

Redlynch & District Local History Society

Visit to Romsey June 2017

Our June meeting comprised a walking tour of Romsey led by local guides, an interesting tour despite the unseasonal squally cold weather.

The area now called the Cornmarket was formerly the Pigmarket, the Corn Exchange building is now a bank. The White Horse Inn was a coaching inn and its former stables are now hotel accommodation. In the Market Place is a statue of Lord Palmerston who was Prime Minister, he died in 1865 and lived at Broadlands; the Town Hall dates from 1864. Many buildings in the town have newer frontages with older structures behind, part of Bradbeers' department store was formerly The Dolphin Inn. Pinchpeny House was the home of a Tax Collector and is marked by a Blue Plaque – one of many in the town. In Church Street, the former Moody's gunshop is now a Victorian museum and information centre. Behind this is King John's House and a later Tudor building which houses a museum and tea room. In Church Place is a stone pillar with the names of the many streams and watercourses in Romsey, some of which flow under current buildings and roads.



Romsey Abbey was founded as a nunnery in 907, the present building dates from circa 120-1140 with later additions and alterations. This large establishment may have given Romsey its name – from Rome's Island. Henry VIII wanted to demolish the building but the town argued that it was the Parish Church and managed to raise £100 to buy it in 1544 – the bill of sale is still in the Abbey. There are marks on the outside wall from target practice during the Civil War and a stained-glass window which shows the collapsible lifeboats invented by Rev. Berthon. He started a business in 1877 to build these in the yard at his house next to the Abbey and tested them on the River Test.

In Abbey Road, Abbey Works was a factory complex and in 1891 some of the buildings became an orphanage set up by an order of French nuns called the Daughters of Wisdom. It was later La Sagesse girls school and is now a care home and study centre still run by the Daughters of Wisdom. There is also a Roman Catholic Church and a beautiful labyrinth garden on the site.

In 1850 there were 12 mills in Romsey and several water channels are still visible including the one beside The Meads Road. The War Memorial Park was transformed from a marshy area into a park using rubble from the demolition of the Romsey Remount Depot at Pouncefoot at the end of World War 1.

In 2015 Princess Anne unveiled a statue of a horse and soldier to commemorate the 120,000 horses and mules sent over 3 years, for war service from the Romsey Depot.

In Bell Street, the former Bell Inn was a coaching inn and is now apartments, Rum's Eg Gallery refers to another old name for Romsey (Rum's Island – a bed of shingle in the River Test) and the Baptist Chapel dates from 1811. There were many non-conformist churches in Romsey, other interesting buildings are the United Reform Church (formerly the Congregational Church) and the nearby Abbey Hall. A Burial Ground was in use from 1708 – 1804 for dissenters.

Middlebridge Street was the main route to Ower and The New Forest before the bypass was built. Much of the street is now modern housing but some of the older buildings include an old Charity School and the Oddfellows Hall from 1902. The street contained tanneries and timber mills in the past. Broadwater House was the mill owner's house for a corn mill that was destroyed by fire.

Our programme resumes on Tuesday 5th September at Morgan's Vale & Woodfalls Hall at 7:30 "The History of a Victorian House – the Russell Coates Museum".