

## ***Fairwarp and Duddleswell History Society: Inaugural meeting***

### ***Those present:***

An inaugural meeting of the (as-yet-to-be formally named) group was held at 7.00pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 in Christ Church, Fairwarp, and the following people attended:

Ian Brown, Ted and Fran Brown, Trish Calvert, Fr John Caperon, Hazel Carter, Matthew Collins, Yvette Connor, Alastair Feely, Paul and Lisa Mahony, John Manthorpe, Rosemary Mulady, Paul and Helen Rowland, Caroline Shaw, Perry Veal, Petrina Volker, Richard Webster.

### ***Proceedings:***

Fr John welcomed all those present to the meeting and thanked Rosemary Mulady for providing mulled wine. She and several others, notably Helen Rowland, had been actively involved in research into Fairwarp's War dead prior to the centenary of the Armistice in 2018, and this had resulted in the belated placing of the name of Aaron Russell on the village War Memorial. The impetus from this initiative had carried us forward to the present point, and Paul Mahony had offered his leadership for the future research enterprise.

Paul Mahony then led the rest of the meeting, in which he outlined his specific interests prompted by the history of his own home The Old Fox House, previously both an alehouse and a temperance coffee house. Paul set out a number of possible spheres of future research and discovery:

- The gathering of so-far uncollected local history information;
- Salvaging information through recording oral history from older inhabitants of the villages;
- Searching and collecting historical maps, documents and photographs - some existing resources (eg Peter Kirby's *A Forest Camera*) could be supplemented by new information.

Paul commended the idea of setting up a dedicated local history website, though it was also suggested that a new 'local history' section could be set up on the Fairwarp village website. He had secured agreement from the Keep in Brighton (the archive repository for the East Sussex County Council, Brighton Council and the University of Sussex) to consider holding any archive material that the new Society wished to deposit. He also recommended that to meet GDPR requirements, the Society should follow the GDPR guidelines of the Royal Historical Society ([RHS | Royal Historical Society \(royalhistsoc.org\)](https://royalhistsoc.org)).

Others present contributed a range of ideas and comments, as set out below:

- Earlier local research by a Dr Scott had investigated a possible Elizabethan chapel in Duddleswell

- Duddleswell Manor is apparently built on an earlier footprint, which needs further exploration, as indeed does the origin of the settlement's name.
- Local folk music is a subject for further exploration; a book already exists describing the music of Scan Tester, and Fairwarp's Gorrings family is another source.
- Herons' Ghyll and its connection with the C19th poet Coventry Patmore would provide rich material for research.
- The origins of Oldlands Farm and the Oldlands Estate may lie in Roman times; and the Roman road through Fairwarp and the Forest could be further explored.
- A rich source of local data lies in depositions made in connection with 'The Ashdown Forest Dispute' (a bibliography by John Manthorpe is attached to these notes).
- Early enclosures and the history of the Forest as a Royal hunting ground offer plentiful research opportunities.
- Early industrial activity on the Forest and in the villages (signalled by names such as 'Boring Mill' and 'Furnace Wood') could benefit from further investigation.
- The contribution of travelling families to local community life and growth is significant: their lives and lifestyles need exploration.
- The origins of both Fairwarp and Duddleswell as settlements remain unclear.

### ***Conclusions***

The meeting was clear that our local history was a fruitful and relatively unexplored area of investigation. The proposed Society would need to be properly set up, with a simple constitution, aims, membership and so on. As a first step, Paul Mahony was elected Chair by acclamation; Fr John would act initially as Secretary.

### ***Next steps***

- Fr John would write up and circulate notes of the meeting by email (those present having given their consent to this), and subsequently also an initial list of sources - John Manthorpe's bibliography being an excellent start.
- Paul, Rosemary and John would draft a simple constitution for the Society and circulate this, before calling a further meeting to set up an organisational framework and identify which areas of investigation to focus on initially.

*John Caperon / December 2021*