

Gloucestershire Local History Association has continued its 2022 programme of Summer activities with two well-attended Sunday afternoon walks, one to find out about water power and transport around Stonehouse, led by Stephen Mills, and the other to explore the history of Bishop's Cleeve, led by David Aldred.

A highlight of the Stonehouse walk was undoubtedly the new Jubilee Ocean Railway Bridge on the Stroudwater Canal to the west of St Cyr's church, which has enabled the formerly culverted canal to be reopened to boat traffic and the previous foot tunnel to be replaced by a towpath. Equally impressive was the huge railway viaduct on the Bristol line south of the new bridge, close to the site of Beard's Mill, where some of the old buildings have been converted to residential properties.



*The WW2 pillbox by the canal at Bond's Mill.
Photo by Eileen Allen*



*Visiting Bond's Mill Estate.
Photo by Eileen Allen*

The two other mills that were visited, both on the River Frome, are still very much in use. Bond's Mill, further west along the Canal, provides office space to a variety of businesses and also features, as its gatehouse, a WW2 two-storey pillbox which is now a Cotswold Canals Trust's visitor centre. At Bridgend, Lower Mills is home to the Stonehouse Paper & Bag Mills Ltd, which celebrated its centenary this year.

We returned to Stonehouse Court Hotel via the late 18th-century Nutshell Bridge, undoubtedly one of the most attractive spots on the entire canal.

The Bishop's Cleeve walk had a very different theme, in that it focused on what can still be discerned of the village's medieval layout, and on a number of late medieval/early modern houses – some of cruck construction and thatch – that survive within this fast growing village. We were also given an insight into the village's prehistory, as revealed by excavations on the sites of new houses and the village's two supermarkets: learning that under aisle 13 in Tesco's is the site of a Bronze Age hut was certainly a revelation to us all!



*Viewing a thatched cottage at Bishop's Cleeve.
Photo by Sally Self*