

STILTON HERITAGE

Exploring the history of Stilton and the surrounding area

NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2025/26

Welcome

....to our second Stilton Heritage Newsletter providing Heritage Members with some of the latest information about our charity and our future plans. We also feature some topics of local history. Again, if you are able, please provide us with some feedback and let us know what you'd like to see in future Newsletters. We'd also welcome any general comments from our Heritage Members on Stilton Heritage and its future. Please contact us through our website: www.stiltonheritage.org or email the secretary: secretary@stiltonheritage.org.



101 Years ago

Times were hard following the Great War and the Spanish Flu epidemic. Stilton's population was only about 450 (1921 census) but there were many needy families. With no National Health Service and state benefits, charities were important for many families. As the Peterborough Standard on Friday 2 January 1925 reports for Stilton: *CHRISTMAS CHARITY GIFTS – Many families have benefitted by generous gifts, as in previous years. The following is a list of the charities:*

Worthington's alms houses contain six inmates, three male and three female, and they each received one ton of coal; Robertson's coal charity – six families most in need of help each received one ton of coal, Apreece charity – seven widows each received 11s; Worthington's charity – 35 of the sick and aged received three cwt. of coal each. These gifts of coal, which is now so dear, are most acceptable

101 Years ago (continued)

The charities now. The Worthington's Alms Houses charity continues (Charity number 233527 and see www.stiltonheritage.org). The others were closed by the Charity Commission in 2000: the Robertson's Coal Charity (number 203949), established in 1895 by the will of James Charles Dymock Robertson of Washingley Hall, provided "*purchase of coal and distributed among such of the aged and needy men and women of Lutton, Washingley, Caldecote, Stilton and Folksworth*"; the Charity of John Apreece (number 233528) "*for the benefit of poor women, widows included, of 60 years of age and upwards who live in the Parish of Stilton*"; and, the charity of William Worthington (charity number 233529) for "*bread and coal for the poor of the Parish [of Stilton]*".

100 Years ago.....

There was good community spirit in Stilton at Christmas time – especially when payouts and food were involved! - and the Bell was an important venue for local gatherings. As the Peterborough Standard on Friday 25 December 1925 reports "*SHARING OUT – The share out of the Bell Inn Helping Hand Club took place on Friday, when a dividend of 10s 4½d was paid to the fifty-three members. The annual dinner was admirably provided by host and hostess Woodbridge for upwards of fifty people. The secretary read a very*

satisfactory balance sheet. The chairman (Mr. H. Neath) proposed a vote of thanks to the officials, and also Mr and Mrs Woodbridge for preparing such a capital dinner. A very interesting evening followed, songs being sung by Messrs. Colbert, Thomson, Reynolds, Redhead, Stretton and others. Mr Robert Knowles kept everyone very lively with his mandolin and songs. The evening closed at 11pm, an hour's extension having been granted."

Do you know anything about the Bell Inn Helping Hand Club? If so, we'd love to hear from you so we can add some information to our records. Contact us through our website www.stiltonheritage.org or email secretary@stiltonheritage.org .

Stilton Heritage Trustees and Organising Committee – we have a new Committee Member

Our seven Trustees of the charity: Paul Springford (Chairman), Sue Ayres (Treasurer), Roy Baines (website manager), Keith Bull (Secretary), Dee Darnell, Olive Leonard and Liam McGivern continue to work to further the aims of Stilton Heritage. We are supported by "founder members", Tony Edwards, John Warner, Yvonne Warner, Vicky Dorling and

Doug Maltman on the Stilton Heritage Committee. Recently, we have also recruited Alison Brown from Folksworth onto the Committee, which strengthens our "surrounding area" focus and provides important links to our neighbouring Parish of Folksworth and Washingley.

The lease of the Parish Room – an update



In our Summer Newsletter we explained our plans to lease Stilton's Parish Room from Stilton Parish Council as our Heritage Centre.

Unfortunately, there has been slow progress with agreeing the text of the lease. The draft document prepared by the Parish Council's solicitor was scrutinised by the Stilton Heritage Committee. We found some problems with both the wording in places and also noticed formatting errors (e.g. paragraphs incorrectly numbered); we referred these to our solicitor.

Our solicitor at Clyde & Co completed a redraft of the text, which not only addressed the problems we identified, but also greatly improved the clarity of the text throughout.

This revised text was sent to us in October together with what is known as a "Heads of Terms" document that lists, in simple language, the basic commercial points to be included in the lease (such as who is responsible for what). These documents were forwarded to the Parish Council's solicitors at the same time.

The Committee agreed the redrafted text was a great improvement on the original and we welcomed the amendments suggested. We were also happy with the draft Heads of Terms listing.

But now we are waiting. It seems individual solicitors have changed and the Parish Council's new solicitor has yet to respond to our own. A chasing email has been sent!

Stilton then and now

At our December social event, our Stilton Heritage Members were entertained by Paul Springford's Then and Now presentation. This showed pictures of Stilton's past buildings and compared them with current views of the village. Not only did it show how Stilton had changed, but it also sparked off interesting discussions especially involving our longer-term villagers who remembered a lot of the old buildings and their residents.

Following the social event, it was suggested that we could have future gatherings to discuss old photos so we can collect more information on Stilton's past.

Many of the Then and Now photographs can be found on the Stilton Heritage website (www.stiltonheritage.org). Roy Baines (the website manager - admin@stiltonheritage.org) would be pleased to add additional photos if they are available. The website also has many stories of historic Stilton. Do visit it and find out more about Stilton's past.

Of course, once we have leased the Heritage Centre, we shall be in a better position to archive copies of photographs and postcards for future generations. So please look after your old photos so they can be added to the collection in the future.



A Foresters meeting outside the Talbot in the early 1900's



The Talbot today

Grant awards

We have been making good use of the Huntingdonshire Futures grant awarded earlier in 2025. Ready for Heritage Centre we've purchased a projector screen, a postbox and more display boards. We have also agreed to commit funds for Internet Provision as well as for important lighting works and shelving.

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) have continued to support our Centre through the Match My Project scheme. As well as

Future talks

Following a successful series of talks in 2025, monthly talks have already been booked for 2026. The first will be held on **January 15th** when Dr Sadie McMullon will speak about *Brickopolis. The expansion of Fletton: brickyards, railways, people.*



Note this will be on the third Thursday of the month, not the second as usual. This is to ensure we are well clear of the New Year and hopefully enable everyone to attend. All talks will be held in the Church, which has provided a perfect space for the increased size of our audiences and they will start at 7.30pm unless otherwise noted.

February 12th Lionel Wall

Bums, Fleas and Hitchhikers: stone masons in Rutland

providing us with furniture for our Centre from their sites in Cambridge, CCC have worked through the Match My Project scheme to provide us with computing equipment to enable us to set up a Local network for our Heritage Centre.

Once the Parish Room lease is secured, we can plan and move on to make the Parish Room a working Heritage Centre.

March 12th Dr Matthew Simons

History of Morris Dancing, 1448–present

April 9th Carys Fyson

Stories from Huntingdon Archives: Stilton and its neighbouring parishes

May 14th Dr Gareth Davies

Foolish Youths and Substantial Rewards: 500 Years of Bells and Bellringers

June 11th Roger Leivers

House of Spies: Espionage at Godmanchester!

July 9th Alison Brown

Aspects of Folksworth history

August – Holiday break

September 10th 7.00pm *Members Annual General Meeting*

September 10th John Dewis

Early flight and Peterborough

October 8th Stuart Orme

Life at Norman Cross: the world's first POW camp

November 12th Toby Wood

Peterborough postcards then and now

December 10th – *Members' Social Event*

Other Local History Talks

If you have enjoyed our monthly heritage events, you might like to know about other organisations putting on talks. And if you know of other local history events which would appeal to our members, please let us know!

Sawtry History Society
(<https://www.sawtryhistory.co.uk>) organises talks at the Methodist Church on the third Thursday of each month (which is why our events are on the second Thursday...)

Peterborough Civic Society
(<https://peterboroughcivicsociety.org.uk>) has a

monthly programme of talks and visits, many with a historical theme.

Huntingdonshire Local History Society
(<https://huntslhs.org.uk>) organises monthly meetings through the winter months

Ramsey Rural Museum
(<https://ramseyruralmuseum.co.uk>) organises a wide range of activities, including local history talks, mainly on Wednesday evenings.

Peterborough Archaeology
(<https://peterborougharchaeology.org>) has a programme of expert speakers on the first Monday of the month.

Did you know?

Evidence of an overweight 18th century businessman can be found outside the Angel Spice?

A former landlord at the Talbot was a prisoner of war at Norman Cross?

The Stilton Cheese pub had at least two other names before it was given its present title?

The Stilton Heritage website has the answers!

Have your say!

We are always looking for feedback from our Members to help us with the future development of Stilton Heritage and its Heritage Centre. If you have any ideas about what you'd like to see or do, please let us know.

And, once the Centre is up and running, we'll be needing volunteers and helpers not only to set up displays and organise archives, but also to man the Centre so that we can open to the public and encourage our local community to get involved with our work.

Stilton Heritage registered as a charity with the Charity Commission in August 2024 (number 1209657). We aim to bring together local people with interests in the history and heritage of our area; more specifically, we aim to establish a Centre for the public benefit that has local heritage collections and heritage research facilities - a village hub for all those interested in Stilton's past. Our Constitution (it's on our website www.stiltonheritage.org) as approved by the Charity Commission, reflects this; the main aim reads: "Stilton Heritage is for the public benefit to advance the education of the public in the history and heritage of the village of Stilton and the surrounding area by the establishment and maintenance of a museum for the collection and display of items, especially those which are relevant to the history of the district."