

## Discover History – June 2019 Mystery Decade

Well the decade Paul was going to talk about was finally revealed as the 1920s and about 70 people were present to hear his plethora of facts and stories about the decade.

The big event of the decade in Worcester was the death and burial of Woodbine Willy. It was a major event, almost state-like, and was attended by many veterans from all over UK, who threw woodbine cigarettes into his grave during the burial. There was even a parade from the centre of Worcester to the cemetery in St Johns.

Many committees were formed during the decade including the one to create the Cenotaph in Whitehall, which started out as a temporary structure of wood and plaster but soon became the stone one that we see in Whitehall to this day. One committee was formed in Worcester to create our own memorial outside the Cathedral. The British Legion was formed, and their 2 factories started to produce silk poppies originally.



The medals for the Great War were distributed, many veterans got the 3 campaign medals, the 1914 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal, affectionally known as Pip, Squeak and Wilfred.



The people were in very poor health at the start of the 1920s and many were living in slums. The Government and local councils decided to clear the slums and the introduction of new sewers. They wanted to build Homes fit for Heroes. Unfortunately, many of the plans did not come to fruition and in Worcester most of the slum clearance did not take place until the 1960s.

People were encouraged to get outside more and Swedish Drill, all about of

movement of muscles. It was taken up in schools, one exercise was to stand on tiptoe and put arms out to the side and then bend the knees and go down and up. Take extreme care if you want to try this exercise!

Mid 1920s consumerism started up and people began to buy things again, such as the Wireless which was the mass entertainment system for the people. New technologies started to appear, electricity



began to be used more widely and Bakelite was developed, and you could even get electric irons that could be plugged in to a light socket! Gas cookers started to appear and take over from the old ranges, much cleaner.

The general strike occurred, with the introduction of gas less people were buying coal and the wages of the miners started to drop. The other unions supported the miners and the General Strike took place.

Fashions started to change, and corsets were abandoned by most ladies! Their dresses and skirts became less restrictive and voluminous, ankles were seen, and women even started to wear trousers. Their hair became shorter and with the ankles showing people were concerned about the morals of the 'loose women'! Men wearing bowler hats were thought to be important and the working classes tended to wear large flat caps as demonstrated by Paul below.



People started to go out to the Picture House and to Dances. One of the most popular ones in Worcester was the Arcade in St Swithins Street, the entrance was where the rear entrance to Superdrug is now. They also started to go to the seaside by car or public transport and Holiday Camps started to appear.

Despite the start of the problems towards the end of the 1920s, leading to WW2, the 1920s were often known as The Long Weekend due to activities such as the dancing the Charleston and the general happiness of the people.

With a wonderful range of cakes and refreshments during the interval everyone clearly enjoyed themselves and the team have a number of volunteers to help with cakes at future events.

