

Annual report 2018

From Helen Forde in the chair

The 60th anniversary of the founding of Banbury Historical Society was celebrated at the AGM in July 2018, held at Linden House in South Bar, the newly restored premises of the solicitors Spratt Endicott. The Society is very grateful to them for allowing us to use the premises and the gardens for the occasion. While this is now a commercial building, it was previously the residence of Jeremy Gibson's godmother, Christina Pemberton, whom he recalled visiting there as a child, together with other reminiscences about Banbury at that time. The chairman, Deborah Hayter, produced a fine cake to mark the occasion and the anniversary was toasted in suitable fashion by members while enjoying the garden at the back of the building.

The first session of the year was held in St Mary's church where the Revd. Canon Jeff West talked about the architecture and changes introduced inside the church in the nineteenth century. This was followed in October by a lecture from Professor Greg Larson on palaeogenetics and bio-archaeology which, delivered at high speed and very amusingly, kept the audience on their toes as they grappled with the complexities of the research and the potential for re-writing some very early history as a result of the findings. Dr Rosemary Leadbetter gave us a more localised talk in November on smallpox and its effects in Banbury and Carol Anderson, head of Oxfordshire Museums Services followed that in December with a description of the glove industry in West Oxfordshire. After Christmas another historian based locally, Dr Rowena Archer, shared her interest and enthusiasm for the formidable Alice Chaucer, the fifteenth century Duchess of Suffolk, and the following month, February saw a more than full house for a talk by Keith Westcott on the Broughton hoard of silver coins and the subsequent discovery of a Roman villa in the grounds of the castle. Next Liz Wooley gave a very well-illustrated, and indeed disturbing talk about the prevalence of child labour in the nineteenth century and the necessity for families to augment their resources in this way and the final session in April was a reminiscences session on Banbury in the second world war, led by Karey Morley of Banbury Museum.

A degree of changing places in the committee took place in the autumn with Deborah Hayter standing down as chair; she had led the Society in an outstanding manner for four years and richly deserved a rest. However, she has agreed to continue producing the newsletters and booking speakers for which we are very grateful. Susan Walker, who had organised summer meetings for several years and David Pym, who had done the same including a very interesting walk round the geology of Banbury buildings for one of the 2018 summer meetings, both resigned in the autumn; the committee thanked them for their contributions and were very sorry to see them go but welcomed Rosemary Leadbetter and Pamela Wilson as new members to swell the ranks. Ian West has been working on a new website for the Society and in the interim has brought the existing website, hosted by the museum, up to date and improved it with reports of the lectures and up to date information. He has undertaken a great deal of work on the new website and deserves all our thanks. The Society reviewed its data protection policy in relation to the new legislation of 2018 and issued a privacy policy which is available on the website.

During the year the Society secured a grant from the Pye Charitable Settlement for bookshelves to be built in the museum library to house the volumes donated by Jeremy Gibson. The books subsequently emerged from the boxes in which they had been stored and the library is now open to all, for reference, on Wednesday afternoons, with Society and museum volunteers acting as invigilators. This provides a very positive profile for the Society and significantly improves the

services to members. It is hoped to commence the listing and cataloguing shortly to make it easier for readers to identify what they would like to use in advance.

Chris Day has continued to edit *Cake and Cockhorse* and Jeremy Gibson has completed the latest volume in the Records Series *Banbury in the eighteenth century: Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor, 1708-1797 and other Banbury records* which has been distributed to members. The Society is very grateful to both of them for the amount of work they have done during the year. *Junctions at Banbury* by Barrie Trinder, which was published last year, has sold extremely well.

The membership of the Society remains strong and the lectures continue to be well attended with between 60 and 70 in the audience. It is heartening, if occasionally a bit difficult, when large numbers of non-members also attend meetings but the option of using other premises on such occasions remains open and the committee will do its best to forecast which lectures are likely to be a sell-out. However, it is a tribute to the flourishing state of the Society, its members and its committee that this has to be an option.