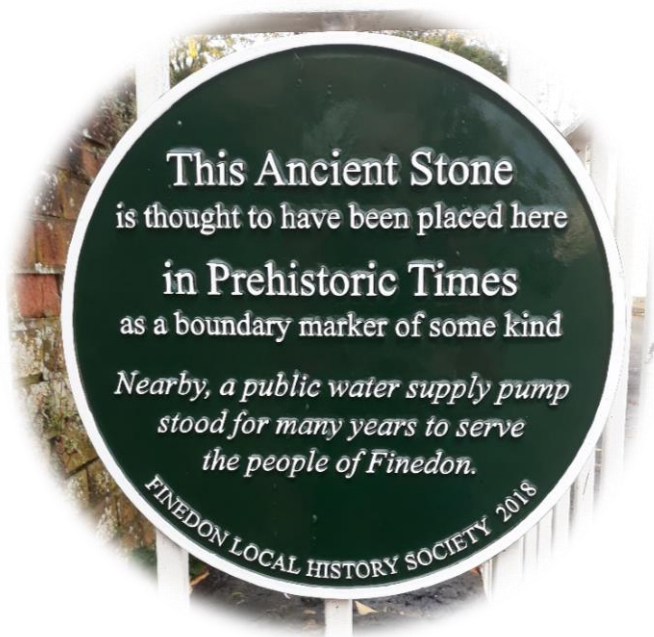


Finedon Local History Society



Ancient Stone Plaque, Dolben Square

Newsletter
January 2020

Chairman's Report for 2019

This year has not been its best in the history of the Society. On 25th May, our former Chairman of 11 years, Malcolm Peet, died after many months of illness. Founder member Brenda Beck wrote of Malcolm's enormous contribution to the Society since its formation in 2000 in the September edition of the newsletter. He is, and will be, greatly missed.

It had been known for some time that the Society would lose the use of the Friends' Meeting House. We were eventually given 12 weeks formal notice to leave by 30th June. Much of our furniture and larger items have gone to other like Societies (on a loan basis) or have had to be disposed of. However, we are fortunate to be able to use the Mission Room for office and research work on Monday mornings, for two hours from 10am. Visitors are very welcome to drop in on these mornings for a chat and a cup of tea. Storage space is very limited, but we can store our paper records and archive material as well as items of office equipment. Unfortunately, we are not able to put on exhibitions in the Mission Room, as we did in the Meeting House, due to other organisations using the building at other times.

Our new website should be of considerable benefit to the Society and maybe, as a look forward, it could be used for online exhibitions. I should like to thank Society member Graham Sherwood and professional web designer Simon Sturgess for their sterling work over a period of close to a year in bringing the new website to fruition. This is not the "finished" product as the website will be developing and evolving as time progresses.

We had an interesting list of speakers this year with good attendances. I see that we have a full list for 2020 (see back page), thanks to Carolyn Smith for all her work in arranging the speakers.

Thanks also to Mick Britton for all his hard work in organising the clearance of the Meeting House in addition to his work with Carolyn Smith in their continued research activities and the writing and production of the Newsletter.

David Bailey, Chairman.

Treasurer's Report

For the Financial Year ending 31st October 2019

The Society has had a record number of subscriptions for membership (122 members) and good attendances at our monthly meetings. Three newsletters have been produced this year with professional printing, which is well worth the cost. We have benefitted from a final grant of £35 from Wellingborough Council for the plaque in Dolben Square. See Ancient Stone, Dolben Square.

The move from the Meeting House has impacted on the Society's finances. We had direct one-off costs for the move of £333. The new arrangement with the Mission Room will cost the Society about £1,055 a year (for rent and insurance) compared with the rent, utility and insurance costs of £1,330 at the Meeting House.

As a result, the Society's balance has fallen from over £4,000 at the beginning of the year to £3133. This is a healthy balance now we no longer have any property responsibilities.

Many thanks to Harry Nicholls for auditing the Society's accounts again this year. I am happy to answer any questions you have on the Societies financial position.

Rachel Terry, Hon Treasurer.

FLHS 2020 Membership Reminder

Thank you to all our members who have already renewed their subscriptions. If you have not yet renewed, we hope that you will do so before 31st March 2020, so that you will continue to receive the next edition of the newsletter, which will be available in May.

Your subscription (£5 per person for the year) may be sent to Mrs Rachel Terry, Mill Cottage, Finedon Road, Finedon, NN9 5NQ. Alternatively, it can be dropped off at the Mission Room on a Monday morning between 10am and 12 noon or given to a committee member during one of our monthly meetings.

For those of you who have online banking, members can transfer their subscription into the FLHS account (Sort Code 09-01-29, Account Number 02892977) giving your name(s) in the reference section of the transaction. Additionally, the setting up a direct debit for the annual subscription could also be an option. Members who elect to take up an online banking option, would they please advise Rachel by email at rachel.terry2@btinternet.com.

2020 FLHS Committee

The officers and committee members elected at the AGM on 25th November 2019 were:

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| President | Jacqui Minchinton |
| Chairman | David Bailey |
| Vice Chairman | Michael Shipton |
| Secretary | Mick Britton |
| Treasurer | Rachel Terry |
| Minute Secretary | Brenda Beck |
| Committee Members | Karen Eames |
| | Jeremy Millington |
| | James Sheehan |
| Researcher | Carolyn Smith. |

New Society Website

Graham Sherwood

Just over a year ago I accompanied my sister, who still lives in Finedon, to the exhibition of 'Shops' held in the Friends' Meeting House. Being a career retailer, it fascinated me, and I drove home to Milton Keynes thinking long and hard about how I could become involved, having left the town some fifty years previously and now living so far away.

Having looked at what information was on the internet, I decided to throw my energies into the development of a new, improved FLHS website and after making an initial approach to the Society, I broadcasted my intentions on the FLHS Facebook page.

Very quickly, a young man (well, much younger than me) Simon Sturgess who lives in the town and who possesses the appropriate

web design skills, offered his invaluable assistance work began in earnest in February 2019.

We launched the new website at the Annual General Meeting in November, with an appeal for as many locals and ex-pats to spread the word, urging those with computer/tablet/smartphone facilities to show those without the result of our efforts.

Simon and I hope you enjoy the fruits of our work. The site will get bigger and better as time goes on, hopefully with the involvement of more Finedon folk. The website address remains the same at:

www.finedonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk

Following In The Footsteps Of The Late Phil Gobbey (Part 2)

Janet Schmelzer

With our very own "Letter from America", Janet continues with her personal memories of Finedon in the 1940s. From her first instalment (May 2019) of following in the footsteps of Phil Gobbey, Janet resumes her walk.

At the end of the first part of my walk I had ventured up Rose Hill to the Co-op Fish & Chip managed by Sid Underwood in my day; this was mostly open in the evenings but on some days, it was open when fresh fish was available.

We'll backtrack a bit now and walk along Well St. I well remember the Tannery and next to it a largish area of what we then called "waste ground" (in the USA it would be called a "vacant lot" – in case you care). Next to the Tannery the ground was covered with piles of tanned leather scraps that I remember gave off a peculiar smell. Also, on this area was huge water tank which I think was called a Static Water Tank and was intended for putting out fires from expected incendiary bombs during WWII. The tank was well fenced in to keep out the curious and I believe it wasn't removed until well after the war.

My school friends and I who lived in the Mulso Rd area mostly walked to the Junior Girls School via the various yards and alleys instead of on the streets and roads and whether these were

shortcuts or not I don't know but we found the walk to school more interesting this way and sometimes we braved cutting through Shitten Alley.

Across from the Tannery was a small sweetshop on the corner of one of the yards but the name of the shop and that of the yard elude me. A bit further along was The Mission Room. I can picture a pub as the only other business a bit further along and on the other side was The Prince of Wales.

We then come to a small shop run by a Miss Miller, a disabled lady who I believe was in a motorized wheelchair. Miss Miller sold various items of ironmongery, paraffin and ammunition. My dad owned a shotgun for rabbits, etc., and he sometimes sent me to Miss Miller's shop to buy ammunition or what we called cartridges for the shotgun. I still remember my instructions to ask for "12 bore, 5 shot." Imagine anyone selling such an item to a child these days! With wartime paper shortage almost no shops provided a bag and I must have carried home the box of cartridges for anyone to see.



Miss Miller's shop, Well Street, prior to demolition. c.1960

I enjoyed these small excursions to Miss Miller because I liked the smell of paraffin (still do) and Miss Miller was always glad to see anyone to chat to in her rather dark little shop, plus it was warm in winter. From reading Phil Gobbey's account Miss Miller's shop was previously in Ewenfield Road.

Right around the corner was another shop that I often was sent to for our meat ration, this was the butcher shop owned by Frank Cooper and his family, I remember scuffing my shoes on the sawdust covered floor and that it was always so cold in there, necessarily of course.

Around the corner on Affleck Bridge and on the right was a sweet shop called Benson's and in pre sweet-rationing days I have vague

memories of a beautifully dressed window full of chocolate boxes, colourful glass jars of sweets, etc. But perhaps my memory serves me wrong and it was during the war and empty chocolate boxes, etc. were substituted to keep the window looking attractive. Across the street was Albert Shelton's butcher shop and on the corner Swan's shop selling groceries, sweets, etc. I was never in this shop as we were registered for our rations at Burton's in the High Street. Those of you close to me in age will remember that we could only get our food rations at one particular shop.

We've arrived at Dolben Square and Regent St. and the only business I can recall on this street besides the Regent Cinema is Harry Shelton's butcher shop.

Backtracking around to Church St and I remember the printer's shop on the left and wish I could recall the name of the owners. It was up some steep steps and this shop had a distinctive smell of paper and print and I enjoyed occasional errands there to buy Christmas presents of Basildon Bond blue writing paper and envelopes. Remember the days when we wrote letters and some folk were particular about the kind of stationery they used? Another attraction for me was that sometimes the printing press would be working at the back of the shop and I liked the sound of that.

Some way along Church St was the Finedon Co-operative Society premises comprising as if my memory serves me right, their grocery, bakery and perhaps the coal dept. Upstairs were the offices. Across the street and next to Pytchley Row was the Co-op Drapery Dept. which sold fabrics, clothes and general haberdashery under the management of Mr Cyril Wilson. The Co-op Butcher's Shop was next door.

I have I think completed my walking tour of what Americans would call "Downtown Finedon" or "the Business District" but there were still a good many other shops and places of business in other parts of Finedon and in my next instalment my explorations will try to cover those.

To compliment this walk around Finedon a poem, provided by Susan Leach, formerly of Finedon now living in Paignton, Devon written by the late Rose Richardson, a friend of her grandmother.

*What memories go through my head,
As I lay on my little bed.
When I went shopping down the street,
Many dear friends would I greet.
First to Piggot's for some lace,
Then carry on at a great pace,
I go to Dingy's for some peaches.
Call for chips at Georgy Leache's
India Shop so clean
Sold rolled bacon, oh so lean
Pat Talbot had some wicked ways
Opened her shop on Sundays.
Go to Yeats for some cake
Then to Warner's to see them bake, loaves
Some long cottages too.
On to visit Ernie Lowe, "what do want?"
Barbara would say.
Her Daddy was careful to see that you pay.
Crossed the road to Struggles to pills,
These were sure to cure all ills.
To Dawson and Pope, a very select shop.
When a hat I required I was sure to hop.
Shelton's a wonderful shop on the bridge,
Sold fresh ham that had never seen a fridge.
Binson's was my last port of call,
Even now I so often recall
All the goodies there displayed
But I alas was so dismayed
To find no money at all was left
So back home for tea I would go
There to find my greatest treasure
A happy home to give me pleasure.*

Rose Richardson

The Impact of World War II on Finedon Infant School

Carolyn Smith

After reading John Douglas's story of his evacuation from London to Finedon via Long Buckby (January 2019) I decided to look at the impact upon Finedon Infant School of the Second World War.

In the summer of 1939 plans were already well advanced with preparations for what was seen as inevitable war with Germany. The Infant School was already being used in the evenings as the venue for Air Raid Precaution purposes. Gas masks had already been issued, and during the day classes would be abandoned for short periods whilst children's masks were checked and instruction given to ensure everyone was fully aware of how the masks should be worn, if the need arose.

One of the national plans was "Operation Pied Piper", the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of children from major British cities. For Northamptonshire, it was expected that, 40,000 children would be evacuated from north London to the county. 25,000 of them would come to the Wellingborough and Kettering districts, which included Finedon. Between Friday 1st September and Sunday 3rd September 1939 seven trains would carry 11,964 children from St Pancras station to Wellingborough station. 5,020 were destined for Wellingborough and Finedon, the remainder for Rushden, Irthlingborough and the surrounding villages. Eighty United Counties buses had been requisitioned to transport the evacuees from the county's railway stations to the billeting stations.



*Operation Pied Piper.
Evacuees arriving in Brent, Devon from Bristol 1940 © IWM (D2587)*

From Our Archives



*Mulso Square c1950. Looking towards Church Street, with the Co-op Drapery on the left and Co-op Grocery and Bakery on the right.
Photograph donated by John Coles*



*A light dusting of snow. Stocks Hill, late 1950s.
Photograph donated by Ted Amey.*



The cedar tree of the Tudor Gate dominates this winter scene of the High Street, c.1955.



On the same day, looking towards the Banks park. The "Pam" on the right prior to demolition.

These two photographs were donated by late Pete Swords

In Wellingborough district there were five billeting stations, one of which was the Mulso School at Finedon, where the headteacher, Captain Sutton, was the billeting officer. The billeting stations were equipped with an emergency stock of blankets, to be used if householders taking in evacuees said they hadn't enough bedding. It was emphasised that evacuees would not be sleeping in the billeting station. It was expected that the children would arrive with 48 hours of rations. Additionally, boxes of rations, in Finedon's case supplied by Finedon Independent Cooperative Society, were given out with each child taken into a household. Each box contained one can of meat, two cans of milk (sweetened and unsweetened) two packets of biscuits and a quarter pound of chocolate. These boxes were supplied specifically to avoid a rush on local tradespeople. Those who housed evacuees would also receive ten shillings and sixpence (52.5p) a week for one child and eight shillings and sixpence (42.5p) each for two or more children.

On September 13th it was reported that Wellingborough district had only received about half of its expected number of evacuees. This was in part due to a significant number of children who had been expected to leave London not making the journey. Also, those in charge at Wellingborough had decided that the evacuees on the earlier trains should go to fill the quota for the outlying districts, so that those who arrived later would not have so far to travel. When the last train was cancelled, they could not call back some of the children who were already being settled in Rushden and the villages.

In Finedon the presence of the evacuees was felt almost immediately as they settled into their new homes their families back in London were already making arrangements to visit. Such that on the Saturday of Feast weekend, 16th September, two busloads of parents of evacuees from Walthamstow swelled the numbers of visitors to the Feast weekend fair.

On the 19th September Miss Joyce Drew, headmistress of the Infant School opened the school for the new term and reported that *"20 natives and 30 immigrants were admitted"*. Also, Miss Edna Constance Hewitt, college trained certified teacher from Chapel End School, Walthamstow had temporarily taken up duties in the school. Prior to this date the school had around 170 children on roll, so with thirty extra children and a teacher the school was able

to make full use of their five classrooms, and there is no indication that they had to operate a part time schooling timetable.

Whilst the children settled into school, organisations within Finedon were being mobilised to help the children and their mothers. The Finedon Evacuee Welfare Committee had been formed from the 50 people who attended the first meeting, and it was to be supported by subscription from the town, with the Conservative Club setting the ball rolling with a £5 donation. A repair and sewing subcommittee and a boot and shoe repair subcommittee were formed. The former appealed for gifts of clean and wearable clothing to supplement any clothing the children had brought with them. The latter reported that they needed 20-30 Finedon men working on a rota, who would be willing to repair boots free of charge, provided the materials were found. Also, many of the children needed to be provided with boots free of charge. The British Legion branch put out a call to their members to volunteer to repair the boots of “necessitous children”.



Stonework from Chapel End Infant School Walthamstow

The Coop Social Welfare Committee advised that the Coop Hall was available, free of charge, on Mondays and Fridays and alternate Tuesdays, to be used for social activities for the evacuee families. The women evacuees were invited to attend the Women’s Coop Guild and tea would be provided free of charge, but would they please bring their own sugar.

Miss Drew kept records for the “native” children and the “immigrant” children separately. This was probably because the London County Council (LCC) would still have been funding the schooling for the evacuees. Indeed, during the first month after

their arrival the LCC sent their own nurses to carry out medical inspections upon their children. Miss Lumley from Willesden and Miss Stuart from Chapel End also visited. Regular dental inspections were also recorded for the Walthamstow children. It is unclear whether the children were amalgamated into the main classes or taught separately. But it is most likely they were placed within their own age groups as by November 20th 1939 Miss Hewitt, the visiting teacher, had been placed in charge of Class IV. At the end of term, the whole school had a Christmas Party, attended by local dignitaries plus Mr and Mrs Hall from Chapel End, Walthamstow and several evacuee helpers.

The LCC continued their inspections during 1940, with Mrs Sewter visiting on a monthly basis. In May 1940 she visited on the same day that Captain Sutton was at the school checking the children's gas masks. The Infant School had become a site for an air raid shelter and the children were schooled in air raid warning procedures. On 29th May 1940 they all managed to get into position within one minute of the alarm sounding.

The start of the autumn term in 1940 coincided with more changes at the school. Miss Hewitt had been recalled at the end of the previous term, and she was replaced by Miss A.M. Wakefield of Walthamstow. During September both official and unofficial evacuation of children from London to Northamptonshire was happening, probably due to the start of the London Blitz. During September the school was closed for a total of 4 days due to billeting purposes and medical inspections. At this point Miss Drew does not disclose any numbers for new "immigrant" children. But after a third closure of the school on 7th and 8th November 1940, again for billeting purposes she revealed that 80 immigrant children had been admitted to the school, and Miss Turnball, a certified teacher from Stockwell had commenced her duties. Arrangements were made for a class to be taught in the school hall. The school was re-organised to allow the new children to be placed in their respective age groups, and furniture, in the form of 48 chairs and 24 tables had also been received from the LCC stock.

As 1941 began the school settled into its new routine operating from 5 classrooms and the hall as a permanent classroom. During this year there were several occasions when the school did not open until 10 a.m., as there had been air raids during the previous

night. A rake and holder were installed in case of firebombs, and a supply of sandbags were delivered. On the lighter side, the LCC paid for the evacuee children to be taken out of school to visit the cinema on several occasions. Something that would probably have not gone down well with the “native” children.

At the beginning of each term Miss Drew recorded the numbers of children who moved up to the Junior Schools – natives and immigrants being recorded separately. A few of the evacuee children may have returned to London, but with the numbers of children for whom the LCC was responsible gradually reducing by June 1942 the total number of children in the Infant School had sufficiently reduced that the LCC tables and chairs were removed, and presumably the school hall was no longer being used as a classroom.

Miss Wakefield of Walthamstow ceased her duties on the 2nd October 1942. Although there is no record of Miss Turnbull leaving the school with 49 children moving up to the Junior Schools in September 1943 it would seem that the bulk of the evacuee children had left the Infant School. Indeed, by March 1944 the Infant School had returned to its pre-war arrangement of having only 4 classrooms in use.

It Is Never Too Late Too Join!

Mick Britton

Recently the Society was delighted to receive an application to join from Mrs Winifred Stevens of Hull. Winifred has always read the newsletter of her son and society member, Peter, but thought it was now time that she joined in her own right. What is so special about this gesture to join? Winifred was born in Finedon in 1918 and recently celebrated her 101st birthday!

Not wishing to miss the opportunity I asked Peter if, with his mother's permission, I could have a few words about her life in Finedon, from a time so long ago where personal memories are so very few and far between. I was fortunate in that Peter had previously written a piece for the St Mary's Parish Magazine to celebrate Winifred's 100th birthday in 2018. This has been reproduced, with consent, for the benefit of our Society members.

Mrs Winifred Stevenson was born in Finedon at the very end of the First World War. Her mother was Florence Miriam (May) Wells, the oldest child of Frank and Ada Freestone who were living on High Street in Finedon, close to the junction with Rose Hill. Frank was born in Burton Latimer and was employed as an Army Boot Maker. Her father was Albert Wells who was originally a Farm Labourer at Hillside Farm, owned at the time of his marriage to Florence by his step-grandfather William Russell; his natural grandfather having died as the result of an explosion at a blast furnace. Before then, William had been the manager of an ironworks in Irthlingborough. Albert became a mine worker and, after living for a while with his wife's family, they moved to a house at the bottom of Mulso Road which they shared with another family. Winifred was brought up in this house, which bordered on to the Recreation Ground at the back and was later used by Tommy Gore in the fifties/sixties as a car sales business.

Winifred worked at the Ideal Clothiers on Irthlingborough Road where she was trained as a machinist to sew trousers, waistcoats, etc. - in fact most of their products. These skills became very useful as it enabled her to make most of the family's clothes and later to work from home when the children were settled at school and needed less attention!



*Ideal Clothiers, c. 1925
Photograph donated by Elaine Burley*

The Wells family had meanwhile moved to Summerlee Road and she was married from here during World War 2 to Bob, who was

then an Airframe Fitter in the RAF, and who came from Wellingborough. Both of her sons were born at the Woodfield Nursing Home and the Stevenson family moved to Cromer Road in the late forties; this was a prefabricated concrete “semi” called an Orlit, designed by a Czech architect and adopted by the government as a quick solution of the post war need for new housing – an ice-box in winter but otherwise a modern house. Winifred well remembers holidays taken from there to the East Anglian coast, travelling in Jess Lawman’s coaches, and later ones to Scotland by car.

The family moved to Finedon Road, Wellingborough in the mid-sixties because Bob, who joined the Ideal Clothiers in Wellingborough after being de-mobbed, was settled there and enabled him to walk to work each day rather than the daily bus journeys. Winifred still retained her links with friends in Finedon and the church there, of which her elder brother Ron later became the organist.

Winifred and Bob celebrated their Golden Wedding at the Mulso Arms with family/friends and they then went on a trip down the Rhine. However, sons Peter and Tony were now living respectively at Leeds and Hull so, when Bob died in the early nineties, she decided to move closer to them and now lives in a bungalow on the outskirts of Hull. Here she joined a “Writing Group” run by a local volunteer which encouraged her talents in that area, and she spent many years writing and composing poetry. She has privately published several booklets of her work.

Winifred celebrated her 100th birthday there with some neighbours and friends and then a family meal at the weekend which included her three great-grandchildren.

Peter has passed on several of Winifred’s booklets to the Society. From Perspective (published in 2015), a poem entitled Mill Lane.

Mill Lane

A sleeper here, a sleeper there, all that was left of the railway line.

Flanked by a hedgerow, now green wild, and lofty trees entwined with vine.

*Then on ahead a cinder track, no daisy would put down
 roots.
 But clinker now have lost their edge, crushed by the
 tread of the workers boots.
 And then at last the river Ise, though called Isebrook,
 which seems a shame,
 From water from it drove the mill, the one which gave the
 lane its name.
 No traces of a mill remain, only odd buildings stand to
 show,
 Of industry which once was here, and cottages four in a
 row.
 Number one was an oasis; thirst quenched for a copper
 or two.
 Then on we'd go to water's edge with fishing rod these to
 pursue.
 Still following the rivers flow, feet trampled down the
 uncut grass,
 And in the distance can be heard a speeding train will
 soon pass.
 We cross a bridge now homeward bound, leaving the
 river Ise behind
 To onward flow, yet still remain as do the pictures in my
 mind.*

Winifred Stevenson.

Ancient Stone, Dolben Square

Rachel Terry

At the Finedon History Day in 2017, Jon-Paul Carr (Secretary of the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum) was on the guided walk round Finedon. He was interested in the stone behind the railings in Dolben Square. What is its importance? Francis Terry, leading the walk, quoted from John Bailey's book "*Finedon otherwise Thingdon* ", p190 2nd para":

To all appearances, it is one of those stones set down in prehistoric times to mark a boundary or track and, if so, has been there for thousands of years...

Adjacent to the stone used to stand a public pump and there was at one time a similar, but smaller, stone which lay alongside the first.

Jon-Paul suggested that it would be informative for locals and visitors to have a plaque on the railings explaining the stone's significance. The Society successfully applied for a small community grant from Wellingborough Borough Council and, although there was some delay while the railings were painted, the plaque was erected earlier last year. The Society is very grateful for the Council's financial support.

When you are next in Finedon, do go to Dolben Square and have a look.



Over the centuries the stone was used as a central meeting point in Dolben Square. George V's Coronation, 22nd June 1911.

From Finedon to Van Diemen's Land

The Transportation of Finedon Convicts in the 19th century

This Society publication has recently been re-printed. Costing £5 or £6.50 for UK p&p. To order a copy please contact Mick Britton on 07988 065010 or at michael.britton@ntlworld.com

FLHS Programme 2020

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| 27 th January That is The End of the News | Rev Paul Needle |
| 24 th February The Lost Sports Grounds of Kettering | Ian Addis |
| 23 rd March Witchcraft in Northamptonshire | Kevin Varity |
| 27 th April Northamptonshire Country Houses | Neil Lyon |
| 18 th May The Commonwealth War Graves Commission | Megan Kelleher |
| 22 nd June John Warner and Me – Finedon in the 1950s | Tom Watts |
| 27 th July Memories on Stone-historic Graffiti in the Garden Lodge at Lyveden | Susan Lees |
| 24 th August History of the Music Hall | Colin Ray |
| 28 th September Northamptonshire Film Archive Trust | Pete Austin |
| 26 th October Kirby Hall and the Hattons | Malcolm Deacon |
| 23 rd November AGM and The History of the Wellingborough and Finedon Quakers | Karen Hawes |

*FLHS monthly meetings are held in the Mission Room at 7.30pm.
Speakers and/or topics may change at short notice owing to
circumstances beyond FLHS control.*