

Sandbach History Society
Report of the November 2023 meeting
Pauline and Stephen Minshull: Bygone Sandbach

Pauline and Stephen Minshull gave a completely new presentation to Sandbach History Society from their "Bygone Sandbach" series. Images are taken from the collection of the late John Minshull, updated by Stephen, where older slides are overlaid and compared the present day images. On this occasion the presentation took the form of a tour around places on the edge of Sandbach, some of which are described in the following account.

The tour began in Homes Chapel with views of the centre showing the George and Dragon at the beginning of the 20th century but also two other pubs, no longer existing: the Bull's Head (demolished 1948) and the Red Lion (demolished 1970).

The next stopping point was at Brereton and the Bears Head, built in 1625. This inn has always been a popular stopping place on the A50 particularly before the building of the M6. A photograph from 1920 showed the inn together with a post office, a Methodist Chapel, and a smithy.

The nearby Brereton Hall is a Grade I listed building, originally built for Sir William Brereton in 1586, although altered in the 19th century. From 1939 to 1993 the building served as a private school for girls. Since 2000 it has been a privately owned residence; in 2017 a planning application for a hotel was rejected.

Moving further down the A50 we came to Arclid and at the crossroads the Rose and Crown pub, later to be Zest Indian restaurant. Alongside was originally the Congleton Union Workhouse as a photograph of 1900 showed. It later became a hospital specialising in geriatric care until it closed in the 1990s and demolished in 1994. A modern housing estate now occupies the site. Taken just a little further away was a photograph from 1957 showing the K7 Bluebird, Donald Campbell's jet engine hydroplane, on its way up to the Lake District for water speed tests. On this occasion it had stopped en route outside the Salamanca pub (now a house) at the Arclid crossroads.

Cutting across country, by means of Love Lane, and passing another former pub, the New Inn at Betchton (now office buildings) we found ourselves looking at the site of yet another well-known pub, the Red Lion, popularly known as the Romping Donkey, at Hassall. This was partly "accidentally demolished!" and is now a private residence. Not far away, near to Hassall Hall, is the site of the unfinished church at Lodley. It was built by Mr W Lowndes, of Hassall Hall, at his own expense in about 1836 but he died in 1837 before its completion. It then stood empty until 1930 when it was demolished.

The route now took us across to Winterley and on to Haslington. Just off the main road in Haslington is Haslington Hall, a Grade I listed building dating from 1545 and built for Admiral Sir Francis Vernon. Additions and alterations have been made over the centuries and in 2004 was being run as a hotel specialising in wedding receptions and accommodation. In 2018 a fire destroyed a large part of the upper floor. It was bought by a property developer who made the building structurally safe and it is now on the market for sale.

A photograph, looking up Crewe Road, Haslington, in the 1960s showed a factory which had been built by the government just after World War 1 and was in fact the first factory in the UK to manufacture lactose-free milk substitute. In the 1930s it became part of the Milk Marketing Board and later Whey Products and then, in 1987, it was taken over by Dairy Crest. The building was demolished in 1989.

Travelling back to Wheelock, a photograph showed Slater's Garage after damage by German mines in World War II. Apparently, Mr Slater was in bed and woke to find the bedroom floor beneath him had disappeared. He later found his trousers attached to a tree branch. Fortunately, no-one was injured.

The next stopping point was the present day Sunny Mill Drive, off Crewe Road, near the centre of Sandbach. A photograph showed Jennings' coach building workshops which originally occupied this site. When ERF built their first diesel lorry in 1933 it was in premises provided by Jennings and thereafter JH Jennings had the contract for the lorry cabs.

The photographic tour took us off in the direction of Bradwall, heading down Bradwall Road and passing the old brickworks which, in its day, had supplied the bricks for many of the buildings of Sandbach. From Pillarbox Lane can be seen the Grade 2 listed Bradwall Manor, built in the 1800s and during the 20th century was the home of Sir John and Lady Barlow. Sir John, a successful businessman and MP, died in 1986 and after his death, when the house was being renovated, it was damaged by fire.

From Bradwall to Moston. Yew Tree Farm is a timber-framed building dating from the late 16th century and can be seen from the Middlewich Road. In 1989 it was renovated and used for entertainment and business meetings of the board of Murgatroys Ltd. but it has gradually deteriorated since 2006 and is now surrounded by the large Albion Lock housing estate. The building has been empty since 1999 and has been the subject of fire and vandalism attempts. It is currently boarded up and its fate remains unknown.

Moving through Elworth there was just enough time for a quick pint at The Fox public house, dating from the 18th century. Photographs of this building in 1890 and 1910 show it when it had accommodation, and was classed as a hotel, and one could stay overnight under the thatched roof.

Turning off Middlewich Road down Park Lane, or Giddy Lane as it was once known, we came to Abbeyfields, a Grade II listed building which was built on land originally belonging to the Abbey of Dieulacres, near Leek. The present building, dating from the early 1800s, was taken over during World War I as a Red Cross hospital.

The presentation concluded by looking at various photographs of Sandbach Heath in the 20th century – when it had a garage, a hairdressers, a grocery shop, a post office and a chip shop – and finally ended in Vicarage Lane with Tall Chimneys, the building designed by George Gilbert Scott in 1850 which was originally the vicarage for St Mary's Parish Church.

The next meeting of Sandbach History Society will be a **Zoom meeting** on Tuesday 5th December at 8.00 pm. Anthony Annakin-Smith will talk about "Statesmanship, Tragedy and

Love” a remarkable 19th century story of three Cheshire overseas adventurers, one of whom – an eminent politician – had Sandbach links. Visitors who wish to join the meeting should contact the Society via the website or by phoning 01270 760810 to check on the availability of places and arrangements for joining. For further details about the Society see www.sandbachhistorysociety.org.uk

John Higgins



1957 Smallwood Bluebird



1992 Brereton Hall



2013 Haslington Hall



1993 Arclid Hospital