

Local History Group 1 contributions to the “Museum of Local Curiosity”

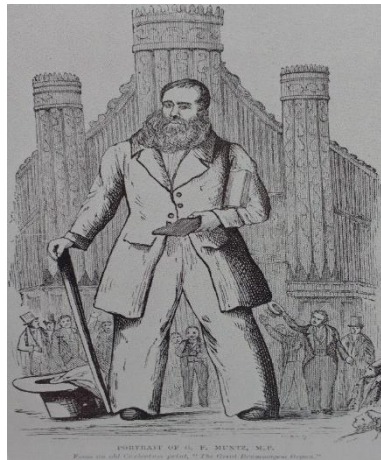
On December 13th, 13 members of the group met together to plan for 2023 and hold our Festive Meeting in St Swithin’s House at Barston. In the first hour, following the format of the Radio 4 programme “The Museum of Curiosity”, eight members suggested entries to our local virtual museum. These are a few notes that we made during the morning: apologies for any mistakes or inaccuracies.

“Solihull Carnival in Days Gone by” – Linda Maxfield



Linda shared with the group her memories of Solihull Carnival from her youth. She vividly recalled the wonderful floats and children with fishing nets leaning over to collect money for charity – no health and safety in those days! Linda recalled the fair in Tudor Grange Park where the carnival procession finished. She remembered winning goldfish by throwing ping pong balls into goldfish bowls and bringing it home in poly bag!! The helter-skelter and ghost train were favourites rides .

“George Frederick Muntz and the Muntz Family” – Pam Hunter



At a Zoom meeting during lockdown, Pam had given us a wonderful presentation on the Muntz family. Pam reminded us that the Muntz family made their fortune from Muntz Metal Works; Muntz metal (George Frederick’s invention - an alloy of Copper and zinc) being used for the sheathing of the Cutty Sark. George Frederick, an M.P for Birmingham, who rented Umberslade Hall. The Muntz family granted the land for the railway on the understanding that a station would be built; George Frederick’s son was responsible for establishing The Forest Hotel and buying Umberslade Hall. George Frederick’s grandson also built Christchurch Baptist Church in Hockley Heath in 1877 which became a World Heritage site in 1992.

“The Plunge Pool at Packwood” – Elizabeth Orton



Elizabeth currently volunteers at the National Trust property, Packwood House. Her item for the virtual museum was the Plunge Pool, at Packwood, created in the 1680s by George Featherston; plunging into fresh water was popular in the late 17th century. Today it is surrounded by conifer hedge, but the original holly hedge was probably used for drying laundry. Elizabeth shared that it is uncertain what the plunge pool was used for, but she suggested that it may have been a “Tudor swimming pool for smelly land-workers”.

“Queen Eleanor” – Cherrie Morgan



Cherrie chose Eleanor of Castile for her entry. In 1250 Henry III arranged the marriage of Princess Eleanor of Castile (age 10 years) to his son Prince Edward (age 13 years). The young couple lived together from when she was 18 years old – it was a love match. They were married for 36 years and had 15 children but only 5 survived. In 1274 they became the first King and Queen to be jointly crowned. Eleanor was an educated lady and Knowle Manor was given to her. She died near Lincoln (there is a plaque to her in Lincoln Cathedral) and there are 12 Eleanor Crosses from Lincoln to London where her coffin rested on the journey to Westminster Abbey. After the queen's death in 1290, King Edward gave the 'Manor of Knoll' to the Abbot and Priors of Westminster and instructed "that masses be said for the soul of Queen Eleanor".

“George James Eveson” – John Eveson



Evesons Fuels is a well-known local company, situated for many years at a site on Station Road. The chosen resident for our virtual museum is John George James Eveson, John's great grandfather, who had offices at 134 Edmund Street in Birmingham. He was the owner of the first car in Knowle in the early 1900s. Originally Evesons were the suppliers of charcoal in the Bewdley area. Later the company brought coal to the weighbridge on the canal in Knowle from where it was lifted on to the roadside for distribution around the Midlands area – the current boatyard is on the site of the coal wharf.

“Thomas Charles Plant” – Margaret Plant



Margaret spoke about her ancestors, her father and grandfather both named Thomas Charles. The family business originally involved the transportation of rushes and reeds from the Preston area to Birmingham by horse drawn carriage. The business developed into suppliers of hardware and their first business premises was in the Bullring. Margaret also spoke of having dustbins full of water on the roof which saved the premises from fire damage and her evacuation to 'The Croft' in Haselor during WWII.

“Dorridge Station” – Tony Taylor



Tony’s entry was an important part of the later years of his working life when he travelled daily, by train, to work in Warwick. As mentioned by Pam, the Muntz family sold their land on the proviso of a station at Dorridge even though the population was tiny. Built by GWR it was opened on October 1st 1852. Named Knowle and Dorridge Station on July 1st 1899 it was renamed Knowle Station by BR in 1968 and later, June 6th 1974, became Dorridge Station. In 1932/33 the station was renovated due to the quadrupling of the Birmingham mainline.

“Lyons Family Butchers” – Joan Taylor



Lyon’s pies are a favourite in the Taylor household and Joan chose this well-known ‘butcher’ family for her entry. From the early 1880s the presence of a butcher in Knowle was well documented. The Alldays, the Corbetts, George Barratt and the Harpers preceded John Lyons as the local butcher. After the end of WWII Phil Lyons (John’s son) and his son Eric made a deal with Frank Harper to buy his shop which they ran for many years. In the early 1950s Eric and his wife bought and refurbished the High Street shop. The business is now in the fifth generation of the Lyons family.