

Farewell to another chapter of history

THE Fox and Crane is to close today and this brings to an end another chapter in the history of Nuneaton.

Many readers will remember it as the Weddington Grove and a few will recall when its large upstairs function room held discos.

It first became a public house in 1934 and it took its license from an old fashioned pub at number 5, Abbey Street, The Pheasant.

The license was transferred to the Weddington Grove when The Pheasant closed.

The building was once a private house, part of the Weddington estate. At the time the estate with its hamlet of Weddington, which had a population of about 100, was owned by Henry Cunliffe Shawe (1834-1911).

The Grove was built in 1818, partly from local engineering blue bricks, and enamel face bricks from another ceramic area.

Weddington Hall was in beautiful parklands and the Weddington Road, a leafy lane hemmed in by tall trees

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and hedgerows.

What is now the Fox and Crane was the home of Henry Pole Shawe. A private house within the estate. It is probable that the house was built especially for him.

A feature of Weddington at the time was the annual flower festival held in the Hall grounds. This was attended by thousands of Nuneaton townspeople. At the time it was very popular.

It must have been a wonderful event, with all the stalls of colourful flowers set out in the landscaped gardens of the hall, with its specimen trees and extensive shrubberies.

Weddington was also well known at the time for its ghosts. Weddington Hall was reputed to be haunted.

By World War I, the Weddington Estate was in a run down state, becoming a Red Cross hospital.

Weddington Hall was purchased in 1928 by a local

builder, Percy Howe, and pulled down. Houses were built in the grounds and along Weddington Road.

This led to the need for licensed premises to be opened to serve the expanding district of Weddington, 63 years later the pub will close, leaving just fond memories of happy times soon to be forgotten.

In February 1996, a Roman farm site was discovered immediately opposite, proving that this section of Weddington Road is of Roman period.

The farm site probably lies under part of the Grove's land plot and therefore the site requires a thorough archaeological excavation down to at least one metre.

To the south of the Grove, an early English coin was found, this may also prove that the Royal Hunting Lodge at Weddington is also nearby from King John's time around 1210.

For memories of Weddington, the Hall, its grounds and much of its history there is a wonderful website: www.weddingtoncastle.co.uk. For local history enthusiasts it will be of great interest.