

Stoke Local History Group

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Newsletter editor: John Marshall

COVENTRY Council House is currently highlighting the flag of Ukraine - in a symbol of support for the besieged nation, now under attack from Putin's Russia.

As numerous companies and organisations seek to distance themselves from Russia, the city council has been criticised in some quarters for maintaining its historic links with Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), the first city to be twinned with Coventry after the horrors of World War Two.

Council leaders have met local Ukrainian representatives and have pledged their support for the country's people. But they insist on maintaining current links with Volgograd.

In a statement, Councillor Abdul Khan, the council's deputy leader, said: "Our friendship has always been with the people of Volgograd – the faith centres, schools, businesses, organisations and all those who share our desire for peace. It has never been a link to the Russian Government and never will be."

Councillors say they will send a formal letter to Volgograd, telling them what is going on and urging them to join the plea for an end to war.

"We know many people in Russia are calling for peace," Cllr Khan said, "and we hope our friends in Volgograd are adding their voice to that call. Coventry wants the people of Ukraine to know they have our city's support and friendship and we will strengthen the call for an end to this war and a return to peace."

Coventry was at the forefront of the twin city movement which started with the link to Stalingrad where more than one million people died in 1942-43 during the Battle of Stalingrad.



Support for Ukraine

Photo: John Marshall



THE second series of *The Great British Dig: History in Your Back Garden*, began at the end of last year and was expected to feature an episode about Biggin Hall, filmed in the summer. But the series mysteriously went off air after five episodes, with the team posting a message on Twitter saying they were having a short holiday. Stoke Local History Group got in touch with Strawberry Blond, the company that makes the programme, to ask what was happening. Spokesman Steve Wynne told us: "The Coventry/Biggin Hall episode of *The Great British Dig* is due to air on Wednesday 18th May at 9pm on More4. I very much hope you enjoy watching the show as much as we did making it."

Next history group meeting - Friday 6th May

THE next meeting of the history group was originally scheduled to take place on April 1st but we've been told that this date coincides with the funeral of Stoke Park resident Sarah Little, who sadly died recently. We understand that a number of history group members will wish to attend the funeral so the next meeting of the group has been delayed until the following month, Friday 6th May, when Phil Tutchings will talk at Stoke Library about the history of Caludon Castle. An introductory overview of Caludon Castle appears on page 2.

AN exhibition featuring work by sculptor Jacob Epstein is taking place at Coventry Cathedral until May 31st. It includes the famously controversial 'Jacob and the Angel', first produced by Epstein in 1941 and on loan from Tate Britain.

Caludon Castle: a home for the nobility

MANY locals will be familiar with Wyken's Caludon Castle Park and the fragment of wall which remains of the building from which it is named. The information board close to the wall gives visitors an idea of the history of the site which had long been widely overlooked.

Caludon would perhaps be more appropriately described as a "crenellated house" rather than a castle as its story is one of a home rather than a military installation. The site has a rich and varied history as a domicile for nobility, workplace for local people and centre of culture across almost one thousand years.



Artist's impression by Peter Urmston of what Caludon Castle might have looked like at its peak (from 'A History of Caludon Castle', published by John Clarke, 2013)

The area is recorded as being part of Godiva's lands and "Caludon" is derived from old English meaning "Flat Topped Hill". Caludon fell into the hands of the Earls of Chester following the Norman invasion and later passed into the ownership of some of England's most influential families.



The heyday of Caludon Castle was around the time of the renaissance under the Berkeley family, a branch of which still currently resides at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire. Lord Henry Berkeley lived at Caludon and was the last aristocrat to die there in 1613. Lord Henry was godson to King Henry VIII and his son Thomas Berkely godson to Queen Elizabeth I.

Caludon was home for a time to the lutenist John Dowland, who performed to royal houses across Europe. He was a tutor to the Berkeley family's children. There are exhibits relating to Dowland at the Coventry Music Museum.

The site saw theatrical performances and lavish entertainments. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is said to have been commissioned for the wedding of Thomas Berkeley to Elizabeth Carey (members of both families were influential to the Bard's work). Caludon is also mentioned in his *Richard II* history.

In 1398 Thomas Mowbray rode out from his Caludon estate to fight a duel with Henry Bolingbroke (the later Henry IV) at Gosford Green. Shakespeare portrays King Richard forbidding the duel and banishing both combatants.

During the Berkeley's time at Caludon up to 150 servants worked at the house together with workers at the home farm, deer park, mills and brew houses. The family were reputed to have treated their employees and tenants well but were also extravagant spenders and fell into debt which led to the sale of the estate which was largely managed by tenant farmers into the twentieth century.

The "castle" fell into disrepair and stonework was reused for farm buildings over the years. The estate was broken up and auctioned as lots in 1822 and the portion which is the modern-day park was sold to Coventry Council in 1939.

Phil Tutchings

●The history of Caludon Castle will be featured in a special exhibition at City Archives (based at the Herbert) from March 30th. See last month's newsletter for details. Phil Tutchings will talk about Caludon Castle at our history group meeting on Friday 6th May.

Drunk and disorderly, idle or dishonest

THE sight of punishment stocks outside a relatively quiet suburban pub in Binley Road has often provoked a great sense of curiosity – among children in particular.

What was the function of these stocks and why were they situated at this spot, next to the Bull's Head public house? Were they ever used for punishment?

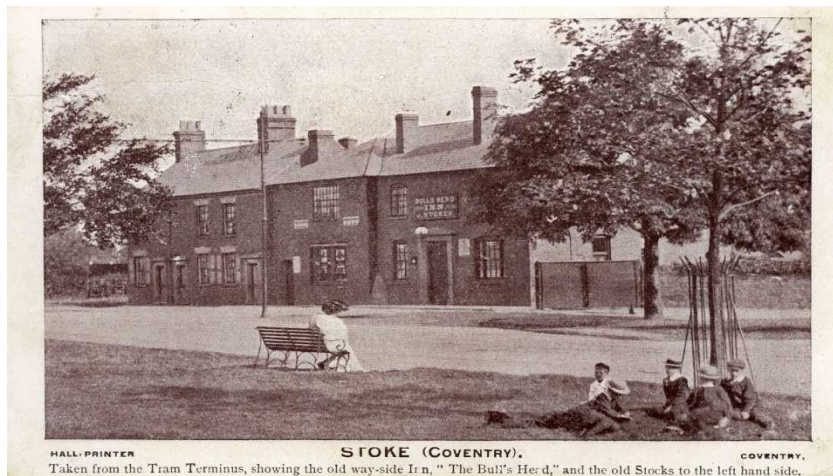
Such questions were answered by Rev Thomas Blyth in his book *The History of Stoke* (1897), and his account is usually regarded as reliable.



Stocks today beside the Bull's Head pub and (below) a picture postcard from 1906 showing the original pub and a caption that draws our attention to stocks on the left-hand side. The old tram terminus was opposite the pub.

Blyth tells us that the stocks were put up here in about 1848 or 1850. "It appears," says Blyth, "that a man named William Kimberley had been taken before the magistrates on a charge of being drunk and creating a disturbance at the Bull Inn. He was fined. If the money were not paid he was to be placed for six hours in the stocks. He refused to pay.

"The parish possessed no stocks, and therefore ordered William Woodward to make and put up stocks. Kimberley, however, eventually paid the fine. The only person ever placed in these stocks by way of punishment, was a man named Hunt, who had been convicted of drunkenness and creating a disturbance..."



Local historian David McGrory refers to this story in his book about Coventry's suburbs, but warns that it might not be true because other sources claim the stocks date back to 1610. The most plausible explanation is that new stocks in 1848-50 might simply have replaced much older stocks that by this time had been lost.

What we know for certain, however, is that stocks had become a common form of

punishment in England as early as the mid-14th century, so Coventry and Warwickshire would certainly have had such facilities.

Commenting on 15th century Coventry, David McGrory observes: "Those committing minor offences, such as selling under-weight bread, were put in the pillory or one of the many sets of stocks which could be found scattered around the city. Another common punishment was to be tied to the tail of a cart and flogged from the Knaves Post in Much Park Street to the cross in Cross Cheaping and back." (*A History of Coventry*, 2003)

Curiously enough, there is a website devoted entirely to the subject of pillories and stocks (pilloryhistory.com) and much of what follows is drawn from that source. The writer tells us that in 1351 a law was introduced, authorising the use of stocks to stem the pay demands of labourers:

"This had been implemented as a reaction to the Black Death, which had halved the population. The consequent scarcity of labour had enabled agricultural labourers to demand increased pay. The statute

attempted to discourage this trend by saying that anyone demanding or offering higher wages should be put in the stocks for up to three days.”

Stocks and the pillory required offenders to be encased in large wooden boards with hinges. Stocks involved placing the boards around the ankles and wrists, whereas in the pillory the boards are fixed to a pole and placed around the arms and neck, forcing the hapless victim to stand. Illustrations from the period suggest that public humiliation was intensified by passers-by throwing insults and rotten items.



Binley Road stocks

Contemporary photos: John Marshall

In 1405 another statute required that every town or village should provide stocks for punishment, and these were often used to control beggars and the unemployed. The Vagabonds and Beggars Act of 1494 declared that “vagabonds, idle and suspected persons should be set in the stocks for three days and three nights and have none other sustenance but bread and water and then shall be put out of town.”



A statute of 1605 required that anyone convicted of drunkenness should be placed in the stocks for six hours. It was not until the 19th century that these forms of punishment were abandoned. In 1816 the pillory was restricted to punishment for perjury and it was finally abolished in 1837.

Unlike the pillory, the stocks continued to be used until the 1870s, though their use became less frequent. One person in Pudsey, near Leeds, was locked in the stocks in 1860 for gambling on a Sunday. And in 1865 William Jarvis had to sit in the stocks in Rugby for six hours as a punishment for drunkenness (pictured, left).

Apparently, the last recorded case of the stocks being used in England was in Newbury in 1872. An account from that time gives a vivid impression of the scene: “Mark Tuck, a rag and bone dealer, who for several years had been well known as a man of intemperate habits... was fixed in the stocks for drunkenness and disorderly conduct in the Parish Church... Twenty-six years had elapsed since the stocks were last used, and their reappearance created no little sensation and amusement, several hundreds of persons being attracted to the spot where they were fixed. Tuck was seated upon a stool, and his legs were secured in the stocks at a few minutes past one o’clock, and as the church clock chimed each quarter, he uttered expressions of thankfulness, and seemed anything but pleased at the laughter and derision of the crowd. Four hours having passed, Tuck was released, and by a little stratagem on the part of the police, he escaped without being interfered with by the crowd.”

The dilapidated stocks beside the Bull’s Head pub in Binley Road were replaced with a copy in 1998. The original pub was part of a row of old cottages and - as Fred Lockett reminds us in his book *Coventry Pubs* (2018) - the rural nature of Stoke in the 19th century is emphasised by the occupation of licensee Thomas Pettifor, who was described as a farmer when he kept the pub from 1850 to 1867. George Smith, who took control from 1867 to 1874, was a cow-keeper.

The pub was later demolished and replaced with the current building (pictured) in 1926, designed in the familiar ‘Brewers Tudor’ style of the inter-war years.



John Marshall