

THE JOURNAL

OF THE
WORCESTERSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY
AND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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**WIALHS JOURNAL
(ISSUE 39 – WINTER 2010)**

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Front cover illustration "The Shambles" by kind permission of John Mason

NOTE: The material contained in the Journal does not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of the Society. Articles, letters, book reviews, photographs or questions for publication are always welcomed by the Editor.

EDITORIAL

My thanks to those ("the usual suspects" and some new names) who have contributed articles for this edition.

I regret to moan (yes, again) about the lack of reports from members on the many events which took place over the summer – an opportunity missed, both to record the events and to show others what they missed.

And now for the bad news -

After much deliberation it has been agreed by the Committee that from 2011 the Journal will be published only once a year, with Newsletters being issued at intervals (period, format and content to be decided).

This change is due to a combination of the lack of material being sent in by members, a diminishing reserve of Worcestershire-related material available on the web, and the rising cost of printing and posting. The position will be kept under review and it is possible that publication of the Journal may cease if matters do not improve.

The Journal is intended to reflect members' activities and interests and while a few do send material regularly it cannot survive mainly as a selection of random "clippings" trawled from the internet by its editor.

Although it is becoming increasingly difficult, I will do my best to keep finding new articles to include, but in order to maintain the Journal's content - even in just one annual edition - we need your help with contributions PLEASE.

Glyn Thomas

PRESIDENT'S PIECE

I thought for this piece I would concentrate on the success of the restoration project to return to full navigation the two canals linking Droitwich, the early Brindley Barge Canal to the R. Severn and the later link to the Worcester/Birmingham Canal.

I had been interested in boating for many years, my first trip being with Scouts in the mid '60s, followed by an annual 'booze & cruise' with fellow workers throughout the '70s. My personal involvement in the Droitwich canals started back in the late 1970s after the family moved to Worcester and I attended a WEA course on canals where I met Roy Fidoe. (He was more into railways than canals so we made a good team), we later joined the **WIA&LHS**. We started to walk the local canals, including some pretty dark and miserable areas of Birmingham before we decided to see how much of the Droitwich canals we could find, never ever believing that one day we would actually boat the length of it.

Max Sinclair used to regularly update the Society on the progress of restoration and of his involvement, which started in 1951 with a campaign for restoration to be followed from 1971 onwards with working parties etc. during which the canal was re-watered from Vines Park in Droitwich down to Ladywood Lock.

Progress over the next many years was slow & piecemeal, some work being done on rebuilding locks and by-wash walls but the improvement to the towpath was very obvious and the canal became very well walked. A major success during this period was the rebuilding of the top three locks at Hanbury, facilitated by the very generous legacy from an IWA member.

Behind the scenes a scheme was being prepared by BWB, which was to involve major funding from agencies, which were to include BWB, The Local Councils, Advantage West Midlands and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This was to be the 'big push' and full restoration was targeted for 2010 at a cost approaching £12.5m!

In 2006 I was asked if I knew of any members of our Society that would be willing to sit on a 'Heritage Consultation Committee' to be chaired by BWB. From that point on I volunteered and became more involved along with a work colleague, Mike Hayzelden, who is also a member of our Society and has a thorough knowledge of architecture, archaeology and recording.

We then jointly set about undertaking a major measured and photographic survey of all existing structures/assets along the full length of both canals. We were to record what existed before restoration, followed by full access to all work places during restoration and finally a record of the completed scheme. This involved several days walking the towpaths, the best time initially being March/April before vegetation has grown back.

The work was dealt with by two distinct contracts, the Barge Canal from Ladywood to the River Severn and the Junction Canal which was to involve a new line for the canal, the building of a number new locks and the elimination of the 'missing link' of about 500 yards by using the River Salwarpe to connect into the Barge Lock in Vines Park.

Gradually the work proceeded from end to end but stalled when the funding for the short section using the R Salwarpe was withdrawn. Just that short distance threatened to jeopardise the completion of the through route.

Questions were now being asked about how this had come about and delicate negotiations with landowners commenced.

On the Barge Canal meanwhile everything was in place, minor amendments were made to the water levels on weirs as the overall water level had been reduced to accommodate drainage requirements in Vines Park and along the route. A decision was made to get boats into Vines Park from the R Severn to coincide with the Droitwich Salt Day on September 11th and BWB hired a narrow boat for the week prior to the event in order to 'prove' the system.

Mike and I were asked if we would like to form part of the crew, skippered by the Chairman of our Heritage Consultation Committee for a trip from Vines Park to the river and back. Naturally I accepted the offer but sadly Mike had to decline and therefore it was pleasure to find that Roy could make the day.

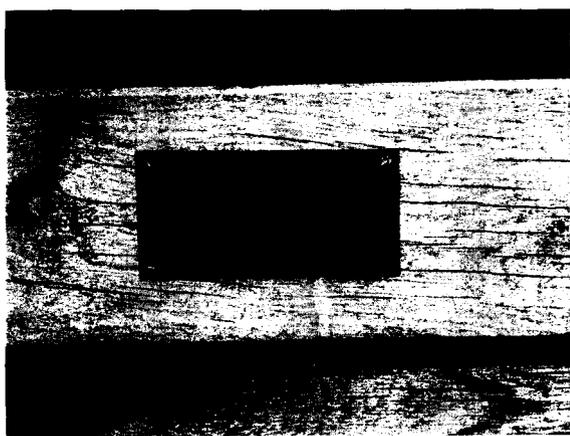


We set off on a lovely sunny day, cruising down a canal, which we had never imagined would once again be open for boats. The locks were hard work, they are broad (14'6") and the gates are heavy but all was well until just before Mildenhall Mill we came across a tree fallen across the canal. A boat making its way to Droitwich was unable to pass but we decided to have a go and being slightly

higher in the water we were able to get by. We carried on under the A449 tunnel to the river where we turned to retrace our route. The fallen tree was still there but was now being cut into small pieces by the very efficient maintenance crew from BWB who were quickly on the scene. From there, despite a short delay we returned to Vines Park after a truly memorable day.



Our Society has been responsible for the provision of a bench on which to rest one's weary limbs, which has been placed in a lovely position on the junction of the R Severn and the Barge Canal at Hawford, it is well worth taking a walk down there just to sit and relax.



Next year there should be plenty of boats to watch as well.

Finally very good news is that the problems in Droitwich have been resolved and a contract has been let to complete the 'missing link'. Contractors are now on site creating a new towpath and deepening the channel of the R Salwarpe to navigation depth.

Roger Tapping

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

As another successful year draws to a close I think it is worth reflecting on what I regard as some of the highlights of the last years programmes. Those of you who were able to attend the talk last November on whistles were in for a surprise. When Simon Topman turned up to give the talk with no illustrations and only a small box of bits and pieces I, along with many others thought, Oh dear, this could be a disaster. However it turned out to be far from the case and we were treated to a delightfully entertaining talk by someone who clearly knew his subject inside out and was able to put it over accompanied by a wicked sense of humour. A very memorable talk and a full report can be found in Journal number 38. This was followed by a visit to Birmingham in May which included a visit to his factory where we were able to see the process of producing the whistles. I have selected those plus the weekend visit to Cardiff and Flatholm as my personal highlights of the season and we have to thank our Committee for all their hard work in compiling such interesting and instructive summer and winter programs. Whilst walking down the Butts recently I became aware of the progress being made on the construction of the new library and history centre and it got me thinking of the impact of recent development of Worcester's Industrial Heritage. The removal of the

Cattle Market and most of Joseph Woods yard to construct the library, the recent demolition of much of the Vinegar works and The Royal Porcelain site have removed several key links with the our industrial past. We, as a society, have a role in trying to ensure the worst excesses of developers are mitigated to protect our heritage and the individual character of our City for future generations. To that end we are actively monitoring development plans through representation on the Conservation Areas Advisory Committee.

Our Friday Walking Group is about to start an exercise to collect data for Worcester City Council in order to update Conservation Area Appraisals and we would welcome new faces. It's a great way to find out a lot more about the history of our City.

Michael McCurdy.

SUMMER PROGRAMME 2010 Members' Reports

I have included all the events which took place this summer, just to show the "cornucopia" of items in the 2010 programme arranged by our hard-working Summer Programme Secretary (thanks Mike) – and to illustrate the relatively small number of reports actually received from members.

Surely WIALHS can do better – if you haven't already done so, please read the editorial for some news on this.

AIA CONFERENCE CHELTENHAM (17/4/10)

No report received

FOREST OF DEAN VISIT (8/5/10)

"There is not much evidence of my Office prior to 1285" (John Harvey, Deputy Gaveller).

The Dean is a fascinating place, not least because of the Free Miner tradition. Free Miners existed in other parts of Britain in the past, notably in the Mendip Hills of Somerset, but the Dean free miners are now the last survivors. The tradition dates back over 700 years and enables a man, born in the Hundred of St Briavels and having served for a year and a day in a Forest mine, to dig for coal, iron or stone almost anywhere in the Forest. The working arrangements are under the control of the Crown representative, the Deputy Gaveller. A claim or area of mining is known as a gale.

Of the seven or so working mines in Dean we were able to see two. The first, working coal, and owned by Robin Morgan, is in fact two mines. One is the New Road gale working the Yorkley seam, and the other is Hopewell which taps the lower Coleford High Delf seam and extends northward into the next valley. Collectively the complex is known as Hopewell. Currently the Hopewell gale is producing a small amount of coal, which is to be graded on the museum site. New Road is almost worked out and has been utilised as a museum trail. Visitors will note that the valley is dry, but all water drains into the Old Furnace Level, sunk by the Mushet family in around 1820. This underground stream forms the latter part of the tour. Before going underground we were

able to walk to the southern part of the gale at Phoenix, still open and producing just a little coal. On one occasion Robin and one of his colleagues crawled underground to Phoenix, dragging an electric cable to power equipment. Robin is probably the oldest of the working miners. His colleague, James Britton, is the newest. In the absence now of a maternity ward in the Forest he will probably be the last!

Our second visit was to Clearwell, the last surviving iron mine, and owned by Ray Wright, a free miner. His son, Jonathan, guided us around. On being asked whether any other miners worked underground Jon replied that insurance cover would be too high. Several other mines are worked by family only. Jon took us through a series of caves and showed how the iron developed on the face of the limestone. However the only product of the mine, currently, is ochre, and this is still being extracted. It is probable that ochre mining dates from Roman times

The caves stretch over a huge area, and tunnels not open to the public can access various abandoned iron mines. Iron mining continued locally until after the Second World War) when the Watkins family took over the nearby New Dun mine. However Watkin's found that they could make more profit from processing scrap.

On leaving the mine members were delighted at the spectacle of some fourteen Bugatti cars in the car park. Apparently this was the owners Spring meet.

The day finished with a visit to Monmouth where the fish and chip shop by the Old Bridge received considerable patronage. Christine is to be congratulated on a very well organised successful trip.

Ian Hayes

**HENWICK GROVE,
UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER
VISIT
(1715110)**

No report received

**VISIT TO BATH BY TRAIN
(2215110)**

No report received

**RAF MUSEUM COSFORD
& WESTON PARK
(1916110)**

No report received

**SHRUB HILL ENGINEERING
WORKS - WALKABOUT
(2316110)**

No report received

**MADRESFIELD COURT VISIT
(3016110)**

No report received

**JEWELLERY QUARTER
MUSEUMS, BIRMINGHAM
(817110)**

On a fine day (unlike the day I did the 'recce', caught me in a thunderstorm under a jeweller's window canopy - could have been very expensive!) the coach driver did an excellent ferry service between two simultaneous venues; the Pen Room and the Jewellery Quarter Museum.

Jewellery Quarter Museum

We enjoyed a guided tour around a real jewellery factory, little changed since the early part of the last century, including a demonstration of jewellery making techniques at a jeweller's bench.



For more than 80 years Smith and Pepper produced jewellery from this workshop, founded in 1899. When the proprietors of the Smith & Pepper jewellery manufacturing firm decided to retire in 1981 they ceased trading and locked the door. Tools were left strewn on benches; grubby overalls were hung on the coat hooks; and dirty teacups were abandoned alongside jars of marmite and jam on the shelf. In the eighty years before its closure little changed with the working practices or equipment used within the family-owned business. Today the museum tells the story of the Jewellery Quarter metalworking heritage over the last 200 years in an extension of 2009.

The Pen Room

In a former pen factory, The Pen Room recalls the history of some of the companies involved in the trade. Exhibits and displays provide an insight into the variety of pens and writing equipment manufactured during the latter half of the 19th century by

companies, situated in and around the Jewellery Quarter. In the 1800s, around 100 companies used to distribute steel pens in Birmingham.



The museum looks into the lives of the employers and workers involved in the business, as well as providing information on the pen companies. It also has information on how steel pen nibs were made and has pen nibs on display. Beyond the steel pen, the museum also aims to display other forms of writing equipment. Apart from a general introduction to the pen trades, we were also allowed to practice with various writing implements.

Acme Whistles (J. Hudson & Co)

After lunching around the Quarter, with a little difficulty we managed to locate J. Hudson & Co., for fast paced and extraordinary tours of the Whistle Works by Simon Topman (the Managing Director, who gave us such an entertaining reating talk last winter). It was astounding to see that much of the production was still undertaken by hand, albeit with modern machinery, though older hand presses are still kept for individual production pieces. Hudson & Co was founded in the 1870s in Birmingham by Joseph Hudson (1848–1930) and his brother James Hudson (1850–1888). In 1883 Joseph Hudson, a toolmaker and violinist, began tinkering in his toolshed making whistles.

Observing that Bobbies were having a hard time communicating with rattles, he realized that his whistle could be used.



The company was family run for over 100 years and three generations; Joseph Hudson's son, James Clifford Hudson, and his grandson, Leon Clifford Hudson ran the company after Joseph retired. The company is the world's largest and most famous producer of whistles, their patented designs being the recognized standard. Today most are made of plastic; the original whistles were made from brass strips. In addition to the "Thunderer", they make varieties of bird calls, dog calls, safety whistles, sports whistles, and party whoopers!

Mike Hayzelden

**LAYCOCK ABBEY AND FOX
TALBOT MUSEUM
(518110)**

No report received

**CARDIFF AND FLAT HOLM
WEEKEND
(3-5/9/10)**

I received a number of reports on the weekend, which was clearly very enjoyable - wish I had been there! All the reports received are included below, and my thanks go to those who took the trouble to write in.

**A Historical & Industrial Archaeology
Cornucopia.**

The weekend visit to Cardiff & Flat Holm began on land donated to Cardiff City by the Earl of Plymouth, who also gave away Hewell Grange (less a fire surround which was removed to his castle at St Fagan's).

There we watched the weaver preparing fleeces for dying, weaving on his large hand looms was a master occupation; the miller in his water mill was preparing oats for porridge, wet Wales was not good land for growing wheat; the clog maker who, had felled his own trees from which he fashioned the soles, was sewing the uppers; the saddler was enjoying a well-earned lunch break after his arduous leather working.

Away to the hotel which must have been on land once owned by the Marquis of Worcester judging by the stained glass window in the dining room.

The boat trip to Flat Holm was governed by tides and far too brief. History stretched from the Bronze Age - an axe head too precious to be left on the island, to Celtic Christianity - St Cadoc, a contemporary of St David, has been recorded as a visitor, to a Mediaeval Monastery sited near the current day farm house, to more recent times - where to nurse the contagious sick, and gun emplacements against the enemy. (Not us by this time). The most recent archaeology was the silent foghorn, by the un-manned lighthouse. With careful footwork remains of a narrow gauge railway could be found.

Aberdulais Falls was the site of a long-dead tinning industry. Villages and workplaces needed strenuous effort, to prove a point. At least the gigantic water wheel has been rebuilt and now spasmodically generates electricity that is fed into the national grid.

Cefn Coed Colliery Museum enabled us to stay dry. With illustrations and explanations we could discover about the lives of pit ponies, what pithead baths are like and the refinement of crude oil.

Our last adventure was a journey on the Brecon Mountain Railway. Built in 1858 to carry limestone all that was left were slagheaps and this much cherished trundling train.

Thank you so much Roger for a truly wonderful weekend.

E A Thompson.

Amgueddfa Werin Cymru.

(That's St.Fagan's Welsh Folk Museum to you and me!)

We spent an unusually fine (for Wales) afternoon at this precursor to Avoncroft. It was a re-acquaintance for me, a student here in the 1970s, the museum building then being recently completed, with two floors of galleries and a cafe (in part of the present shop) serving an outside sitting area. Entrance fees were payable then at 10p! Yes, I still have the guide book and a later edition of 1985 (entrance 30p) following my training period with the museum's consultants. They were printed in black & white with no Welsh translations or editions. The site then finished at the Tannery and Smithy, just about a dozen buildings in all.

Our master plan proposed a concentration around the smithy to create a village, thus the Iron Worker's Terrace became the start of a 'street'. Y Garreg Fawr farmhouse was also being rebuilt where the pottery now is, but now seems to have moved. A limitation with such museums (as Avoncroft and the Black Country Museum - I have worked at both) is that buildings only come to the

museum when they need to be rescued from an 'endangered' site and even then it can take years to organise.

It was in 1946 that the Earl of Plymouth gave St. Fagan's to the Museum of Wales for a Folk Museum. Those who visited the house may have found a link with Worcestershire via the Earls of Plymouth. Fittings and furnishings displayed have come from many of their houses including Hewell Grange, supposedly from the 'old house', however the nearby drawing of Hewell Grange depicts the garden front of the current Victorian Jacobean style house, not the original ruin by the lake. **St. Fagan's**, however is the genuine article, built in the 1560s on the ruins of a 13th Century castle. Having visited a few times since 1985, the pace of change continues to increase, particularly in the techniques, ambition and ability to move ever more imposing structures, such as the new church and the miner's institute (how did they move that large terrazzo floor?). The new prefab also made an interesting comparison with Avoncroft's. The consensus was, of course, that at Avoncroft's was a more sophisticated design.

What are my impressions now? The main one is the Welshness! The South Walians, by and large, only spoke English and the 1985 guide book had just a Welsh translation of the title on the cover. In 1976 there was a weaver [as now], wood turner and cooper, as well as the farmhouse curators, but only a few were fluent in Welsh, though now all were explaining in Welsh. There are far more traders and craft workers operating today, with the shops, baker and other outlets creating the attraction of village activities such as at Blists Hill and the Black Country Museum. The large site, however, still feels to have a haphazard layout. The single access point to the main St. Fagan's House gardens, the other half of the site, was

always and still remains a constraint. The site is now so extensive that I did not have time to visit the whole site as well as the museum. Good for encouraging regular local visitors but exhausting for new or occasional visitors. Themed routes might also be an idea as I failed to find all the craft workers as well as missing a couple of the newer exhibits since my last visit. I know; a good excuse to go back!

Mike Hayzelden

Ciloerwint

After the Second World War it became apparent that the supply of water from Elan Valley to Birmingham might be inadequate in the future. Accordingly the upper part of the Claenven valley was flooded, the dam being completed in 1952. About a mile below the dam and unaffected by the lake, was a farmhouse - Ciloerwint.

It appears that Ciloerwint was not demolished when the dam was built as both appear on contemporary ordnance survey maps. However, some time in the mid 1950s an announcement was made that what might be the last surviving Welsh long house was due to be dismantled and possibly re-erected elsewhere.

A long house consisted of two parts - a section for cattle divided by a corridor from the family living accommodation. There was one front door wide enough to cater for a long horned cow. Once inside, the cow turned to the left, the family to the right. Originally built as a half timbered **cruck** house in 1470 it was rebuilt in stone in 1734.

The farm house was re erected as the fifth building at St Fagan's museum in 1959. As it stands it represents the house as it was in 1750, although it was certainly inhabited well into the 20th century. An approach has

been made to Severn Trent but they are unable to find the exact date of demolition at Claenven from their archives.

Force of circumstances prevented me from seeing Ciloerwint on its original site before it was too late, but I was able to meet up with it at St Fagan's thanks to Tapping's Tours.

Ian Hayes

Aberdulais Falls.

Formed by glacial action 20,000 years ago, Aberdulais lies in a leafy gorge accompanied by what remains of its old support buildings. A typical South Wales site with a rocky stream, sharing space with industrial activity. The gorge is now a net producer of electricity. Nature has claimed back what has been a scar (Lynda saw a dipper and a yellow wagtail in the top pool and fish and eels are said to be present) but a museum and film presentation reflect the harsh environment experienced by those who worked there: noise, dust, long days and "It was so hot the sweat ran out of my shoes"

Thin steel was tinned here in an industry which occupied this valley, benefiting from the proximity of abundant coal and using tin from Cornwall. In 1891, of 225 **tinmills** in Britain, 205 were in south Wales. The site had from the 16th century been used for smelting, corn milling, woollen milling and copper production (Do you remember our visit to the Anglesey copper mine? Copper was shipped out of nearby Arnroth to Liverpool and such places as Aberdulais)

Tinplate produced here travelled to all parts of the world, although at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries, President McKinley, in a fit of protectionism, banned its import to the US: no problem: expatriot Welshmen

continued to operate plants there. (McKinley was subsequently shot!)

Typical of large industrial employers and philanthropists of that era, William Llewellyn (1782-1857), locally-born and raised, built a school which became a library and reading room for the workers (and which is now the tea room). He also provided instruments for the brass band.

Mike Niccolls

The Brecon Mountain Railway

The railway is not a preserved line but is a private concern using, for the most part, the trackbed of the former Brecon to Merthyr Tydfil Junction Railway.

The original standard gauge railway opened in 1859 and finally closed in 1964 as a result of Dr. Beeching.

BACKGROUND

The owner, Mr Tony Hills, was looking for a suitable site for the narrow gauge railway (1ft 113/4 inches or 600mm if you are young!)The original railway fought its way through the Brecon Beacons which involved steep gradients and the Torpanteau Tunnel, which, at 1313-feet above sea level was the highest tunnel in Great Britain. The 5.5 mile length between Pant and Torpanteau seemed to fit the bill. The car/coach park is built on the site of the former railway branch into Dowlais.

The train departs from a 'new' Pant station built between 1982 and 1996, the original station being situated a short distance away.

THE ROUTE

For the first 600yards (none of your metric in this report) the line follows a new

alignment, some of which was cut through rock, to join the original line coming in from the right. To the far left can be seen the River Taf Fechan, the track bed of the branch from Pontsticill (a station which we call at) to Merthyr Tydfil and the spoil heap of the material excavated from the London and North Western Railway Morlais tunnel. Incidentally as you approach the car park at Pant Station you can see the 'Pepper Pot' ventilation shafts of the tunnel.

On the hills beyond can be seen the Vaynor quarry from which most of the track ballast for the Brecon Mountain Railway (BMR) was obtained.

Across the valley, forward of the train as it passes a disused quarry, can be seen the village of Ponsticill. The train enters a wooded valley cutting with many bridges crossing the several streams tumbling down the hillside. As it leaves the cutting the Taf Fechan Reservoir comes into view, a backdrop three peaks behind. The middle peak is Pen-Y-Fan which at 2906-ft is the highest peak in South Wales.

As the train enters Ponsticill Station the reservoir dam can be seen. The reservoir was completed in 1927 and holds 3,400 million gallons. The original signal box can be seen alongside the Station House. The grassed area to the right of the signal box was the site of the old turntable. The train does not stop here on the outward journey and we continue to the northern end of the reservoir at Dolygaer. Here the engine runs round to the opposite end of the train for the journey back to Pant.

On the way back the train stops at Ponsticill for about 20 minutes to take on water. There is a small refreshment room, an outside seating area, children's play area and toilets. The temporary refreshment room and toilets are provided in three converted ex-British

Rail carriage trucks. We recommence the journey back to Pant.

Track is laid beyond the current terminus and hopefully it will be extended to Torpanteau.

THE ENGINE AND CARRIAGES

The American type of locomotive was built by Baldwin of Philadelphia in the USA in 1930. It spent its working life in South Africa hauling limestone near Port Elizabeth.

In 1974 it ran away driverless and after travelling a few miles it left the track and was wrecked. The insurers wrote it off and the BMR purchased it as salvage.



It is a 4-6-2 tender engine weighing 47 tons. Rebuilding started in 1990 and it entered service in 1997, as an oil burner. After 10 years it was converted to coal, sadly not Welsh Steam Coal but Russian imported

The carriages are built in the American style with a veranda at each end; a caboose (guards van) completes the line up.



THE VISIT

What a cracking trip. The scenery is remarkable which proves you do not have to be a rail enthusiast to enjoy this railway.

My visit was 'made' for me by the information given to me by Kevin, our-guard for the day, and also the good service by the staff in the restaurant at Pant Station when we returned, who kept open so refreshments could be taken before our journey back.

COMMENT

It took a long time to obtain the necessary consents and construction started in 1978, the first train running in 1980. Russian coal is used, although there is a pit producing good quality Welsh coal within one and a half miles away. Why can't that be used? It all boils down to planning conditions! It appears that the permission for the coal extraction was on the condition that transport from the site would be by rail in order to ensure there would be no multi movements by large and heavy road lorries. That I can understand. The railway decides to change from imported oil to coal but can't use local coal because of the planning condition.

This railway is a tourist attraction to the area bringing many visitors. Why can't we see

the bigger picture, apply common sense and allow Welsh coal to be taken by road to the site. I don't know how many lorries would be involved but it can't be that many.

I enjoyed this visit and will return again now I know more about the background (as you dear reader will now know). I would ask you to tell your friends about this little gem, they will not be disappointed. Thank-you Roger for including this visit to end our weekend in South Wales.

I have drawn extensively on information from the official web site of The Brecon Mountain Railway and am grateful for permission to use it.

Roy Fidoe

VISIT TO HINDLIP HALL

(17/9/10)

No report received

GLOUCESTER AND WARWICKSHIRE RAILWAY AND HAILES ABBEY

(18/9/10)



A great day on the railway including a guided visit around the engine workshop and yards at Toddington. The added bonus

(apart from intriguing foot safety gear) was the appearance of a London Routemaster bus from the village fete.

Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway

The line was primarily built (1900-1906) to improve through services from Birmingham to Bristol and the West Country. The line closed to local passenger traffic on 5th March 1960, though the line continued in use for goods services until an incident at Winchcombe on 25th August 1976 effectively closed the line. At Winchcombe, the next stop down the line, platforms, station buildings and the signal box had disappeared completely except for the goods shed and weigh-bridge. This is the GWR's main stock yard. We stopped here for 30mins to see the rebuilding and small display in the station building while our train ran out and back to Gotherington, the current limit of the line due to the embankment collapse. Repair work is now well under way, with new land drains laid in a trench below the railway embankment (this was built more than a century ago) directed into two existing culverts beneath the railway.

Hailes Abbey & Church

Once a Cistercian abbey, founded in 1246 by Richard of Cornwall and dissolved Christmas Eve 1539, Hailes never housed large numbers of monks but had extensive and elaborate buildings. It was financed by pilgrims visiting its renowned relic, 'the Holy Blood of Hailes' allegedly a phial of Christ's blood. The impressive water tunnels are now partly visible as are the amazing roof bosses now displayed in the museum [found in the spoil as unsuitable for use as walling material by stone robbers].



Outside the remains of the Abbey is Hailes Church. The church is older than the abbey, being consecrated in 1175 and then served as the Capella Ante Portas to the Abbey until its dissolution. Inside the church are fine Medieval wall paintings.



Winchcornbe

During the Victorian era much of the Castle was restored by the Dent brothers, glovemakers from Worcester. By Abbey Terrace are Dent's Almshouses in a crisp Victorian style by Gilbert Scott. Abbey Terrace is built on the site of the Abbey cemetery.



Instead of tea some of us spent our time at the Railway Museum [a preservation society's bewildering collection of railway memorabilia]. A display of tools and equipment which show railway life in the days of steam. Signals and working models are visitor operated. Set in 1.5 acres of gardens, with a friendly, attentive collie dog!



Mike Hayzelden

DENNIS WALKER

A tribute to Dennis, one of the founder members of WIALHS, who died recently.

When Bill Gwilliam formed the Society Dennis Walker became a lively member making considerable contributions to our activities and studies. His dry but very witty remarks enlivened many a social occasion. His considerable knowledge of the Worcester Tinplate Industry widened our understanding of the important products and developments which affected the lives of the nation. The humble tin can gained its true importance in its effect on us all. I well remember the members sitting silently fascinated when the manufacture and decoration of Judges Wig Cases was explained to us. We all wanted to own one.

We should all be proud that he chose to join us as a long-serving member.

Max Sinclair

OLD BANGERS AND OILY RAGS

Mike Wall

My life seems to revolve round the quest for yesterday and never mind today. I've always been like that so it can't be old age! I don't know when I was smitten but probably when I was around 5 years old. I have always had a great fascination for motor cars especially the older ones. Most modern cars [even including Jaguar these days] seem dull by comparison. Yes, I know they are faster/safer/more economical/warmer/more reliable etc etc but they give me no thrill. I get no kick out of seeing a modern red

Ferrari, but show me an Alvis or Bentley or Frazer Nash and I'm yours! It's the same with a 1935 Morris 8, Wolseley 18, Vauxhall 14 or Austin 7. My brain, such as it is these days, reverts to that of a 10-year-old in the 1940s. Like many kids of that age [and of today I suppose with modern 'jelly-moulds'] I was able to recognise most makes without reading the badge. A distinct advantage with your pals when, indeed, they were properly amazed when I was correct and the vehicle in the distance proved to be a Singer not a Morris!

My fascination with motor cars must have stemmed from my father, a policeman, who drove my mother and me to see my grandmother in Sussex in the later 1940s and 1950s. He managed to borrow or hire a different pre-war car each time for our trip. He even obtained a superb and, these days, a very desirable MG 1½ litre VA [with its long bonnet with typical English sports saloon coachwork and art-deco instruments]. Once or twice we went to the top of Bury Hill near Arundel to see the holiday-makers in their often worn-out pre-war cars, over-occupied and under-maintained, struggling up this formidable mountain, ever looming higher and higher. The easy bit from Croydon or Staines over, the hill was dreaded in those days! But the old cars of the 1920s and 30s mostly took it in their stride, but some boiled and, even worse, leaked oil or had now-perished tyres deflate. Cruel but exciting nevertheless for a 12-year-old.

Perhaps a couple of incidents propelled me to the old-car scene. I knew all the current makes and [as I thought] all the old ones as well, but on one journey near Bognor, my father, driving an Austin Cambridge with poor brakes, nearly hit a strange pre-1930s car on a bend. "Phew", he said, "that was an old Swift!" I said I had never heard of that one and he replied "Oh, they went out of production years ago."

I enquired what 'out of production' meant. It transpired that the company failed to sell sufficient cars at the time and, not being able to pay its employees, closed down. For ever. How sad. I could not look in the back pages of *The Motor* to see a picture of the new 1948 Swift. Extinct or nearly so. On another occasion, I came across a small Vintage [as I know them nowadays] car on Bognor seafront. The badge said Lea Francis, Coventry. By having to wait for my mother to change her weekly library book in Bromsgrove, my researches in the *Motor* had revealed that new models of the Lea Francis 14 were available and indeed could be seen occasionally, all shiny and new, on the roads. I knew I would love to own a Lea Francis sometime.

Meanwhile, I still gathered in my mind [more interesting than school work] odd cars that caught my eye. In an auction in the old Bromsgrove Market Hall [its replacement may soon be demolished] old cars were offered. I tried to persuade my father to bid for a c.1935 SS, later Jaguar. How could you resist? Leaf-springs on the steering wheel, twin bucket seats in the rear, long bonnet, great lines - a wonderful machine! No he would not. What about a Renault, c.1935, its grinning radiator with its exceptional slope [a throw-back to its 'coal-scuttle' bonnet days 10 years before). No, it's French! Down side streets I wandered, sometimes a veritable automobile jewel would appear. A Railton 10, incredibly rare now, an Essex [before it was swallowed up in the Hudson Terraplane combine], a Vale and a Moms Major [huge and hard to visualise it had smaller and more profitable relations, the 8, Cowley and Oxford etc]. I remember in Edgar Street in Worcester was often parked a La Salle, a cheaper Cadillac, now long gone. In Droitwich, a rather rare Triumph-like saloon beckoned. It was a Crossley Regis, occasionally seen these days in car shows.

I had to work as did everyone else, but I was determined to buy a car as soon as I could afford one. A 1938 Ford 8 did me proud for some years, later replaced by a Triumph Mayflower - well it looked old and reminded me of the Railton! Eventually the chance to buy a Lea Francis came up. The company had by then ceased to manufacture cars - a great pity. They had no place in a world with Hillman Avengers, Vauxhall Crestas or Ford Cortinas, worthy though they might be. Never mind Minis and E-Types! So this Leaf, as we like to call them, was a 1928 12/40, 4-cylinder Meadows engine, a very rough 2-seater with dicky boarded over. Never mind, it went well after I had the radiator re-cored and other minor bits done. It was a pleasure to drive. The large steering wheel swung me round fast bends like a Le Mans Bentley. Or so I kidded myself. It was far from original, so for £15 I bought another one, same horse-power but an un-restored 6-light saloon body and most of the other parts in-situ. It was considerably heavier than the old one but went well enough when I had sorted the seized engine and other faults. It took several years to do this and a disastrous conrod breaking and piercing the aluminium crank case meant that it was off the road until I could gather enough funds to repair and continue to use it.

Eventually, it was done. I was rather pleased that a non-mechanic could actually put together an old car and make it work well. I did several weddings in it but realised that with my still limited funds and expert knowledge, its days under my ownership were nearing their end. It was sold several years ago, but I have never regretted owing a Vintage car. They give much pleasure and if I can do it, so can many others. The engine [at least on mine and other makes of similar size and date] is easily accessible and simple to repair.

But I still love all old cars. A trip to Brecon, or Shelsley or Prescot is like a magnet for me. I'm afraid my enthusiasm for canals and railways takes second place to these ancient vehicles - and lorries as well! I have a grandson who collects model cars - but none after 1950 please! You never know, he may catch the bug one day!

Mike Wall

ASPECTS OF SOUTH WALES – 1960 AND 2010

Ian Hayes

*Ian's article relates a recent railway trip during the WIALHS Summer Programme weekend to a train journey he took some 50 years ago. Many thanks Ian – this brings back memories of visiting my grandparents' house in Wales in **the** late 50's There was a branch of this railway running at the top of the field "out back". I used to run out to see the steam trains go by – even in the middle of tea! - Ed*

Until the early 1960s Brecon was the hub of a fascinating system of railways which not only ran through some delightful countryside but gave access to a wealth of industrial archaeology. The lines radiated to Moat Lane (near Newtown), Hereford, Newport and Neath, the total mileage being about 188.

South of Brecon two of the lines crossed the Brecon Beacons, one by the highest tunnel in Britain, and penetrated the South Wales valleys. Up until 1958 it was possible to do a round trip to Merthyr, Hirwaun, and Neath, then back to Brecon. This took only an afternoon and cost well under £1 in fares. On 30 June 1958 economies took place which

greatly reduced the services and resulted in key trains being withdrawn. However the loop was still feasible on a Saturday, but had to start from Merthyr.

Fifty years later it was still possible to visit some of the places served by these lines by means of a Tapping Tour. However the lines themselves were closed to passengers between 1961 and 1962, well before Beeching. The following is an account of a Saturday afternoon trip from Merthyr in 1960.

The train left the imposing four platform station at Merthyr at 14.05, crossing the site of the Glamorgan canal at Rhydycar. Here, backing on to the canal, was a terrace of 29 cottages built by Richard Crawshay in about 1800. Six were rebuilt at St Fagans museum so that each one represented a different period in their history - 1805, 1855, 1895, 1925, 1955, and 1985. The result was one of the most interesting exhibits at the museum.

The Vale of Neath.

Beyond Rhydycar Junction the train entered the long smoky Merthyr tunnel, emerging in the Cynon valley. At Hirwaun, on the watershed between the rivers Cynon and Neath, a change had to be made for the train down the Neath valley. High up on the valley opposite was a complex of collieries including Tower, which survived as the last deep mine in South Wales until recently. Happily a report in the 'Telegraph' states that the mine should reopen in 2011.

The last station before Neath was Aberdulais, near the site of one of the objectives of our tour, a very early tin plating works now the property of the National Trust. Aberdulais village was largely demolished to make way for the dual carriageway A465 road.

Here it is worth mentioning that a number of pre Nationalisation tickets were still in circulation in 1960. One, from Neath to Aberdulais, was numbered 2370 - equivalent to a couple of journeys a week. One can, perhaps, visualise a lady from Aberdulais walking to Neath and coming back on the train with her shopping.

The **Hirwaun** to Neath train arrived at Neath (General) at 1512, from which it was a short walk to Riverside station, a relic of the Midland Railway's efforts to reach South Wales. A survival of the Midland pre 1923 influence was that through tickets to Hereford were still available in 1960 from Riverside.

The Neath and Brecon.

Riverside was a bleak sort of place with little passenger shelter and huge platforms to cater for commuting miners, many of the pits up the Dulas valley not being close to a village. Parked behind the station were lines of ancient 'clerestory' coaches for use on the collier's trains.

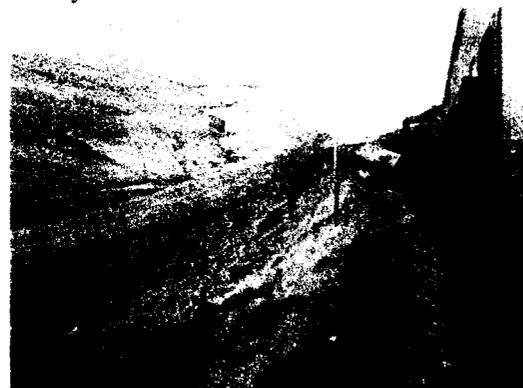
The river Dulais flows through a hanging valley and runs into the river Neath by a series of picturesque rapids and waterfalls. These had been harnessed to provide power for the waterwheels working the plating machinery of the factory up to the 19th century. In 2010 what was reputed to be the biggest overshot wheel in Europe was connected to a generator which supplied electricity for the site.

The Neath and Brecon Railway ran just behind the falls, and a few miles upstream served Cefn Coed colliery museum, also visited by our Society. Two shafts reached down to a rich seam of anthracite. Unfortunately the methane given off by the coal, coupled with flooding problems, caused the mine to close in 1968 before it

was exhausted, having first gained the name of "the slaughterhouse". The site, now owned by Neath-Port Talbot Borough Council was converted into a museum and was included in our Society itinerary in 2010. The star turn of the museum is certainly a 1927 winding engine, now turned over by electricity.

Beyond Cefn Coed the line climbed up the valley originally serving various pits. Onllwyn, a coal washery, has latterly been the terminus of the line. In 1960 the line proceeded to a junction with the Swansea valley line at Coelbren, this station being actually on the watershed between the Dulais and Tawe valleys. The train went on to emerge high up on the valley side of the Tawe and shortly arrived at Craig y Nos. This was the station for Craig y Nos castle, the residence of the soprano Adelina Patti, who died in 1919. She was notable for holding a series of farewell concerts lasting over thirteen years. Of considerable interest was her private waiting room at the station, the taps being made of silver.

Behind the station, in 1953, was a small network of narrow gauge railways serving local quarries, and a beautiful little Kerr Stuart locomotive rusting away. Passing over the summit the train descended the Usk valley to reach Brecon at 17.51.



N&B Railway – near the summit

The Brecon and Merthyr.

At Brecon station on a Saturday at 18.00 all three platforms were occupied by trains. In the next 20 minutes there were departures for Hereford, Newport and Neath. However most of the day Brecon slumbered.

Our train was the 18.15 to Newport and this started by pottering down the Usk valley, passing through what was reputed to be the oldest tunnel in Britain (although there were rival claimants), and down to Talybont on Usk. Here commenced what was to most of us, the main attraction of the line - the Seven Mile bank. When notice of closure was announced enthusiasts from all parts of Britain descended on the Usk valley, sometimes outnumbering the local passengers.



B&M Railway – Seven Mile Bank

Tom Rolt, writing in 'Lines of Character' states: "The Brecon and Merthyr deserves special mention for its bold frontal assault upon that great massif of the Brecon Beacons which imposes an almost impregnable wall between the vale of Usk and the smoke shrouded gulfs of the Rhondda and Ebbw. At Talybont begins one of the most formidable inclines in Britain, no less than seven miles of a killing ruling gradient of 1 in 38".

That, in effect, is almost as steep as Lickey, but three times as long.

One of my abiding memories is of standing on the dam of the Talybont reservoir in the evening and seeing the lights of the Newport train rising up against the darkening hillside, until they finally vanished over the skyline, for all the world like a plane taking off. One of my friends commented "Astounding rate of climb these pannier tanks".

At the summit the train entered Beacon tunnel, as mentioned before the highest in Britain. Immediately south of the tunnel was Torpantau "in its wildest most lonely situation with scarcely a human habitation in sight".



B&M Railway – view from Beacon Tunnel mouth

Torpantau is strictly within the realm of the Brecon Mountain Railway, which is covered elsewhere. When I enquired in 2010 from one of the staff why the line did not actually serve Torpantau I was advised that only one of their locomotives was capable of reaching that station. My own thought is that the Brecon Mountain Railway is only a pale reflection of the original railway.

In spite of its title the Brecon and Merthyr did not actually run through trains between those two towns, it being necessary to change at Pontsticill Junction, one of the

current termini of the Brecon Mountain Railway. From the junction the Merthyr branch descended the Taf Fechan valley, joining up, before 1958, with the famous Heads of the Valleys line. The entry to Merthyr was via a sweeping 180⁰ turn, passing again through Rhydycar. Merthyr was reached at 19.47, completing 80 miles of one of the most scenic and interesting rail voyages in Britain.

Some thoughts on tickets.

A ticket provided a souvenir of the journey, and its retention required some skill. Various methods were available:

- Hop over the fence at the terminus. (This never worked in Ireland).
- Try your luck with the ticket collector.
- Get a day return for the single journey, normally the same cost as a single. These were of little use on the N & B as there was only one train a day, giving 24 minutes in Brecon.
- Ask the booking clerk if he had any short distance pre Nationalisation tickets. Most co operated.

And Dowlais.

South of the station at Pant lay the town of Dowlais, with a very complicated rail system. It had seven sheep haunted stations served by four different railways - all worth exploring. But that is another story.

Ian Hayes

A sketch map of Ian's "day trip" is included in the Photo section later in the Journal – the two-column format here does not do it justice - Ed

MIDDLEPORT POTTERY

Dr Malcolm Nixon

Members may well recall occasional news items given out at our meetings regarding the future of Burgess, Dorling & Leigh's 'Middleport Pottery' near Burslem, Stoke on Trent and for those who came to my Bill Gwilliam Memorial Lecture they will recall this factory figured prominently in my life story. This iconic 'model pottery', built in 1888 on the banks of the Trent & Mersey Canal has been under threat for some time - initially from decay (almost £1m has been spent trying to keep the building water-tight, a process far from complete) and latterly from the recession. Ironically the business has traded profitably, but a combination of unforeseen circumstances (including an unfortunate case of staff dishonesty) forced the owners to sell the business.

For a while it appeared that it might become part of the Prince's Regeneration Trust portfolio, but that offer fell through and instead it has become part of the Denby Pottery company. The new owners themselves have a long and proud history (it was founded in the very early 19th century in Derbyshire where it still operates) and they are very much a 'factory based' craft pottery with a distinctive house style. They have promised to continue **making** the traditional 'Burleigh' ware at Middleport - which relies so much on the now unique process of under-glaze transfer printing - and will expand their sales outlets to compliment their own marketing plans. The factory shop will still welcome visitors and to many it will be business as usual; sadly, for those wishing to book a factory tour to see the ware made, this will no longer be possible. Unfortunately it is deemed too dangerous to walk round the Victorian factory - perhaps

the consequence of a visiting member of the new company in a slip on one of the many wooden flights of stairs! However given Denby's love of heritage and their interest in what makes Burleigh unique future visitors might be surprised.

For my part - my years of surveying the packing house, washroom and latterly the decorators is almost at an end - but new ventures at Middleport beckon and hopefully news of these will follow in a later Journal.



As a change from my normal photographic offering (the factory in the 1960's) I have included a 2008 image of one of the 'Burleigh' decorators - Karen - at work on the 'Evelyn & Crabtree' annual mug - some of you may have one of these limited editions - if so, here is how it was made!

Dr. Malcolm Nixon

SWIMMING IN THE RIVER SEVERN AT WORCESTER 1870-1914

Judd Doughty

This short article is taken from a recent study undertaken by the author entitled 'Sport and Spaces and Place for Sport in Worcester 1880-1914.'

In the latter years of the 19th century the River Severn provided an ideal place for the population of Worcester to swim and bathe. Recognising this, the City Corporation (the forerunner to the modern City Council) erected a wooden swimming 'barge' semi-submerged in the river at the north-end of Pitchcroft. This self-contained barge was installed in 1879 to hide the naked form of the males who had, in the past, regularly frequented this part of the river. The barge was wooden in construction, around 30 yards long and part-open at the upstream and downstream ends to allow the flow of water through the bathing area.

As well as hiding the modesty of the male swimmers the barge was a relatively cheap and accessible way for the Corporation to comply with 1846 Baths and Washhouses Act. This legislation encouraged authorities to establish indoor baths, washhouses, laundries and, most importantly, open bathing spaces. Specifically, it was developed to help combat the poor working and living conditions many of the working classes were exposed to during the industrialisation of the manufacturing industries. Indoor swimming pools were not allowed as part of this initial act and it was not until 1878 that this legislation was adapted to encourage the construction of indoor swimming pools, rather than 'plunge baths.'

Helped by the Muscular Christianity of the middle-classes, born out of the influential public schools and universities, swimming became hugely popular as both a recreational activity and as a sport by the late 1870s. By the turn of the century swimming was not only popular in terms of participation but also had a number of governing bodies and specialist publications devoted to it. As Worcester is a sizeable distance from the nearest seaside resort it appears that the Severn was seen as an acceptable substitute for the salt water so craved and heralded by those with influence during the Victorian period. The salt waters of Droitwich Spa and the famed water 'cures' of the Malvern Hills, popular amongst the wealthiest members of society, can only have helped to encourage the less privileged residents of Worcester into the water.

By 1900 the Corporation moved the barge to a site roughly 200 hundred yards downstream from where the racecourse grandstand is situated, at the end of the Butts Siding spur-line. With this move came a second barge to cater for the growing number of female residents who wished to swim. At this time the Corporation also banned swimming or bathing outside of the swimming barges in a bid to both prevent accidents and improve the image of the riverside area, an attempt at rationalising the activities of the working classes. These barges were attended to by a 'Swimming Barge Attendant' employed by the Corporation. In 1900 this task was undertaken by a local gentleman named Charles **Webb**. He ensured that the riverside bye-laws were adhered to and that, under no circumstances, bathing between the sexes took place. Although the swimming barges catered for the majority of swimmers a number of more competitive athletes took part in the popular one mile races which started at Kepax, to the north of the city, and

finished alongside the grandstand. These races were most popular during the 1930s according to local historians Haynes and Haynes.

In the exceptionally hot summer of 1902 The Worcester Chronicle reported not only a considerable number of swimmers using the 'barges' but also an increase in the number of thefts of both clothes and valuables occurring from the edge of the containers. This was later remedied with the installation of changing booths at the side of the barges. Despite this free, safe and relatively accessible venue, reports of drowning and near-drowning in the Severn appeared most weeks in all of the local newspapers. Many of these accidents happened at Sandy's Point near to the Diglis weir and canal basin.

The swimming barge attendant held the grim responsibility of removing corpses from the Severn. With the central location of the river and the close proximity of it to the vast majority of Worcester's residents, it is perhaps no surprise that it was an ideal 'playground' for many of the younger townfolk. In addition to this many of the residents worked either alongside the river in the warehouses and wharfs or actually upon the river in the transport and fishing industries.

Moreover, the entrance cost of the privately owned Sansome Walk 'Turkish' style baths may well have been prohibitive for many residents, especially those from the lower reaches of society. Sansome Walk baths did allow the local Elementary Schools and Scout Packs to use the facilities for free however.

Judd Doughty

STOURPORT BRIDGE

Keith Beddoes

Keith kindly submitted this article very recently and I felt that it should be included in full in this edition as the bridge has just had its 140th anniversary - Ed

My interest in Stourport Bridge stems back to the 1950/60s when I was employed at the Kidderminster engineering company Bradley & Turton which closed in 1979. Whilst at Bradley & Turton it was a well known fact that the forerunner of the company, F Bradley & Co, had supplied ironwork used in several buildings locally including Stourport Bridge. Since its refurbishment in 2006/7 there have been many differing accounts as to who exactly designed and built it way back in 1870, and also no mention of F Bradley or Bradley's part in it. The following is a brief account of the bridges across the Severn at Stourport on Severn.

The First Stourport Bridge (1775)

Contrary to popular belief, there have been four bridges over the river at this point, all Toll Bridges.

The first mention of a proposed bridge across the Severn at Stourport appears in a notice published in Berrows Worcester Journal for 2nd September 1773 stating that "Trustees had already been appointed to put into execution an Act of Parliament for building a bridge across the river Severn at Stourport".

Accordingly an Act was soon passed, GEO 13 CAP CX 11, empowering certain persons to constitute "Trustees" to acquire Redstone ferry and construct a bridge over the River

as near to the ferry as possible and to levy tolls for the use of the ferry and proposed bridge. The Act also gave the Trustees powers to borrow, on the security of the tolls, a sum not exceeding £7,000 to build the said bridge.

During the following weeks and months, the Worcester Journal reported several meetings of the Trustees taking place "in a dwelling house of Mary Roden of Stourport, the meetings being called by the Clerk to the Trustees, Richard Colley, a Mercer and Draper of Kidderminster". Amongst things initially discussed was "to ask for any person or persons willing to contract with the Trustees for building a stone bridge across the river to consist of 3 arches----".

By December 1773, the plan had changed, the Trustees now considering plans for a wooden bridge to a design of their appointed surveyor, Thomas Farnolls Pritchard (1723 - 1777) a Shrewsbury Architect and it may be of interest to note here that at the time Pritchard was surveyor for Stourport Bridge, he had drawn up plans that were later incorporated in the famous Ironbridge in Shropshire.

By the summer of 1774, the necessary riverside meadowland had been purchased but plans for the bridge had reverted back to the original idea of building a stone one, also to the design of Pritchard after he had changed his opinion about the use of wood. This change of plan, it seems, created some delay in progress (new?) contractors being sought to build the stone bridge. Matters must have dragged on further with little work being done, for at a Trustees meeting in September 1774 it was agreed to borrow £1,000 "to be used for completing the bridge".

In November 1774, the Trustees decided "that to speedily complete the bridge it was

necessary for them to provide some materials in the Winter - so as to start (work) again in the Spring as early as the season permits". Although further progress appears not to have been reported, work must have proceeded at quite a pace for 6 or 7 months in 1775 until the bridge was completed in September 1775, a notice appearing in the Worcester Journal for 4th October 1775 stating that "the bridge was now commodious and convenient for horses and carriages to pass and re-pass over the same". It was also announced that a drawing by James Sherriff of Stourport "dedicated to the proprietors of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire canal - will soon be ready for publication".

The 3rd Bridge (1806)

Although the stone bridge was elegant in its design, it was also substantially built to withstand the raging moods of the Severn and appears that local stone, probably from the same Arley quarries that Thomas Telford later used in building Bewdley Bridge was incorporated in it quite extensively.

Over the years there have been many "Great Floods" in the Severn Valley area causing much damage, however the "Great Flood" in February 1795 was particularly notable for its severity, washing away several bridges over the Severn including the one at Stourport. Obviously the severing of the link across the Severn was of great concern to Stourport people so plans were put in hand by the Trustees to build a replacement. Consequently the Trustees applied for another Act of Parliament in 1795. This Act, 35 GEO III CAP CVIII, when passed authorised the Trustees to rebuild the bridge by borrowing a further sum of £3,000 on security of the Tolls, whilst under this new Act the previous Tolls were repealed and new ones substituted on the ferry to pay for a new bridge.

It does appear that very little has been researched and written about a replacement bridge except history tells us that "a bridge of cast iron was erected in 1806" the compiler of a book, some time later, The Cambrian Travellers Guide, stating "the bridge was built by Ironfounders in the district, possibly by Messrs Baldwin, Son & Co at their works in Foundry Street Stourport. This claim was further strengthened by the fact that an iron bridge spanned the main road at Erdiston, near Tenbury Wells bearing the name of Baldwins Iron Foundry and a date. However quoting from reliable published sources such as "The Ironbridge, Symbol of the Industrial Revolution" by Neil Cossons & Barry Trinder, in 2002 and a Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain & Ireland by A W Skemton & Mike Chrimes, also in 2002, they all credit both the design and manufacturer of the cast iron Bridge to John Hazeldine of the Bridgnorth Foundry, the same foundry that produced Trevithicks locomotive Catch - Me - Who - Can in 1808. Hazeldine's bridge was a single arch of 165 ft made up of half ribs, the bridge visually very similar to the original Ironbridge in Shropshire. This likeness can clearly be seen in several engravings which, like the stone bridge, appear in various publications that feature the river Severn and Stourport.

A Second Bridge! (1795)

As the new bridge was not opened until 1806, 11 years after the first one washed away, one wonders why the lapse of time. Could it be that the Trustees were unable to quickly raise sufficient funds? The answer to this question may lie in an extraordinary revelation, there was a second bridge built in the meantime! - not long after the washout! We know this to be fact, as a notice appeared in the Worcester Journal for 10th September 1795 stating - "Notice is given

that the temporary bridge across the Severn at Stourport will be open for carriages and passengers by Thursday 17th inst" Signed Richard Colley, Clerk to the Trustees.

This notice obviously refutes the long-standing belief that there were 3 bridges over the Severn. It also begs several questions: Was this temporary bridge, a wooden one, taken from Pritchard's early design and did it last until 1806? Was it built alongside the remains of the old bridge? For in the Shrewsbury Chronicle of 16th April 1802, the bridge Trustees were seeking estimates for an iron arch to be erected on stone abutments (already being built) suggesting perhaps that these abutments were replacements to the ones washed away? It was not for another year that the Shrewsbury Chronicle of 13th May 1803 reported that the Trustees were considering tenders that had been put forward for an iron bridge. After that, at present, we know no more until this bridge was built in 1806, perhaps further research might reveal the facts and rewrite this part of its history.

The 4th Bridge (Present Bridge 1870)

With the continued growth of Stourport, so did the traffic over the old bridge increase and with it restrictions as to the amount it could cope with - it must have been almost life expired anyway. As far back as 1821, the bridge's wooden superstructure had been replaced with iron plates to strengthen it, but one overriding factor in replacing it was the actual width of the carriageway which was very narrow. By the 1860's the bridge was in urgent need of replacement so plans were put in hand to replace it with an entirely new substantial iron bridge. By 1868, it does appear quotes had been requested by the Trustees, perhaps in various construction publications or newspapers, asking for contractors to submit tenders for a new bridge. At the same time, the Severn Bridge

Trustees, as they were then known, applied to Parliament for an Act to be passed for the construction of the new bridge. This Act "The Stourport Bridge Act" of 1868, 31 & 32 VICT CAP XVII was passed - "for altering, widening and rebuilding a bridge across the Severn at Stourport". Among the many clauses the Act also gave powers to the Trustees to borrow further money to finance the construction of the bridge, estimated cost £7,000, yet again using Tolls as security.

Towards the end of 1868, tenders for construction had been submitted to the Trustees and agreed, along with specifications, costs and drawings prepared by the appointed engineer, Edward Wilson of 9 Deans Yard, Westminster.

Edward Wilson (1821 - 1877) Designer of Stourport Bridge

Edward Wilson, an Architect & Civil Engineer, was born in Edinburgh in 1821. Prior to 1847 he had been Locomotive Superintendent of the Hull & Selby Railway then Locomotive Superintendent to the York & North Midland Railway (1847 - 1853). Following this appointment, he was made Loco Superintendent to the Midland Great Western Railway of Ireland (1853 - 1856). He then became Engineer to the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway until 1860. When the latter railway amalgamated with others to form the West Midland Railway, he became its Chief Engineer (1860 - 1863), residing in Worcester. Following the West Midland takeover by the GWR in 1863, he became Construction Engineer for the GWR's West Midland Division which included Stourport and the Severn Valley line. Whilst at Worcester he is credited with designing the present Shrub Hill station which, when opened in 1865, had an overall glazed roof.

As well as being Engineer to the GWR, he also carried on his own business as a Consultant Engineer from his Westminster address in Deans Yard. Perhaps his finest work as a consultant was designing London's Liverpool Street Station, opened by the Great Eastern Railway in 1874.

Apart from Stourport bridge, his other (and last) major works in the area, which still can be seen today, are the Falling Sands Viaduct and Foley Park Tunnel, both built from plans he had drawn up as Engineer on the construction of the Kidderminster to Bewdley line which commenced in 1874. Unfortunately, as work was in progress, he died at Westminster on 26th August 1877 aged 56, just six months before the completion of the line in March 1878. The line eventually opened to passengers in June 1878 and is now part of the preserved Severn Valley Railway.

N.B. For further reference to Edward Wilson as designer of Stourport Bridge, see page 613 of *The Buildings of England (Worcestershire)* by Alan Brooks & Nikolaus Pevsner, 2007.

Construction of Stourport Bridge

There were two contractors responsible for the construction of Stourport Bridge, both contractors having to provide 3rd party sureties to ensure the work was carried out. Contract No. 1 for £2,969-13-10d was let to Messrs Henry Hilton, bricklayers, of 60 Great Brook Street, Birmingham. Hilton's were to be responsible for all the brickwork including the lowering and widening of the approach roads, the long causeway in particular, to accommodate 2 new footpaths running the entire length and across the river arch. They had to alter the abutments for the arch by lowering the existing arches next to the original abutments and building more substantial abutments to take the ironwork.

They also had to provide drainage and metalling for the new road, build a new Toll House at the Arley Kings end of the bridge, plus bedding and fixing all of the stone blocks including those in both abutments.

Nearly all of the large stone blocks including the copings and capstones came cut to size and shape from quarries up river at Highley, whilst the Skew Backs, where the main ribs spring from the abutments, were Forest of Dean stone set in mortar.

To enable foundations to be put in below river level, for both abutments, piles were driven deep into the riverbed, Cofferdams then being constructed to enable the bricklayers and masons to work in safety, pumps being used 12 hours a day in order to keep the workings dry. The time stipulated to complete all the brickwork was 6 months after receiving orders from the Trustees to begin work. The sureties for this Contract were Mr Thomas Adams, Cambridge Street Birmingham and Mr John Clarkson, Newhall Street, Birmingham. The contract dated 19th October 1868 was signed by Henry Hilton.

Thomas Vale (1835 – 1910)

Also engaged on the brickwork contract was Thomas Vale. A name synonymous with Stourport for over 100 years since the incorporation of the company, Thomas Vale & Sons on 9th September 1903. The earlier years of Thomas Vale are a little vague as no records exist but according to the Vale family tree, he was born in Studley, Warwickshire on 22nd May 1835, the son of a farmer also named Thomas.

Between 1864 and 1869, the younger Thomas Vale is listed in the Birmingham business directory as a Hosier in Aston. From 1861, he was also listed as a partner in the Birmingham based bricklaying and building firm of Henry Hilton, a company

which operated between 1856 and 1879. Given his business background as a Hosier, in what capacity he was a partner in a bricklaying company is not known. His exact post during construction is rather vague also which over the years has led to speculation (locally at least) that he may have been a subcontractor overseeing the brickwork on the causeway. However, the very few references to him in local newspapers of the time, writing in connection with the building of the bridge, imply he was a Superintendent for Messrs **Hilton**. Perhaps he was **Hilton's** site foreman, Clerk of Works or held some other sort of supervisory position? What has become clear is that he was employed only on the brickwork contract and we know that because of his association with **Hilton** and his overseeing the brickwork, he moved with his family to Stourport in 1869, eventually setting up his own Civil Engineering Business which has now become the Thomas Vale Construction that we know today.

Contract No.2 was for all the ironwork and was let to the Lloyds - Fosters Department of the Patent Shaft & Axletree Company of Wednesbury, Staffs for £4,166-5s-8d.

The Patent Shaft Company had its origins in the early 1830s following an idea by a local Baptist Minister, the Reverend James Hardy for "faggoted" cart axles of forged iron, built like segments of an orange and forged together under a hammer. This it was claimed gave much greater strength than axles then being forged with layers of flat or square iron. Hardy's idea proved such a success that he took out a patent on 4th April 1835. Shortly after, he acquired a small ironworks in which to manufacture "Hardy's Patent Axletree". In 1840 the business was taken over by Charles Geach, a Birmingham banker and Thomas Walker, a former clerk at Hardy's works. From thereon

the Patent Shaft & Axletree Co as it became, expanded its Brunswick Ironworks and by 1844 were supplying axles to the London & North Western Railway for its rolling stock.

In 1867, the Patent Shaft Company acquired the neighbouring Company of Messrs Lloyds Foster & Co. whose extensive works had blast furnaces, steel works, rolling mills, bridge & girder shops, foundries and collieries. Lloyd Fosters had been in business since 1818 when Samuel Lloyd (a member of the banking family) started mining coal and ironstone in a district of Wednesbury known as Old Park. He eventually built a factory there and branched out into the iron & steel trade. Old Park Works supplied the ironwork for London's Blackfriars Bridge but due to financial problems with the contractor, Lloyds Fosters incurred a financial loss of £250,000 which forced them to sell out to the Patent Shaft Co. in 1867. They completed the work on the bridge, which opened in 1869. The Patent Shaft Co. closed in 1980.

Lloyds-Foster's contract for Stourport bridge was not only to supply and erect the heavy ironwork, including the 5 main ribs, but they were required firstly to dismantle the old cast iron bridge before work could begin! Another stipulation was that during construction of both the brickwork and the arch they had to provide ferries and the men to operate them so that the general public were still able to cross the river without hindrance. These ferries operated from temporary wharfs to which approaches had been made (by Lloyds), they also acted as "safety boats" should any workmen fall into the river from the staging and scaffolding put up by Lloyds, at a cost of £450 for use in erecting the bridge. Another safety feature similar to that required by **Hilton's** was the requirement to watch and light up the bridge during construction. It is interesting to note here that compared to over 340 tons of cast

and wrought iron that was to be used in the new bridge, only 156 tons were recovered from the old bridge showing what a flimsy structure it was. Incidentally, the scrap value of the recovered iron amounted to £400, which was deducted from the contract price! Some other items worthy of mention from the comprehensive Bill of Quantities, was the use of over 10 tons of "Best Staffordshire Bolt Iron" for the nuts, bolts and dowels used for bolting and fixing the iron sections and bracings together. These bolts and dowels varied in size from $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, 1 inch, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch and $1\frac{7}{8}$ diameter and where applicable had Whitworth threads. $1\frac{7}{8}$ diameter high tensile bolts were used to bolt the ribs together, the bolts and drilled holes being to tight fits to stop any movement taking place. Six cast iron ornamental lampposts, fitted with 16in diameter globe lamps at £3 each were placed on the bridge both sides of the carriageway, a pair in the centre and a pair at each abutment either end of the bridge. The whole of the ironwork was to be painted in 4 coats of oil paint (lead) for a total cost of £ 104-8s-Od, but unfortunately no colour scheme was mentioned.

The time stipulated to complete the arch was 8 months after receiving orders from the Trustees to begin work and it will be noticed that Lloyds-Fosters were given 2 months more to erect the arch than **Hilton**, of course they first had to remove the old 1806 bridge! The sureties for this contract dated 16 October 1868, were Edward Covey Esq. of 8 New Broad St. London and Edward R Lloyd Esq, Sparkhill, Birmingham and was signed by the Patent Shaft & Axletree Co. Lloyds-Fosters Dept per S Zachary Lloyd.

Opening

Exactly when construction started or how long it actually took has not yet been ascertained but it was 2 years from signing

the contract before the bridge was finished despite the timescale clause in the contract.

The bridge was opened on Friday 21st October 1870, the Kidderminster Times of 29th October reporting that the bridge was formerly opened for traffic to the public by a body of the committee; Mr John Lowe, one of the oldest Trustees was the first to go over. It went on to say that "the new bridge is a very substantial one, it has been constructed by Messrs Hylton (sic) of Birmingham without a single accident". (Strangely though, this newspaper does not mention Lloyds-Fosters involvement).

Tolls for foot passengers had been re-introduced after being abolished for many years and would cause hardship to the labouring classes who resided in the county and came daily to work in the town. It further pointed out that if a carrier's or market cart had a number of passengers, everyone had to pay a toll, whilst a gentleman's carriage may contain any number of occupants and no extra toll would be charged! This anomaly was the cause of many complaints, because of which the paper hoped the tolls on foot passengers would be of the shortest duration. Of course these new charges had been reintroduced to pay off the loans the Trustees had borrowed to finance the bridge but despite paying off some debts by way of the tolls, by 1892, the Trustees still owed the sum of £3,900. This was one factor that decided the Trustees to transfer ownership of the bridge to Worcestershire County Council which before this could happen had to be ratified by Parliament. Duly an Act of Parliament was passed on 20th May 1892, 55 VIC 1892, cited as the Stourport Bridge Transfer Act for transferring the bridge and the Trustees' liabilities to Worcestershire County Council as a County Bridge free of tolls.

Freeing of Tolls

Amidst great excitement, the freeing of tolls took place on 3rd April 1893, events of the day being reported in several newspapers. Crowds of people had gathered and there obviously was a party mood, someone having composed a 5 verse song about the freeing of tolls which was sung to the tune of "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo". There was also keen competition for the honour of being the first to cross, a lady, over 80 years old, placing herself and her donkey cart at the toll gates some hours before the official time of opening. Several latecomers had attempted to push her out of the way but her appeals to the Authorities won the day and she was afterwards feted by the 15,000 Bank Holiday crowd. Sadly, the toll keeper, Peter Snider and his wife Betsy Ann were out of a job.

On transfer of the bridge into the Council's ownership, the Council became responsible for the former Trustee's liabilities, including keeping a light burning every night in the centre of the bridge for navigation and safe guidance of vessels, failure to do so would result in a fine of £5. With respect to road lighting of the bridge, the local Stourport Board were made responsible for it but from the centre of the bridge to the Eastern (town end) parapet. The County Council, likewise from the centre of the bridge to the end of the Western (Arley Kings) end of the parapet. The lighting could be by means of gas, oil, electricity or any other luminant. The Council were also responsible for paying an annual sum of 10 shillings to the Rector of the Parish of Arley Kings in respect of a small portion of glebe land taken for the purposes of the bridge. Another payment annually of 5 shillings to the Staffs & Worcester Canal Company was in respect of a piece of land upon which was part of the spiral staircase, forming a communication

between the bridge and a footpath by the side of the River Severn.

Spiral Staircase



Stourport Bridge c 1950 and the spiral staircase. The white plate to the left shows the high water mark of the 1947 floods.

The reference to the spiral staircase, brings this account full circle and one of the reasons for writing these notes. As there is no mention of a cast iron spiral staircase in Lloyds-Fosters contract, one would assume it was not put in at the time of construction so in the absence of further records we haven't yet a date for it. The staircase was cast by F Bradley & Co. of Clensmore Foundry, Kidderminster, the name clearly being seen on the faces of the iron steps. It is probably unique now, but way back in 1893 or so, it certainly wasn't as Bradley (forerunner of Bradley & Turton) made several others and until the mid 1990's an almost identical one, also by Bradley, could be seen in the old Victorian library in Kidderminster. Unfortunately it was broken up in the name of progress when the building was demolished to make way for the present modern library. Employed at Bradley's until the early years or so of the 20th Century was brilliant patternmaker, Thomas Cave, noted for his intricate work and design. Some of his work can still be seen today in the shape of ornamental cast iron globe lamps on London's Thames

Embankment. These show a striking resemblance to the original 6 lamps placed on the Bridge in 1870. As Bradley did a lot of subcontract work he was not often mentioned on large contracts he worked on, such as, Ryde, Ramsgate & Margate Piers, so pure speculation and verbal statements by some ex Bradley employees, suggests that the 6 Stourport bridge lamps and/or the ornamental parapet railings may have been designed by Thomas Cave and cast at Bradley's.

The End

Following the transfer of the bridge to the County Council, the Trustees issued their Statutory Winding up Order in the London Gazette and the local press, thus severing the final link with the Trustees.

Clause 6 of the Transfer Act stated that the bridge ----- be forever open to the public free of toll or other charges. Only the surviving Toll House, for those that know of it, remains - not only as a reminder of these charges but also as a silent witness for all those involved in the construction of Stourport Bridge as we know it today.

Keith Beddoes

JOTTINGS OF THE EARLY DAYS OF TENBURY FIRE BRIGADE

Final part of the article started in the last edition - Ed

The next record we have dates 3/6/1919

Ordered that the Clerk enquire from Shand Mason Co. on what terms they would be prepared to exchange the present engine for

a motor engine of similar horse-power, able to take a gradient of one in six.

The result of this enquiry is not known, but the steam fire engine was not replaced by a motor engine until 1938. To return to the early days of the steam fire engine this proved to be a vast improvement over the manual. The horsing arrangements were generally under the same system, these prevailed until the early 1920's when it was decided to use a towing vehicle. For a short time motor buses from Critchleys Garage, Bromyard Road, were used, this proved to be unsuccessful.

Meanwhile Captain Jarvis and Deputy Captain Dadge had retired and in 1925 Mr.G.E.T.H. Maund was appointed Captain of the Brigade and Fireman J.Howells became his Deputy Captain.

Mr.Maund being a local garage owner also had a fleet of lorries, which he hired out to the County Council. It was soon arranged that Mr.Maund would undertake to have a lorry standing by at all times to tow the steam engine. The fleet of lorries were all painted red, fitted with tow bars, and a gantry over the cabs to take the ladder.

One driver was kept back at the garage each day with his lorry on stand by, a bell being located in the garage, at night one driver had a fire-bell in his house.

On receipt of a fire call the lorry would be driven quickly to the Fire Station, the ladder put on, extra lengths of hose, a bag of coal ktc., steamer hooked up and away, Firemen riding on the lorry, with two Firemen Engineers riding on the steamer to operate the hand brakes. The lorries were of various makes, and improved as new lorries came along, several of the early one were solid tyred 'Gardners'.

On 2/11/36 the Fire Brigade Committee accepted the tender for the new Fire Station being made by converting part of the old workhouse buildings in Teme Street, this provided much better facilities, appliance room, muster room, locker room, recreation room bathroom and hose drying tower. Previously hose had to be dried in the oval butter market on The Square, suspended on ropes and pulleys.



The Brigade moved into Teme Street 28/11/36.

One of the early turnouts from the new Station was an assistance call from Ludlow Fire Brigade fighting a fire at Woofferton Saw Mills, Salop. Leominster Fire Brigade were also requested. On one side of the Saw Mills was a railway junction goods yard, on the other, a Shell and BP Petrol Depot, with tanker lorries garaged there. The fire was surrounded successfully using three pumps working all night from a stream, the pumps being Ludlow's Merryweather steamer, Tenbury's Shand Mason steamer and Leominster's new Dennis motor fire engine.

13/8/1937 - it was recommended that the RDC apply to the Ministry of Health to sanction a loan not exceeding £1000 for the purchase of a new fire engine to be repaid over a ten year period.

8/9/1937 - Ministry of Health agree to loan. Various fire engine makers canvassed

2/10/1937 - Three fire engines demonstrated at Tenbury in front of members of Fire Brigade Committee, and Brigade, namely,

Leyland FK6 500/700 GPM
Dennis Ace 3501450 GPM
John Keer and Co.Limited
Drysdale/Tordson 5001700 GPM

11/10/37 - It was resolved that the Council be recommended to purchase a Leyland Motor Fire Engine FK6 5001700 GPM pump with New World body. Fitted all round with War Office 'trak-grip' tyres and with a 30' all metal extension ladder by John Keer and Co. The machine was finished in red paintwork with all fittings and handrails in brass. Registration number - CAB 650

25/4/1938 - The machine was delivered to Tenbury by a Leyland Engineer, Mr.S.Salmon, who was resident for one week with the Brigade for familiarization drills. Machine officially started at a demonstration on Burgage recreation ground by Mrs.W.Rochford, wife of the Chairman of The Fire Brigade committee. A display to the public was given by having the old and new machines pumping alongside each other from the river Teme. The Shand Mason steamer was operated by Fireman W.T.Hartland and the Leyland by his son, Fireman R.A.Hartland.

15/8/38 - The first fire attended with new appliance was at farm buildings used as hop-pickers barracks alongside The Talbot Hotel, Newnham Bridge, owner Mr.G.A.Nott. Small fire, hose reel only used.

During the next year many changes took place in the Tenbury Fire Brigade, mainly due to the new equipment of various types being issued by the Home Office under the

Air Raid Precautions Act. Anti-gas training and the formation of the AFS etc.

On the outbreak of war September 3 1939, it was decided to have two firemen sleep at the Fire Station each night, and when cinemas re-opened after a few weeks of being shut down on September 3, an added duty was that a fireman had to attend each performance. The first fire that the Brigade attended, after the war started, and masked headlights were in use, was at Mr. Firkins of the Moor Farm, Eardiston, where hop-kilns were in flames, 14/9/39.

The Brigade carried on with its early wartime duties, seeing the introduction of Firewomen at Tenbury and the number of personnel attached increasing to over one hundred eventually and the creation of a sub-station at Newnham Bridge.

On 18/8/41 on the formation of the National Fire Service, Tenbury Fire Brigade became a unit of that Service continuing until after the war in 1948 when Tenbury became part of the Worcester City and County Fire Brigade. In 1974 Local Government re-organisation created the Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade. Tenbury being part of the West Division that is the position at the moment, with a new Fire Station, due to open shortly, a fine record of service to Tenbury and District.

Thanks to the Tenbury Fire Station website for allowing the use of this article.

WORCESTER AT WORK

THE WORCESTER ROYAL PORCELAIN WORKS

This is the latest reprint from the 1903 publication of Worcester's Trade and Industrial enterprises. Once again I marvel at the beautiful language of the day. The word "computed" is used in the old meaning and a reference is made to problems relating to "periods of depression" which proved fatal to their competitors.

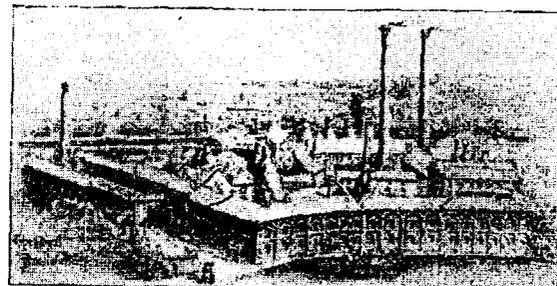
Sadly we will no longer be able to host the vast array of Royal patronage listed in the report and our City can no longer look forward to tourists flocking to see the works and take the tour as they did in 1903.

Roger Tapping

THE WORCESTER DAILY TIMES TRADE AND INDUSTRIAL EDITION, 1903

THE WORCESTER ROYAL PORCELAIN WORKS

One of England's Most Noted Industries.



General View of the Worcester Royal Porcelain Works.

Our brief reference to the Royal Porcelain Works should begin with an apology. The fact that they are one of the oldest industrial works in Worcester, and one of the oldest in England; that for over one hundred and fifty years they have been continuously producing wares of the greatest intrinsic beauty and of the highest money value of any concern in this section; that during that time they have paid out a larger sum in wages to artisans than has any other one establishment; that they have provided for hundreds of artists a school in which their genius was developed; and that they have immeasurably added to our city's prestige abroad and attracted many thousands of visitors to our gates, should at once explain the necessity for some reference to the splendid establishment in this Illustrated Industrial Issue, and should gain our readers' indulgence for the inadequacy of the description.

In referring to the works we shall not attempt to be in the least technical. Although pottery is one of the most primitive of industries, it is at the same time one of the most highly developed, and its bibliography is sufficiently interesting and abundant. In keeping with the plan of this issue we shall merely point out the part the works have played in our city's industrial and artistic life, and shall suggest a few of the peculiar features which have given them their pre-eminence.

The works were established in 1751 by Dr. Wall, an accomplished chemist. That he was also a gentleman of unusual force of character and of great executive ability is proven by the success with which his venture met from the start; for although Worcester had neither coals, nor clay, nor skilled hands, his works at once entered into successful competition with the most flourishing potteries. Since there were no extrinsic circumstances favouring the enterprise, its success must have been due to

the intrinsic superiority of the wares produced - a distinction which in the hands of subsequent managers has been maintained through a century and a half.

During the entire history of the works there has never been a complete cessation of the industry, although they have naturally suffered to some extent by the periods of depression, which have proved fatal to so many rivals. On the contrary, frequent important additions have been made to the plant, and the buildings in which the industry began might be lost in any one department of the modern plant. In the numerous extensions to the buildings the object was not only to permit of the manufacture of an increased quantity of wares, but also to better the conditions in which the artisans perform their work. The management have always realised that in the production of artistic pottery it is highly essential that the work, particularly throughout the last processes, should be performed in sanitary, comfortable, and cheerful rooms. In no other form of handicraft is the individuality of the artist so indelibly stamped upon the work of his hands, and the conditions, which affect him, will be reflected in his work.

From a very early period in their history the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works became the leading form of industry in the city. The value of the works to the city has not been confined to the artisan class, who were paid remunerative wages for an employment tending in a marked degree to develop latent artistic talent, but also it a splendid advertisement for the city itself. Their interest having been awakened by the beauty of the wares, many thousands have made long journeys to inspect the plant, and to watch the workmen transforming with infinite skill and patience, earth's commonest material into the most beautiful forms that human hands have produced.

The records of the works show that the following Royal visitors have inspected them: King George III, Queen Charlotte, George Frederick Prince of Wales, the Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of Sussex, the Duchess of Kent, the Princess Victoria, Queen Adelaide, the Duke of Cambridge, the Princess Christian, Albert Edward Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales, the Queen of the French, the Duke de Nemours, the Duchess of Teck, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the Duke and Duchess of Connaught. In addition to these, many distinguished men and women from all over the world, and a still greater number of those in humbler spheres who still possess life's greatest treasure - a love of the beautiful - yearly attest the wide fame of the works by making a pilgrimage to inspect them.



Vase 33in. high, made for and exhibited at the Chicago Exhibition. The design form and decoration is pure Italian

That the management of the great industry appreciate the interest they have awakened is evident from their very unusual courtesy to every visitor. It is probably true that no industrial enterprise in the kingdom is more unreservedly thrown open to the public, visitors being taken through the various departments in charge of a guide who is familiar with every process, and who readily gives all required information. No gratuities are allowed, and the sightseer is made to feel that his visit is a pleasure to the management as well as to himself.

In making a tour of the premises, which cover approximately five acres of ground, one begins with the show room. This is a well-lighted and well-arranged room, completely filled with the finest specimens from the works, and all so displayed as to make the most effective contrast of form and colour.

From the show room, when his curiosity concerning the various processes in the potter's art have been intensified, the visitor begins his tour. Before witnessing any of the processes he is usually shown the materials, which enter into the composition of the ware. As he looks upon these materials ranged upon a shelf - a piece of soiled clay, a bit of stone, an unsightly bone, a piece of vitreous composition resembling glass, some felspar, marl and flint, he marvels at the ingenuity which can convert such unpromising materials into enduring beauty. To visitors the gradual transformation is of surpassing interest. One first sees the grinding of the materials in huge vats, or "pans," as they are technically called. Some of the refractory substances require a constant grinding under high pressure for days. An idea of the extreme fineness to which the materials are ground may be gained from the fact that before being used they are passed through a silk screen having 4000 meshes to the square inch. When

mixed with water the materials have the consistency and appearance of cream, and to the touch feel as soft as velvet.

After leaving the grinding room the first manipulation of the clay one sees is that by the " thrower," who uses the historic potter's wheel. This simple and yet marvellous device is perhaps the first important invention of which we have any record, as it has been known in a practically unchanged form for 6,000 years. Placing upon the smooth surface of the wheel a bit of plastic clay, a swift rotary motion is given to it, and with deft fingers the yielding material is shaped into various forms almost as quickly as the imagination can conceive them. So much of historic interest attaches to the potter's wheel; it has been the theme for so many apt similes by the moralist and the poet, that one almost regrets the achievements of science, which have rendered it practically obsolete. Nearly all the pottery now made is either pressed or cast, processes which permit of more uniform and much more rapid work, as the same mould may be used many times.

But it would be impossible in our limited space to give even the briefest reference to all the processes through which the clay passes. The making of a single piece of fine ware requires many days and the co-operation of a number of artisans, some of who have devoted a lifetime to the mastering of one branch of the work. The making of the moulds, the casting of the pieces, glazing, firing, and ornamenting are steps each of which would permit of an extended description.

The making of fine pottery is by no means the simple process it is frequently supposed to be. It is computed that in the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works are men representing more than a score of separate, though sometimes allied, arts. A thorough knowledge of chemistry, of draughting, of

modelling, of painting, of mixing colours, are but a few of the necessary requirements. It has been the peculiar merit of the works to which this article is devoted that they have at all times drawn to them the highest obtainable skill. Reference to their progressive history for a century and a half will reveal the names of some of the finest special artists England has ever had, though to most of us their renown is lost in the wider fame the pottery has won.

Upon completing a tour of the works one is taken to the museum, an apartment, much resembling the show room he first entered. The museum, however, not only contains a number of recent productions, but also contains many pieces representing the great advance made by the works since their establishment in 1751. The various productions are arranged chronologically, and furnish a most graphic and interesting illustration of the constant progress made by the works. Over the stairway leading to the museum is a partial collection of diplomas of award from exhibitions, and certificates of Royal patronage; and we are informed by the curator that if all of the diplomas were displayed they would completely cover the walls of a moderate sized art gallery.

A stroll through the museum suggests a number of interesting reflections. The first impression is bewildering, and one is amazed at the number of different forms that have been shaped from the simple straight and curved lines. The old saying that the good that men do is oft interred with their bones is here disproved, for artists whose names have long since been forgotten still live in the work of their brains and hands, their fleeting dreams made real in imperishable clay.

The vast collection in the museum is a visible proof of the important part the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works have played in

the development of the ceramic art. They have not only at all times been the highest exponents of existing styles of the art, but they have frequently introduced the most valuable innovations. They were the first to manufacture the "old ivory" ware, which has become so widely popular. The soft body of old ivory lends itself admirably to rich decorative effects, and is a subject of the highest praise from every critic. They also from time to time produced wares representing the Japanese, Persian, Indian, Italian, and other schools of ornament, catching the spirit of the former craftsmen and exactly rendering their ideas. In methods, as well as in styles, they have also always maintained a foremost position, and have been first to adopt any idea, which would lessen the cost without lessening the quality of the production.

The unusual beauty of the Royal Worcester wares has frequently received a gratifying, but a rather unpleasant, compliment. Their styles, and even their trademarks, have been widely imitated by unscrupulous potters, who could not, however, equal them in quality.

In the foregoing brief reference to Worcester's most famous institution we have not attempted a detailed mention of the many styles of pottery and porcelain wares they have originated and manufactured, nor have we attempted any description of their peculiar excellence. As we have already stated, to do so would be quite beyond our powers. But we have, we trust, indicated how very important the works have been in the city's industrial and artistic life, and have justified our choice in giving them the first place in this issue.



Ewer modelled and decorated after the Italian Renaissance style. Ground colour of brilliant crimson scarlet, frame of panel in wrought raised gold work.

**THE GREATEST OF
BLESSINGS
A History of Worcester's
Water Supply**

Joan Harris

This article appeared on a local history website and I have made every effort to seek the author's permission to reproduce it. I am given to understand that Joan no longer lives in the area, but would probably welcome its publication here. It continues from the last Edition – Ed

The Seventeenth Century continued -

In 1641 it had been decided that 6/8d yearly should be paid to John Folliott, a pumpmaker, for keeping the water engine

ready and serviceable upon all necessary occasions. It was clearly necessary to regularise the basis on which pumping of water would take place, and one may wonder how haphazard it had been prior to this.

In 1644/5 owners of property at the town ditch were ordered to scour it: standing water in it was a nuisance, and a sum of £35111/8 was collected for buying and bringing into it, to keep the watercourse sweet, the water of Barbourne brook. (Over 200 years later, the Barbourne brook was to influence the siting of the first Worcester waterworks to include a filtration system.)

It seems that later in the seventeenth century the waterworks may have been moved to an island beneath the bridge. The 1651 map of the City of Worcester "as it stood fortified" shows the "Water House" at the Quay area as a tower forming part of the city fortifications. Hard winters in the 1680's caused damage to the bridge due to ice floes: the waterworks on an island under the bridge was damaged in 1688, pulled down and rebuilt in 1692. (D. Whitehead: John Gwynn and the Building of Worcester Bridge; *Trans Worcs Arch Soc* Vol 8 1982.) In February 1689, perhaps as part of this redevelopment, the Corporation granted a lease of the waterworks to John Hadley of West Bromwich, with powers to break up the streets to lay pipes, and erect over the Cross a cistern holding 200 hogsheads of water. A document in Worcester Record Office, dated 16th February 1778, assigns the lease of these works to the Trustees for building the new bridge (who needed the land for the bridge site). It quotes extensively the original 1689 lease, defining a piece of land "adjoining the river between the house then in possession of Richard Carwardine and that of the widow Pearkis commonly called the Cranehouse". This land was 13 yards on the widow's side, 10 on Carwardine's, 12 on the river and 12 opposite. The lease also

granted "liberty to erect, build etc.. in the said river and upon 12 yards square thereof against the said parcel of land all such engines, waterworks and buildings as to him, John Hadley, his executors, administrators etc.. seem meet and to extend the foundations five yards down the said river if they saw cause but cause not any damage to the navigation of the river and keep a "wear, dam or stank" from the lower end of the Engine's waterworks up to that part of the Bridge whereon the Tower or Gatehouse then stood, so that the same wear, dam or stank extended not further than the old wear then did, and other liberties to John Hadley, executors etc. for 500 years at the yearly rent of 40 shillings and two good capons to the Mayor".

This document is interesting for its apparent precision. However, no island is mentioned, and it is tempting to assume that the reference to building into the river and extending foundations may have assisted the development of an island which various scholars believe to have originated downstream from the bridge due to natural turbulence. Celia Fiennes, leaving Worcester in 1698, saw an island with willows on it "part of which turns mills". (The waterwheel was more than twenty feet high: Hughes, "Houses and Property in Post-Reformation Worcester", *Trans Worcs Arch Soc*, Vol 7 1980.)

Prints, Maps and Plans illustrating the Waterworks

We have a number of prints (see illustrations accompanying this study) which may illustrate the island in some form. Buck's print "South West Prospect of the City of Worcester", dated 1732, shows the waterworks on what appears to be a spit of land near the site of the present bridge. Doharty's map (1741) shows the site of the waterworks near the present bridge, an

apparent spit of land and a channel "The Little Severn". In 1764 Green's "Survey of the City of Worcester" referred to the water engine at the conflux of Little Severn with the main river near the quay. "An invention of great utility to the inhabitants of the city, by conveying soft water to its remotest parts." One feels that in view of later more detailed accounts of the efficacy of the service, this must be an optimistic view of the facts on Green's part.

Richard Broad's plan of the City of Worcester shows the old waterworks in the area of the present bridge (illustrated in David Whitehead's *The Book of Worcester*, 1976). Eaton in his *History of Worcester* refers to the clearing away of the islet near the new bridge site, pre 1770, in preparation for the building of the new bridge and its approaches (Bridge Street, the previous bridge had led into Newport Street). (See reference to transfer of lease, above.) On July 9 1767 the Worcester Journal had advertised the waterworks of the city to be let or sold, together with a dwelling-house, garden, outbuilding, corn-mill and blade-mill (these could be converted to other uses of a waterwheel). The part of the waterworks which was for the service of the city brought in upwards of £120 per annum. It seemed then that the waterworks had, after its earlier difficulties, become a lucrative proposition: but there may have been no takers, as the advertisement reappeared on 29th December 1768, omitting the last sentence, referring to how much it brought in. Directly above this advertisement in December 1768 was one for plans and estimates for the new bridge "at or near the place where the present bridge stands". In fact there was prolonged argument over whether the new bridge should be on the previously existing site or elsewhere and the choice of the crossing to the new Bridge Street made it necessary that the existing waterworks should be moved, though Eaton writes that the works on the

river were removed and the islet cleared away to improve the navigation of the river. He adds "The small island still remaining there was formed when the water-works were erected."

The Eighteenth Century

In 1770 appeared the Act for Better Supplying the City of Worcester and the Liberties thereof with water and for better paving and lighting the said city. Landlords or owners were to lay, place and repair branch pipes, break up the pavements and make them good. No present or future waterworks or reservoir was to be rated or assessed for or towards land-tax, church or poor rate. There were arguments in the nineteenth century because Barbourne works were rated to Droitwich Poor Law area.

At around this time the water works were moved to the water tower in Barbourne, about a quarter of a mile north of Pitchcroft, at a cost of £11,000. The water was raised by a water wheel, and the city was supplied by pipes. There are said to be wooden pipes still to be seen in the store of Worcester City Museum: I imagine these may date from this time, when wooden pipes were laid down Foregate Street. The tower was at the junction of the Barbourne Brook with the Severn and it remained there until this century, having been converted into a house. (A postcard of this accompanies this work.) The Worcester Record office has a map of land published for



use of the waterworks "lower Reach of Barbourne Brook and New Cut for Waterworks" drawn by G Young in 1774. Water taken from this point would have been cleaner than that taken from the Quay area, but the system must have had drawbacks, because in September 1807 the Commissioners agreed to erect a seven horse power engine in Owner Featherstone's yard at the South End of Pitchcroft (a little North of Upper Quay) and that cast iron pipes should be laid to the reservoir in the Trinity. Among tenders agreed was one from Mr Reading, 781 yards of Iron Pipes at 21/-, £820.00. Mr Robarts, one of Worcester's MPs, had the engine erected at his expense. The engine, which cost £780/15/0, proved unsatisfactory, and was reported on in 1809 and needed repair and alteration. In 1817 the reservoir in the Trinity, being unfit for service, was sold by auction, and replaced by a cast iron tank costing £110.

To be continued - Ed

BOOK REVIEWS WEBSITES ETC

**Worcestershire Turnpike Trusts
and Tollhouses.** *Alan Scaplehorn
and Connie Swann*

Published by the Milestone Society
ISBN 978-0-9557539-0-0

Those who attended a WIALHS Winter Programme talk on Milestones some time ago will doubtless be interested in this companion book on turnpike trusts and tollhouses, copiously illustrated with line drawings, monochrome and colour photographs.

This is, as the authors state, "work in progress" due to the complexity and volume of material available but it aims to provide an initial overview – and succeeds admirably in doing so over its 36 pages.

Regrettably I do not have price details, but suggest that the Milestone Society may assist (www.milestonesociety.co.uk) – or Connie herself, who is a WIALHS member.

Glyn Thomas

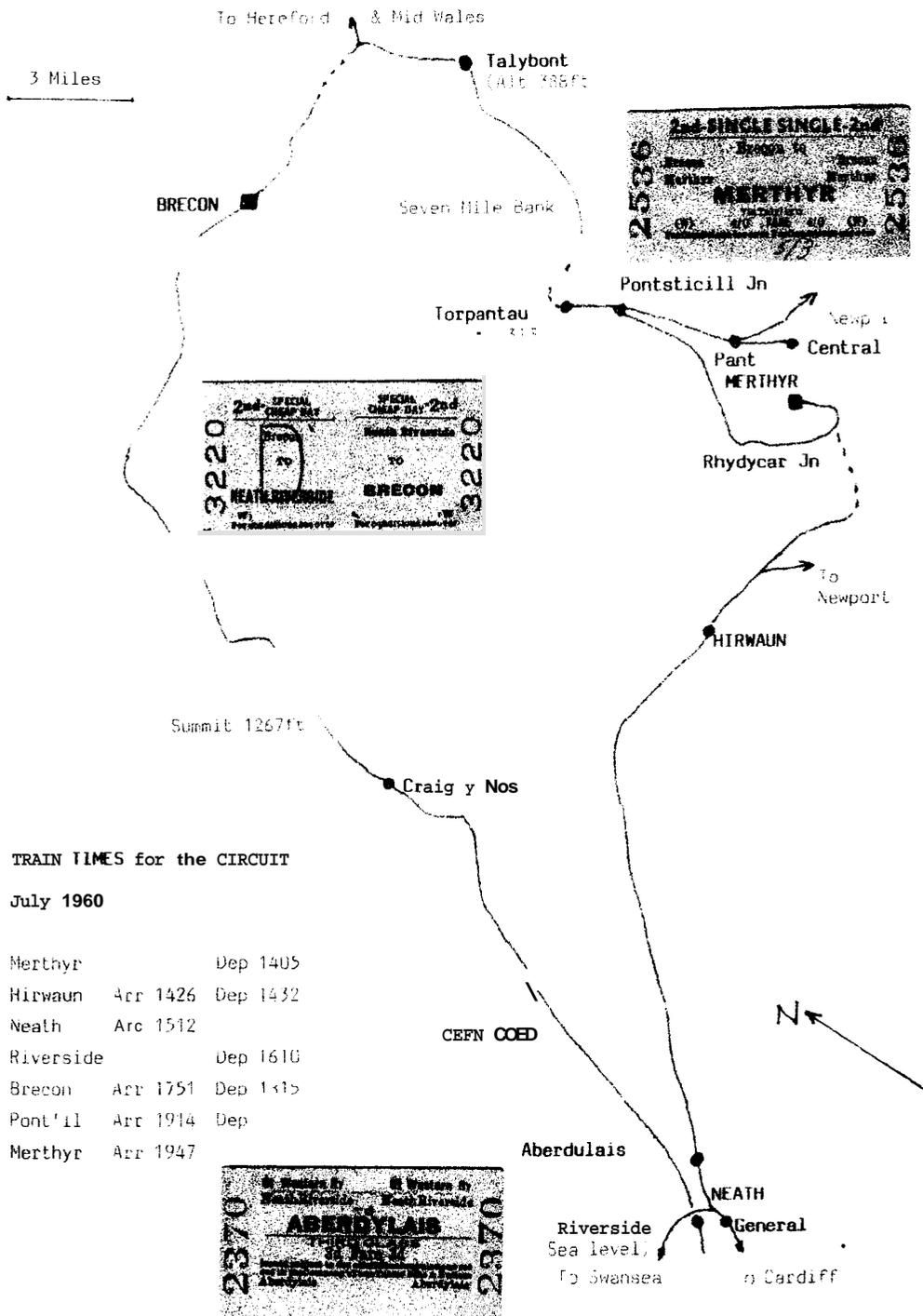
Nothing exciting to report this edition - Ed

LETTERS AND ENQUIRIES

*NO LETTERS OR ENQUIRIES THIS
EDITION*

PHOTOS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

This is the map of the railway "day trip" referred to in Ian Hayes' article.



TRAIN TIMES for the CIRCUIT

July 1960

Merthyr	Dep 1405
Hirwaun	Arr 1426 Dep 1432
Neath	Arc 1512
Riverside	Dep 1610
Brecon	Arr 1751 Dep 1815
Pont'ill	Arr 1914 Dep
Merthyr	Arr 1947

AND FINALLY

Just in case you need a handy reminder of the dates for the Winter Programme.

September Monday 6th	Visit to Worcester City Fire Station. Limited to 20 people. Meet at 7p.m.
Friday 10th	HEDGES, BOUNDARIES AND LANDMARKS by Richard Churchley. This is the talk we missed last season because of the snow.
Thursday 23rd	Tour of Regents Theological College West Malvern Road. WR14 4AY. Ex. St. JAMES SCHOOL Meet 3pm at the school.
October Friday 8th	HISTORY OF TELFORD An excellent talk by Richard Bifield on Thomas Telford, his life and works. This gives a great insight into the life of a man from very humble beginnings, who was an "all round good egg and very decent man".
November Friday 12th	HENRY SANDON - 'HENRY'. The format has yet to be finalised but it should be an interesting evening. Please come and support our very own National Treasure.
December Friday 10th	WATER OVER MY WELLIES A talk about his life working on the River Severn and it's tributaries by Brian Draper, which I am sure will be delivered with his usual <u>great knowledge</u> and sense of humour.
2011 January Friday 14th	MEMBERS' FILM EVENING We have several IA Films including, PARYS COPPER MINE, Anglesey and CLEE HILL History and quarrying. If you have any films of interest please let me know. The reason for having this film evening is in case we have snow and it is easier to cancel than a talk.
February Friday 11th	A WORKING LIFE ON THE RIVER SEVERN. Chris Witts, who was on the Severn the night of the Purton Bridge Disaster, was a Skipper on a Grain Barge and is also a former Mayor of Gloucester.
March Friday 11th	A.G.M. AND MEMBERS' FILMS AND PHOTOGRAPHS of our events and any IA or LOCAL HISTORY we may wish to share.
April Friday 1st	BARON ASH OF PACKWOOD HOUSE An illustrated talk by Mike Miles. The life story of an Edwardian entrepreneur and the House he "Manufactured". His company, Ash and Lacy, still exists and makes motorway crash barriers.

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NOTE : The material contained in the Journal does not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of the Society. Articles, letters, book reviews, photographs or questions for publication are always welcomed by the Editor.

