

May 29th 2019

Wooler's new oak tree – commemorating sacrifices made by many during WW1



Glendale Local History Society hosted a celebratory gathering following the planting of an Oak Tree to commemorate the end of World War 1 and the coming of peace at that time.

Members of the Society, together with invited guests from Lilburn Estates and Wooler Parish Council, heard Professor Patsy Healey OBE, newly elected chair of GLHS, thank all concerned "... for bringing this project to realisation over the past year", Lilburn Estates for generously providing, planting and guarding the fine *Quercus rubor* standard tree and Wooler Parish Council for agreeing the planting site on their riverside land beside the A697. Patsy hoped, "The tree, in time, will grow into a stately feature in the landscape" and with the plaque (thanks to retiring chairman, Mike Allport) to remind and remember sacrifices made by many during WW1.

Society Secretary, Pam Ratcliffe, explained the consequences of WW1 – dubbed "The war to end all wars" – and discussed how it had shaken Europe and the long-established order of European life, hostilities on 11th November 1918 with the hope for lasting peace. She explained the Paris Peace conference, which lasted 12 months, proving a huge investment to make the world a better place for 27 countries, all with competing claims and complaints and with seemingly intractable problems. The four Allied heads of government present for 5 months (cf summits such as the G7 now) were from France (Clemenceau), USA (Woodrow Wilson), Italy (Orlando) and Britain (Lloyd George); Japan's prince absented himself from matters not directly relevant to Japan.

She highlighted international legislation – e.g. on waterways, railways, aviation, finance. The League of Nations was formed to resolve international disputes, by considering when nations have a right and duty to intervene and to validate and resolve competing claims for territory where there are groups of mixed identities. The

conference also had to deal with bolshevism, actual & threatened revolutions, ethnic nationalism, public opinion, reparations and immense change in the social and economic systems, including labour, class and the role of women, plus the then current problems: violent strikes, revolutions (Russia, Hungary, Bavaria) and threats of revolution (Romania, Ireland). The ratification of treaties took time e.g. the Treaty of Versailles: Germany - 28th June, St Germain: Austria - September 1919, Neuilly: Bulgaria - November 1919; treaties with Turkey and Hungary were finally agreed in 1920. Pam concluded by giving the audience an imaginative mental image of end-of-war celebrations held in Wooler, by describing details from an original programme — “a procession of floats decked as ‘Allies’, a fancy dress competition, an evening fancy dress ball, all concluded with a much later evening, hilltop bonfire”.

Finally, before refreshments were enjoyed, the reading of three poems, by members of the Society (Eileen Lyons, Allan Colman and Frank Mansfield), reflected on remembrance of wartime and the coming of peace.