

# Redditch Local History Society

August 2019

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## Newsletter...

### *Latest meeting*

The latest meeting of the Redditch Local History Society was held on Monday 12th August 2019 at the Oasis Christian Centre, Plymouth Road

For the meeting we had an attendance of 40 members and 14 visitors, giving a total of 54 attendees. The meeting was opened by the Chairman who welcomed members and visitors.

### *Presentation*

The presentation today was entitled 'Story of the Royal Enfield and the men who made it' and was given by John Budgen who is the Chairman of the Midland Group of the Royal Enfield Owners Club. The story of Redditch industry is a very important aspect of the town's history, and John produced this presentation specifically for our Society.

John began with the early history at Hunt End which began when George Townsend, an inventive needle manufacturer, began making bicycles in the late 1880s but about 1890 the company was taken over by financiers, who brought in Albert Eadie and Robert W Smith. John gave much information on these early days with bicycles, motor bicycles, motorised tricycles and quad-cycles being produced. The company went through several name changes before finally becoming the Enfield Cycle Company using the trade mark 'Royal Enfield'.



A major change for the company was in 1907 when it moved into its new modern site in Hewell Road. At the same time Albert Eadie left the company leaving Robert Smith in sole charge. The site concentrated on bicycle manufacture as the Enfield auto-car business had collapsed but from 1909 they moved seriously into the motor cycle business launching numerous models. Robert W Smith was heavily involved in their design by 1914 Royal Enfield had an entry in the Manx TT.

Royal Enfield was an innovative company developing many new ideas to improve the motor bike and this was helped by being run by RW Smith and his three sons. In 1932 the first Royal Enfield 'Bullet' was introduced, a name which exists to today, and the firm steadily developed into a major player in the industry. John gave much detail using video clips, photographs and his knowledge covering this period, through the second world war, success in trials, on to the 1960s. An important occurrence at this time was in 1954 when the Royal Enfield supplied 800 Royal Enfield 350cc bullets to the Indian Army. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Royal Enfield was not immune from the demise of the British motorcycle and closed in June 1970. However, Royal Enfield motorbikes continued to be made in India and are now imported into the UK and look much as they did when made in Redditch.

I hope this brief summary gives a taste of how wide ranging John's talk was and the work he put in to create it. The audience were very appreciative and there were many questions afterwards both in the hall and during refreshments.



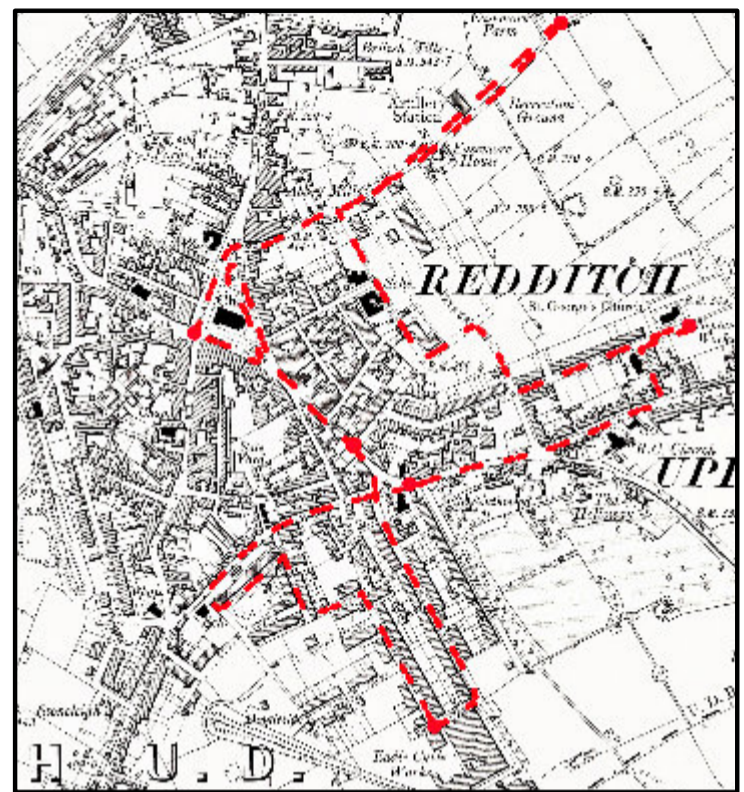
## Next meeting

Our next Meeting at the Oasis Christian Centre is on Monday 9th September beginning at 2.00 pm.

The presentation is entitled 'A walk around Eastern Redditch using a 1903 OS map' and is given by our secretary (that's me!), Tony Green.

The walk route is split into six sections. At the beginning of each section there is a video clip of how it looks today and this is followed by historic images of how it looked around the time of the map. The main purpose is to illustrate how, although there is a belief that 'old Redditch has disappeared', there is still much to see today.

This follows on from a presentation I gave 2 years ago, covering the Western area of the town, which was very well received and has been since shown at local groups and societies.



## Notices

- On the 28th September is the Carnival Parade and Community Festival at the Bandstand. We are looking for support for A History Society stall.
- Your stories are still needed for our exhibition 'Redditch Memories' at Forge Mill Needle Museum running from Thursday 31st October to Sunday 24th November. s.
- A survey was given to members by Graham to find out your thoughts on what we can do to improve the Society. He will be analysing these and the results will be given at the next meeting.
- On Sunday 15 September 2019 from 11.00am to 4.00pm Forge Mill Needle Museum have their annual volunteer organised Heritage Open Day. Admission is Free and amongst the activities will be Motor bikes from the Royal Enfield owners Club, Model boats from the Little Radford Model Boat Club, Live music from Indigo Arts, an exhibition from our Society, displays by Scour Arts and the Redditch Art Circle and free entry into the museum and the current exhibition.

## Our Meetings

The Redditch Local History Society meets, from February to December, on the 2nd Monday of the month (except December which is our Christmas social and is on the 3rd Monday).

Meetings begin at 2.00 pm and last for approximately 2 hours, it begins with a presentation, which lasts about one hour, and this is followed by refreshments and society business, event news and project reports.

Non-members welcome for whom there will be a £3 entrance charge.

(Refundable against membership fee if subsequently joining the society the same day.)

## Contact

For details of how to join the Redditch Local History Society or to contact us:

**email:** [contact@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk)

**Visit:** [www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk)

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