



ACTIVITIES OF ASHTON WI IN JANUARY 2014

Despite the cold wet evening, our January meeting was well attended and the President welcomed two new members and several male guests.

After wishing everyone a “Happy New Year”, Marjory proceeded with the business – reminders for the resolution voting slip to be returned and the annual subscription to be paid. Everyone agreed that the December supper meeting at the Star Inn had been a great success and the entertainment by *‘The Harmonaves’* was much enjoyed.

Several possible outings for 2014 were presented for members’ approval. A visit to Alcester followed by lunch at Hillers farm shop, garden and café has been arranged for 20th March; April it is hoped to visit the New Court World War 1 VA Hospital and a cookery demonstration at Waitrose in Cheltenham, and June an outing to the Cotswold Farm Park (Adams Farm).

The speaker this month was Professor John Dodge, a local amateur historian, who lives in one of the oldest properties in Ashton – The Old Farmhouse. His subject being the architecture of Ashton, past and present. He began with slides showing aerial views revealing evidence of early settlements of Roman origin. He explained that there is very little evidence left of the ancient Briton’s existence, because of their use of wood for housing rather than stone. John then made a fascinating journey though the decades from the earliest 16th century timber framed, thatched properties to substantial stone built and latterly brick and Cotswold stone built houses.

He showed us sketches of the original main part of his own property dating back to the 15th century when it composed of one huge stone floored room, with open hearth in the centre and apertures in the vaulted roof where the smoke and smells escaped! Interestingly, this original roof was built with ‘cruck-framed’ beams. This lovely property has since had several additions including a wonderful huge stone chimney.

It was also the home of the Fred Archer family before he became a well-known author of country tales. It was interesting to see from the slides how Ashton has evolved and changed over time and what a great mix of architecture it contains. Margaret Nicklin thanked Mr. Dodge for a most enlightening evening.



Ashton's Manor House and The Old Farmhouse

Dianne organised a local walk across the fields to Ashton's, the new local plant and farm shop. We made a very soggy and cold walk to their lovely new café where we enjoyed a much needed hot drink and cakes!



Jen Creese Publicity Secretary