

MALDENS AND COOMBE HERITAGE SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 24th FEBRUARY 2016

AT NEW MALDEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Mary, greeted all members (43)

There were apologies for absence from Shaan and Tim Everson, Chris Coke, Lynne Finnerty, Pat Farr, Judy Caddy, Alan Oakley, Beryl Bizodis, and Peter Jackson., and we were please to welcome back Jean Lyons a long time member who had been unable to attend for some months.

There were no new members

The minutes of the last meeting could not be produced as the Secretary had had a problem with his computer. Robin hoped that normal service would be resumed next month.

Mary thanked the church for the use of their meeting place, and for their catering facilities.

She went on to tell members that the Society had purchased a new gazebo for fairs and markets. The cost was £127 plus £6 for a waterproof floor covering.

The representatives of the council were unable to attend again so Robin read his account of why the roundabout came into existence. (see attached)

We then had an interesting talk about the history of Tolworth given by local authors Patricia Ward and Bob Philips. Pat related that initially there had been an iron age settlement evidenced by the discovery of the remains of three round houses in what is now Alpine Avenue, together with another settlement at Tolworth Court Farm. The Domesday book records two manors, there was also a mill and 22 peasants. The two manors were valued at 60 shillings.

A hamlet had been established by the time of the Tudors. The Priory of St Mary's Merton which held the land was dissolved and the land reverted to the crown. The estate including Long Ditton was sold to George Evelyn in 1567 and remained with the Evelyns until 1692. The estate passed through various hands until 1781 when it was bought by Nathaniel Polhill. The census for 1821 shows 234 inhabitants living within the area, with Tolworth Court Farm being the most substantial property.

Bob took over to relate the story of Tolworth from Victorian times, commencing with the building of St Mathews church and the coming of the railway in the 1830s. A school was built nearby, and the hamlet soon became a suburb with the building of the Tolworth Isolation Hospital.

Life in Tolworth changed dramatically with the building of the Kingston By Pass in 1927 together with the ribbon development alongside it and other housing close by. This brought with new shops on he Broadway carrying furnishings, carpets, and curtains, and around this time electrical items came on the market. The Broadway had been opened in 1936 with 57 shops. New schools were built

in Douglas Road and new churches e.g. Our Lady Immaculate and St Georges, and a Congregational church.

Leisure facilities followed with the opening of Surbiton Lagoon and the Tolworth Odeon.

War came to Tolworth on 2nd September 1940 with a bombing raid on Nash and Thompson in Oak Croft Road and another factory on the bypass. After the war life returned to normal for the area, with the major development in recent times being the building of Tolworth Tower in 1963.

Both Bob and Pat were given a round of applause for a most interesting talk and afterwards managed to sell a few copies of their book "The Story of Tolworth".

There then followed an interesting discussion about the shops between Dukes Avenue and Kings Avenue, together with those between Grafton Road and Cambridge Road. (details to follow).

In AOB Martin told members that the Police Station at CI Tower would be closed for a while, as some asbestos had to be removed. Robin also asked for details of the first dentist that members remember in the area, as we were to have a talk on the history of dentistry in a couple of months.

Julian also asked members whether anybody knew where Mesopotamia was in connection with Lieut Firman VC and then went on to explain why he was there. He was hoping to deliver 270 tons of supplies to the forces trapped in the siege of Kut. Unfortunately the Turks anticipated the action and intercepted the ship Julnar and all on board were either captured or killed. This action earned Firman and his assistant Lieut Cmmdr Cowley Victoria Crosses in what turned out to be a suicide mission.

The meeting closed with the next planned for Wednesday 30th March 2016.