

Redlynch & District Local History Society

Downton Walk Tuesday June 4th

Members of the Society met on the early evening 4th June for a guided tour of Downton by Nigel Walker and George Purcell.

Downton was founded in the 13th century and was for a very long time owned and administered by the Bishop of Winchester. The cross outside the White Horse is thought to 14th century, the top part being knocked off during the Civil War and was not rebuilt until 1953. The water meadows were constructed between 1665-90.

It became apparent how busy the town was from the 19th century through to the mid-20th century; there were a handful of banks, a draper, a cycle shop, a butcher, a blacksmith, barbers and hairdressers and also more Public Houses than there are today.

Nigel pointed out brick bonds and roof lines and told us how the details reflected the social history of the people who owned or lived in them. Nigel demonstrated how it is important to use as many sources of evidence as possible to tell the story of a building by bringing maps, documents and photographs to accompany the talk.



The Tannery is in the oldest part of Downton. The Tannery flourished after the 1st World War when the company bought all the mills on the opposite side of the road and made use of them in their production system. The Tannery closed in 1998.

The High Street is the oldest part of Downton, many of the buildings are medieval and actually far older than they actually appear.

The church was drawn by John Constable showing the now removed 30' tower extension which enabled the Longford family able to see the church from their Castle at Bodenham.

We looked at the architecturally important Moot House and finished the walk at the Corn Mill where George and his wife provided us with refreshments in the late evening sunshine.

Stephen Ings

The History Society was very shocked to hear that Stephen Ings, a committee member in recent years and a lifelong local historian and author, had passed away unexpectedly on the 19th May. Stephen was a font of all knowledge for all things in the area with a special interest in the religious life, both currently and in the past. He led many of our guided summer walks and always amazed everyone with his tremendous memory for names and dates without the need for notes. He was active right up to his final weekend when he was going to give an exhibition on the Gunpowder Factory at Fritham and was also scheduled to give our September talk. The Society has lost a good friend and an excellent historian.