

On Friday 25th November Allan Howard gave a talk entitled

'Forge House – A House Through Time'

Using photographs from the Historians' archive, census, electoral register and trade directory entries plus other records from the archives Allan was able to piece together a history of the property from its building, between 1805 and 1807, to the present. This was greatly assisted by the recent discovery of 'The Forge House Papers', the legal documents between the buyers and sellers of the property between 1867 and 1970.

For its first century Forge House, as its name implies, housed a smithy along with a wheelwright's shop as well as residents. It was sometimes two dwellings, sometimes four, but usually three. The ultimate owners were the Lane family (Thomas' side and descendants) up until 1865 when the E side of the village was sold to Lord Lichfield. The copyhold owners sometimes lived in the house, sometimes they let out to tenants.

By 1900 it was one dwelling, now known as 'The Bungalow', where there was a butcher and tea rooms, and by 1909 it had been taken over by a Captain Grant, one time Captain of the Guard at Osborne House, Isle of Wight who ran both tea rooms and apartments. At about this time we have photographs of the outside and the inside of the house, showing it furnished in typical cluttered Victorian style. The Grant family lived there until 1964, and we have graphic oral history of how the north end of the house was used by Coates butchers of Alrewas on a Saturday when they would also take orders for delivery on a Wednesday. The Historians have a continuous photographic record of the property during the 20th century.

In 1923 the thatched bungalow caught fire from a spark from a passing traction engine and its entire roof burned away. It was rebuilt as a two storey house, but some beams inside still show scorching.

There have been five families resident in the house, which has been renamed 'Forge House', since the Grants left in 1964. There is a plaque on the wall inside which states that the property was the site of a building used by Lady Godiva and her husband Leofric (uncle of Harold of the Battle of Hastings). There is actually no evidence of this, although we know from the Anglo Saxon Chronicles that Leofric did die at Kings Bromley before being buried at Coventry.