

February 2017

What a brilliant afternoon. Eight members presented their own pieces of research, in some cases accompanied by music, pictures, photographs and a lot of humour and memories.

Teresa told us about the lovely manor house, Harvington Hall and about the most important owner, Humphrey Pakington a devout Catholic. At the end of the 16th century, Humphrey was responsible for employing Nicholas Owen to construct into the renovations of the Hall, the "hidden from view Priest Holes". These served the area's Catholics from Coughton and Hindlip well, in hiding the Jesuit Priests during the Reformation. Humphrey's eldest daughter Lady Mary inherited the Hall on his death and is buried in St Cassians Church in Chaddesley Corbett.

Liz brought back more recent memories with her portrayal of Sir Gerald Nabarro. Born in 1913 he rose from humble beginnings to become an officer in the Royal Artillery. Although a staunch Conservative, an MP from 1950 until 1970, he was an outspoken supporter of capital punishment and backed Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech. He was recognised around the local area as a typical "toff" with his handlebar moustache, booming voice and fleet of 8 cars, with number plates NAB 1-8. He was responsible for introducing the first share issue to help raise money for the Severn Valley Railway.

Ros had researched the life of Sir Rowland Hill, "Father of the Penny Black" who was born in Blackwell St Kidderminster. A local person who had such an effect on not only the local people but on all people in England, the UK and eventually the world. The introduction of the postage stamp and postal service as we still know it today. It revolutionised business practices and enabled the poorest person to be able to send letters. Whilst working on a scheme for colonising South Australia during 1834-39, he found time to devise a rotary printing press for newsprint. His contribution to his country's social and economic life was recognised with his burial at Westminster Abbey.

Much more in the members' memory is the person Dale chose, Clifford T. Ward, born in Stourport 1944 and died in 2001. We listened to his song "Gaye" whilst remembering his long flowing locks of fair hair. We looked at some lovely photographs of him. A Singer Songwriter whose work added melody and poetic sensibility to the pop scene. He produced 24 albums over the years such as, Home thoughts, No more Roll and Roll. After giving up his teaching career in Bromsgrove high school, Trudi Styler was one of his pupils. He became a serious songwriter for other singers. He could have been a major star but suffered from severe stage fright, and with the onset of MS he withdrew to his home and kept writing songs, some very personal to his own life. "Shattered World" was a stage musical, using his own songs produced as a tribute to his life and battle against MS. He died in Kidderminster hospital.

Val, who in her own inimitable style told us the effect the introduction of the Home Guard, the Local Defence Volunteers had on our area. Started at the beginning of World War 2 in case of an invasion of our shores by the Germans. It was hoped that ex

WW1 servicemen would join up to help out with the people who worked in protected occupations.

On the day of the first enlistment in Kidderminster 50 men joined the queue, then by the end of the week the number rose to 150, eventually there were 650 in the Home Guard in this area. They comprised of the too young to join the forces, too old and ex servicemen and the men covered by protected occupations. Farmers were particularly encouraged to join as they were out about in early mornings and after dusk in the countryside, which was considered a vital area needing protection. Provided with a uniform, an armband and sometimes a gun, the members would be required to guard, factories, airfields, explosive stores and coastal area. Look outs were built on high areas all over. At the height of the Home Guard there were 1.5million members. If anyone had served at least 3 years they were entitled to claim the Defence Medal.

Barry showed that he had been a one time Heavy Metal Rocker! When he related some of the stories about Robert Plant vocalist of Led Zeppelin and other bands over time.. The music played was in strong contrast to that of Clifford Ward! Born in 1948 in West Bromwich he is a musician, singer, songwriter having a career spanning over 30 yrs, He has greatly influenced other rock singers. His accolades are numerous, all being "The Greatest.....Lead singer, Voice in Rock and Roll, Metal Vocalist of all Time. As a songwriter Robert Plant's lyrics were often mystical, philosophical and spiritual, inspired by Norse mythology and J R R Tolkien's books. He wrote many songs that referred to feelings about the death of his son, whilst on tour. Following appearances all around the world, he has just completed a month's tour in USA raising awareness of the worldwide refugee crisis. Robert Plant CBE lives in our area and is often seen just living an "ordinary" life.

After Barry's talk, members related some of their personal experience of his gentle unassuming generosity around our area, that often goes unnoticed.

Anne related the story of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, born in Borno, now Nigeria in 1705, known as James Albert, he lived in Kidderminster between 1760 and 1770. He was an African prince of Zoara and a freed slave. He came to Kidderminster because he much admired the work of Calvinist minister, Richard Baxter. When in the town he worked on his autobiography alongside a scribe from Leominster, while being supported by his wife Betty, who worked as a weaver. When the book was published in 1772 it was considered to be the first black African's experiences of life as a slave. Its title was, "A narrative of the most remarkable particulars in the life of James Albert. It was also the first slave narrative in the English language. He died in 1775 in Chester.

Margaret told us about Rachel Eveline Wilson, born 1894 and lived at Park Hall, Kidderminster. Her father was a partner in Albright and Wilson of Oldbury. After nurse training at Kidderminster Infirmary she worked as a staff nurse at Kidd. Red Cross, and then moved to Uffculme hospital in Birmingham to work at the Voluntary Aid Detachment, an organisation formed in 1909 to provide field nursing services. Rachel then served time as a nurse in the Friends Ambulance Unit, the FAU was a voluntary service founded by men of the Quaker Society as a practical expression of the Quaker Peace Testimony. She served 2 years 1917-1918 in Dunkirk with the FAU. Her

diaries, uniform, medal, poems and photographs can be seen in an exhibition in the Library of the Society of Friends. Her Dunkirk diary is her personal record of life nursing on the battlefield, "accompanied by the deafening noise of cracking and whizzing of shells" Rachel went on to marry Paul Cadbury in 1919, she died in 1993 aged 99.

Thank you to everyone who participated in making this afternoon so interesting.