



Desford & District Heritage Society Spring Newsletter



Welcome to our first newsletter of 2024. Thank you all for your support at our AGM in January. We are looking forward to an exciting year of talks and visits.

Your committee was elected at the AGM as follows:

Chairman: Bernard Grimshaw

Treasurer: Dennis Casson

Secretary: Angela Thomas

Minutes secretary: Pat Crane

Committee members: Jane Crowson, Kate Twitchin, Molly Marcus, Lynda Grimshaw, John Richards, Liz Hudson, Ian Keeling.

Liz, a relative newcomer to Desford, was elected on the night and Ian Keeling, a society member for many years, was coopted at our February meeting. They are a very welcome addition to the committee.

AGM business was followed by Janet O'Donovan giving us an update on The Desford Tapestry.

This is complete and on display in the library. Congratulations to Janet, her stitchers and others who have contributed to this wonderful depiction of Desford Heritage.



Our first talk of the year in March entitled '**On a Collision Course**', was given by one of our Society members, Kate Twitchin. It told the story of the tragic railway crash that took place in Desford on October 22nd, 1881. Using detailed research, Kate was able to narrate the journey of the train and its passengers from its embarkation at Burton to the fateful collision in Desford. She analysed the numerous factors that came together to cause the crash but also brought to life those passengers and railway workers who died or sustained serious injury that day. Kate also highlighted how the people of Desford rallied to help when the disaster happened and played a key role in the enquiries that followed. The interest and excitement that Kate generated as she unfolded events like a thriller novel was stunning. There was no happy ending though, but your committee are going to take forward Kate's suggestion that a memorial be commissioned to mark the tragic event.

The Family History Group recently launched by Kate Twitchin is not part of DDHS, but we are delighted to give our support. Some of our archivists enjoy giving their time and expertise during the sessions.



Since its launch on January 29th, the Desford Heritage Family History Group has become hugely popular and is already supporting a wide range of people on their genealogy journey. Desford Heritage Family History Group offers support and bespoke workshops for those who are at the beginning of their family history research, and top tips for those who are well underway but need some help in taking those next steps. Participants can make use of the Desford Heritage laptops and library computers, with access to a variety of family history web sites including Ancestry and Find My Past. An integral part of the sessions is our “**History Café**”. Here people enjoy conversation about local history over a cup of tea or coffee, often with surprise memories from the Desford archives. Even if you were not able to attend the launch event you are still very welcome to come along to any of the sessions or enjoy a cuppa in The History Café. The group meets on the first Monday of each month between 10:00-12:00 at the Library and on the third Monday of each month between 19:00-21:00 at the Library. We would love to see you there! If you would like any further information, please contact Desford Heritage Family History Group by email – desfordheritagefamilyhistory@gmail.com

The Archivists corner – Pat, Jane, Lynda, Angela, and Gwyneth

As many of you are aware our archive store is housed at SiD and the above people can be found most Thursday mornings sorting and recording the large amount of items and documents that the society holds.

Pat and Jane have for many years answered queries from people researching their family history. The launch of our website has led to an increase in queries and, donations of photographs and documents.

Jane Crowson has written about a recent correspondence below.

DESFORD HALL

We had an enquiry via the website in January from Jane Hayward whose grandmother, Fanny Harper, was Sister at Desford Hall Convalescent Home during World War One. Fanny Harper met her future husband whilst he was being treated there.

Jane sent us some group photos of the soldiers together with the staff at the time, including Dr. Kelly from Desford.



We also found out from newspaper articles at the time, that wounded soldiers were taken on outings. One outing involved 6 cars leaving Desford Hall at 2.45pm and proceeding through Earl Shilton, Barwell, Hinckley, Wolvey, Walsgrave, Coventry,




Kenilworth, and Warwick, arriving at Leamington about 4.45pm. In most of the villages people turned out in large numbers to give the soldiers a good cheer as they went along. On the return journey they were signalled to stop at Wolvey and the inhabitants greeted the men with cigarettes, chocolate, plums, apples, bananas, and flowers in abundance. In one car alone 52

packets of cigarettes were collected. The men arrived back at Desford Hall at 7.45pm after a run of 75 miles in all. The outing was organised by the Earl Shilton and Barwell Motor Association. Desford Hall was a convalescent home before the war, but it opened for military patients on the 5th November 1914 and closed on the 30th April 1919. It had 66 beds at its largest and in the four and half years of operation had 1,901 patients.

**THE DESFORD & DISTRICT
HERITAGE SOCIETY**
Invite you to join them for a talk on:


ARTHUR WAKERLEY

TUESDAY MAY 21ST | 7.30 PM
ARCHITECT, POLITICIAN & VISIONARY



**GUEST SPEAKER
BRIAN JOHNSON**

VENUE: THE FREE CHURCH, CHAPEL LANE, DESFORD

**DESFORD & DISTRICT
HERITAGE SOCIETY**

NON-SOCIETY MEMBERS ARE VERY
WELCOME FOR AN ENTRANCE FEE OF £4
(INCLUDES REFRESHMENTS)

For all DDHS enquiries please email: desford.history@gmail.com

Our May talk by Brian Johnson takes us around Leicester. I am sure many members will recognise some of the buildings of which Arthur Wakerley was the architect.

The Turkey Café (see picture) brings back my memories of the late 60s/70s (we were newly arrived from down south) At one time it was a Brucciani's coffee shop. A treat was their scrummy iced cream buns! The Turkey Café (Grade II listed) had a long history and still stands on Granby Street today.

Arthur was much more than an architect.

I will let Brian Johnson tell us more!

Angela Thomas

Thanks go to Kate Twitchin, Jane Crowson, Jennie Hollier & Huw Thomas for contributions.

We look forward to seeing you on May 21st.