

## Chris Arnot talks about 'Coronation Streets: England Then and Now'



IN the first of a new series of talks at Stoke Library, local journalist and author Chris Arnot will talk to Stoke Local History Group about his latest book, *Coronation Streets: England Then and Now*.

With the recent coronation of King Charles III in mind, the writer looks back at the previous coronation in 1953 – the England of his childhood – and considers how things have changed. Largely for the better, he says.

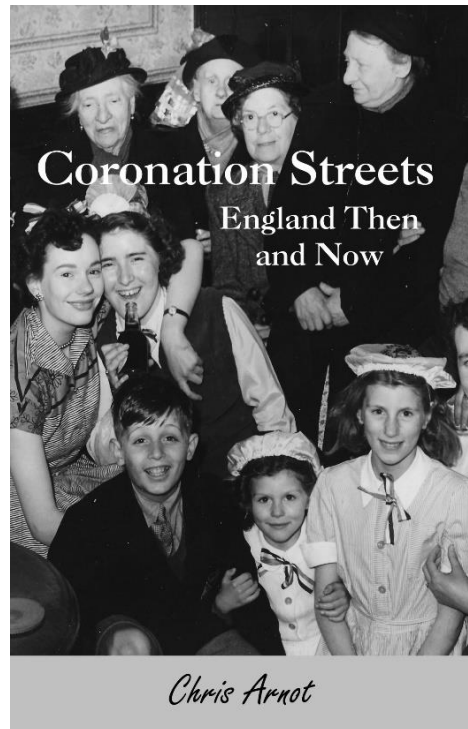
He remembers his own early childhood in 1953 and talks to “people of a certain age” who look back at the glittering ritual of that year’s coronation which, he says, offered a brief break from the day-to-day drudgery of the post-war world.

“Meat was still rationed. Bomb sites were common sights. Televisions were not. Those who could afford to buy them found

their front rooms crammed with neighbours peering at nine-inch screens showing a colourful crown and a golden coach in various shades of grey. The parties that followed were often disrupted by rain and staged in streets lined with houses lacking amenities taken for granted in 2023. Food was so basic that a tin of salmon seemed almost exotic. Millions of families lived with outside toilets and no bathrooms. Or indeed hot water.”

But for all the greyness of the early 50s, there are some colourful memories here from all over England. “For those of us who were ‘kids’ at the time,” writes Chris Arnot, “there were some compensations. Away from the main roads, passing traffic was something of a rarity. You could play in the street. Lampposts were there to be bowled at. Gutters were for playing marbles. Bomb sites and an abundance of building sites were there to be explored.”

So here’s a chance for readers to explore two very different worlds: England then and now.



**Chris Arnot talks to Stoke Local History Group on Friday October 6<sup>th</sup> at Stoke Library, beginning at 10.30am. Signed copies of the book will be available.**

• Chris Arnot is a former features editor on the Coventry Evening Telegraph. He has written for numerous national newspapers such as The Guardian, the Daily Telegraph and The Independent. His many books include works about the Archers, Lost Cricket Grounds, Lost Coal Mines, and Philip Larkin's Coventry.

# Stoke Local History Group – Annual Report 2023

The group's AGM will take place at Stoke Library on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October, immediately before a talk by guest speaker Chris Arnot. The meeting begins at 10.30am.

## A year of experiment

**DURING** the past year the group has experimented by having a few outdoor events during the spring and early summer, to complement the usual talks with guest speakers at Stoke Library during the winter.

This policy was adopted following a series of popular and successful outdoor events during that sluggish period when we were gradually coming out of lockdown and were unable to meet at the library.

Outdoor events have remained popular and this year have included a visit to Charterhouse when we were guests of Historic Coventry Trust and were treated to an exclusive guided tour by David Mahony, the chief conservation architect.

We also visited the amazing Watch Museum in Spon Street, which allowed us not only to learn more about the city's historic watchmaking trade, but also allowed us to see what is probably the last surviving row of court dwellings in Coventry.



*Visit to Charterhouse in May*



*Lychgate Cottages, Priory Row, one of the properties restored by Historic Coventry Trust*

Talks at Stoke Library during 2022-23 have included Adam Wood on Stoke Park and the Stoke Park murders; Phil Tutchings on the Coventry Loop Line; a slide show by Charlotte Ridpath about the Sherbourne Valley Project; a presentation by Graham Tait about the remarkable achievements of Historic Coventry Trust; and an exploration of the life and legend of Lady Godiva, by Iris Weir.

We've also had a slide show and talk about the City Gates and Lady Herbert's Garden with Francesca Marsland; and a stimulating introduction to the life and work of Frederick Lanchester, courtesy of Paul Nolan of Coventry University's Lanchester Archive.

The monthly newsletter, originally a stopgap during lockdown, has continued to be produced.

We remain grateful to Stoke Library for their continued support.

### John Marshall, Chair

**Financial statement** – Apart from regular payments for tea, coffee, disposable cups etc., we have only purchased one item, a Voice Amplifier for £41.98. The total balance on our account is £562.37 which means that we can now proceed to purchase a new projector or other equipment, as and when required.  
**Wynne Lang, Treasurer**



*Symbol of a legend: the Lady Godiva statue, pictured in the early 1960s.*



**A rare chance to visit one of  
Coventry's hidden treasures.  
The historic....**

# **KINGSFIELD ORCHARD**

**It's on the A444 island junction  
with Binley Road, CV2 4EW  
(map overleaf)**

This historic community allotment garden was sealed off and forgotten when the A444 dual carriageway was built.

Now Coventry Tree Wardens are working to rescue ancient fruit trees and plant new ones, while preserving rich wildlife habitats.

Please come to see what we're doing with this historic garden. We will show you around but beware, the ground is rough.

And you could help with the restoration – find out how.

**Visit us on Saturday/Sunday,  
September 16/17, 11am to 3pm.  
See map overleaf.**



The orchard was originally part of King's Fields, so called because it was where Richard II set up his camp for the "duel that never was" on Gosford Green in 1398.

It appears on maps dated around 1860 with many trees, and divided into allotments used by local residents. Many old trees remain and some of the structure of the old site is still evident.

### HOW TO FIND US

The orchard is in Stoke, in the triangle bordered by Binley Road, the A444 and Kingsway. There is parking in Kingsway and nearby streets. Walk down Kingsway to Binley Road, turn right; the orchard is a few yards on the right through a large green gate. We'll be there to welcome you.

Need a bus? There are many to Binley Road from Pool Meadow.