

The Knutsford Workhouse, an open meeting talk by Jenny Collis of Knutsford Heritage Centre on 13th May.

This was initially going to be a 'closed' meeting for members of Ku3a's Family & Social History group. Mary Gracie is one of our group members as well as being very active at the Heritage Centre, so she suggested Jenny as a suitable speaker for a future group meeting. I mentioned the forthcoming Knutsford Workhouse event to various people who thought that it could have great appeal to the wider Ku3a membership. It would be wasted on just the Family & Social History group! Stuart Allan agreed to circulate an invitation to all members, and the result was that 53 people attended, nearly 40 of whom were outside our activity group's membership. What a lovely surprise, especially for a Friday the thirteenth.

The talk itself? It was informative, entertaining, so well researched and illustrated, beautifully explained, so stimulating to all and for those locals in the audience, a nostalgic treat. It wasn't just the central subject, the Workhouse itself, but the way that Jenny wrapped it into historical, social and cultural context. Its origins, evolution and transition into the NHS and Social Care, and sadly its successor's regression due to cost cutting and the wielding of over-centralised power, insensitive to the continuing needs of the local community.

Those last comments aren't Jenny's words, just my own. So many people in the audience had memories of the maternity hospital on the site – how many were born there and had children there! If this talk comes round again, by popular demand, do not miss it. Thank you so much Jenny for the talk, and to Mary Gracie for teeing it up.

Roger Brown