

Historic England and our Local History.

February's talk was by Phil Johnson who spoke on 'Historic England and our Local History'.

Phil's interest in this topic was sparked by a visit to the house of Elizabeth Gott, which was built in the early 1700s. Phil decided to see what digital information was available on the house, which led to a wider search for listed buildings in the region. He found that the title 'clerk of works' was quite ancient and probably went back over 1000 years. The post carried responsibility for significant buildings and was usually linked to the government's treasury department.

At the moment, the principal players with regard to historic buildings are the National Trust, English Heritage, Historic England, the Historic Houses Association. Phil had identified over 3000 other organisations which were involved in some way with historic buildings. Within these organisations, there was often overlap regarding ownership and there were sometimes competing issues in balancing preservation and conservation. Phil then listed the principal historic properties in the region together with visiting costs and ownership. This list could form the basis for future visits by the Historic Environment Group. He then took us through the Historic England website and particularly the Barnard Castle area. He displayed a local map which identified all the listed buildings with their Historic England identification number. 'Clicking' on a building shown on the map produced a summary of the building's main features. Listed buildings are structures of special architectural or historic interest and cover smaller structures such as milestones. Phil has an impressive command of detail and his comprehensive and interesting talk should prompt us to look at the Historic England website and its links for ourselves. This could also prepare us for possible visits in the future.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 9th March at 10.00 when Tim Meacham will deliver the second part of his talk on 'The Railways of Barnard Castle'. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Tim Meacham.

Ian Reid