CADDINGTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2024/2025

PRESENTED TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 24TH APRIL 2025

Caddington Local History Group is now entering its 32nd year of existence and contrary to expectations is not the stuffy, boring or dull Group that some might expect. Far from it and we are lucky enough to have a strong, committed Committee to maintain the high standards that have been set for the Group over the past 31 years. So many thanks to Jane Payton, Kay Palfrey, Sarah Fitzsimmons, Shirley Day and David Tims, but also thanks to other helpers, Doris Herring, Heather Harper, Les Nobbs, Rita Tims and Peter Graham.

We have over 100 members with attendance at our monthly meetings regularly numbering between 55 and 65 people. We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month, except December, at Heathfield Centre at 7.30 p.m.

In December we have our Christmas Dinner and again in 2024 the event was very well attended.

At each of our meetings, apart from August when we had our Summer Party, we have had a guest Speaker. These Speakers have covered a wide and interesting range of subjects. For example, in 2024/25 the subjects covered included:

The History of Caddington's Pharmacy

The History of Luton and Dunstable Hospital

The Story of Agent Zig Zag – a Second World War Spy with criminal connections and a liking for female company.

The Story behind Queen Eleanors Crosses one of which was located in Dunstable.

A presentation by local favourite, Simon Robinson, with his eclectic mix of history and humour. Did you know, for example, that George Washington did not know that Dinosaurs once roamed the Earth because evidence of their existence was not discovered until after he had died. Who knew?

Over the past twelve months we have been busy outside our normal meetings.

We have recently commissioned the development of a new website, soon to go live. We have employed the services of a Caddington based company SPRK Design and this has been most successful. The Committee who are all

involved with this project are learning a lot about the website and what we we can do with it and, Tina, our consultant is learning a lot about Caddington.

We are most grateful to the Parish Council for the grant of £500 towards the cost of the development of the new website. The Group are very appreciative and there will be reference on the new website to the Parish Council's generosity.

We have organised a reprint of one of the Group's publications, A History of Caddington and its People written by Frank Sutton. We have taken a decision to make this reprint more accessible to potential purchasers by subsidising the cost price of £20 per copy enabling it to be sold at a more attractive price of £10. This action has been made possible by the receipt of a grant of £200 from the Village Christmas Float Committee for which we are very grateful.

We will also all remember the great talk we had from Kiran our village Chemist at which over 80 members attended. Kiran enjoyed the talk so much and the fact that he knew nearly everybody who attended. So we were honoured when he asked the Group to organise his retirement party. Over 200 people attended the event held at Heathfield on the 30th January 2025.

Caddhist, as the Group is more widely known, are very much involved in the events for Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday and to this end we have liaised with many of the other organisations in the village. There is a strong sense of community in Caddington and Caddhist is honoured to play its part in that community.

Now a mention of local history. At one of our meetings this year we took the opportunity along with local residents, some of whom were not members of the Group, to research, gather and exchange information about the shops in Elm Avenue.

Many villagers will not be aware of the importance played by this parade of shops in the 1960s and 70s particularly in the lives of many residents of Five Oaks, Fairgreen Road, The Crescent, Elm Avenue and other nearby streets.

The Group has in its gift the granting of Honorary Life Membership to anyone who has in some way contributed to significant village projects or to the continuing development and success of the Group. Only one such honour has been granted to date and that was to Rob Jones who, although not a member, received the award for his work on the restoration of the All Saints Church clock.

I intend to propose early in the coming year the granting of Honorary Life Membership to David Lenton. Many members will remember David who was markedly different to other members during his time as a member because he was a lot younger and much more technically savvy than the rest of us. David developed and managed our current website for many years even when he moved to Canada. He has been extremely helpful in supporting our wish to develop a new website and I feel that the award of Honorary Life Membership would be a fitting way of thanking him and recognising his contribution to Caddhist.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention the concerns that Caddhist have over the future of Heathfield. We are very much supportive of all the efforts being made to safeguard its future. Heathfield is very much our home and it is my view that Caddhist would suffer if we are forced to move, even temporarily, from that home.

Thank you for all your support during the last 12 months and I look forward to another successful year to come.

John Harper

Chairman

22nd April, 2025