

Visit to Old Sawmill, Manor Walk

On Sunday 31st May, Carol and Gareth Brentnall invited the Historians and Gardening Guild to their house and garden. We were very lucky with the weather, so we need not have worried about the crossing of the weir being slippery, although Gareth had had to clear it of duck droppings only that morning. What a lovely, secluded spot it is with a large lawn, mature trees, shrub borders: we could also get down into the old eel trap. And that is before you cross the weir onto the island which has shrubberies and wildflower areas. You then get to the partially ruined summer house where everyone could imagine themselves having a picnic after boating down from the Manor.

After a relaxed walk around, we repaired to the dining room, through the conservatory, where Allan gave a Powerpoint presentation on the history of the sawmill. The old flour mill next door had been there since the mid 1600's, taking advantage of the New Trent, a diversion of the Trent. The sawmill was originally built in 1875. It housed an electric turbine which powered the saw and also pumped water from a well to the newly constructed water tower in the Manor. From there pipes led to various hydrants. The Lord of the Manor, John Henry Bagot Lane must have been very worried about the Manor catching fire. In 1905 the new Lord of the Manor, JHHV Lane, installed a new, more powerful turbine, which this time, with the help of a large bank of accumulators, was able to provide electricity to the Manor as well. Transcriptions of oral histories were displayed which recorded various employees remembering the turbine, battery house and water tower. Grace Lane, who would have been a very young girl at the time, remembered her excitement at turning on the new electric lights. It was thirty years later that the rest of the village got mains electricity. The talk was illustrated with maps, photographs and pictures taken from the Historians' digital archive.

Thanks to Carol and Gareth for making this visit possible.