Woodward (around 1850s)

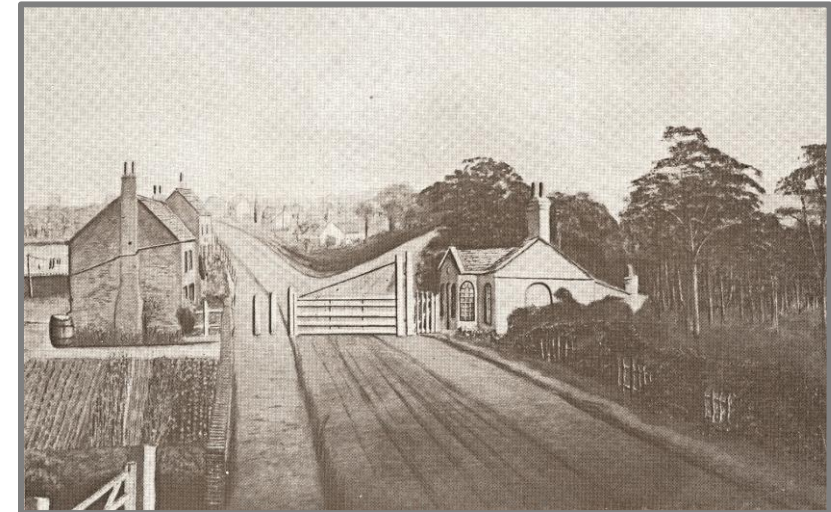
Here are three drawings by Woodward produced in the 19th Century. This was before the late 19th / early 20th Century 'modernisation' of Redditch and its environs. The first (below left) is the Fox and Goose pub at Foxlydiate, the road to Bromsgrove was suddenly narrowed due to the shape of the building, and so this had to be demolished in the early 20th Century. The middle picture is the Kings Arms at the top of Holloway Lane, which was very narrow at this time. The right-hand side of the pub was similarly demolished to widen the road, and it was later rebuilt to the Kings Arms we see today. The right-hand picture is a drawing of the Toll House for the Birmingham to Pershore Turnpike road as it left Redditch south. The Redditch north tollhouse was 'Granny Lockes' at Bordesley Corner.



Fox and Goose, Foxlydiate



Kings Arms, Beoley Road



Toll House, Mount Pleasant

This Newsletter is edited and published by Anthony Green, Society Secretary, Redditch History Society and is produced on behalf of the Society.

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