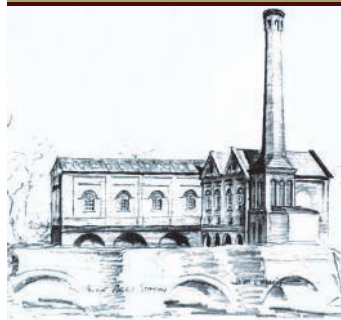


August 2011



WORCESTERSHIRE I.A. & LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Summer Newsletter

WIALHS Celebrates 40 Years!

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Worcester & District Industrial Archaeology & Local History Society, as it was called when formed in November 1971, members enjoyed a very good dinner at the Worcester Golf & Country Club, Boughton Park, Worcester. (*A brief history of the venue follows this article—ed.*)

Incredibly, a number of original members were present and we were treated to an excellent meal in very comfortable surroundings. The Golf Club had been chosen as it offered very good value for money and had good access and parking.

Our Guest of Honour for the evening was Max Sinclair, a founding member and someone who has had a huge influence in the restoration of heritage railways and canals over many years. Max is still making the headlines as the Droitwich Canals restoration scheme reaches fruition.



Max Sinclair is introduced as Guest of Honour by Michael McCurdy, Chairman

It was he who first proposed the restoration of this short link of two canals between the River Severn and Hanbury and managed to persuade local authorities to at least preserve the line.

Following Max's talk there was a short presentation by the Society President, Roger Tapping, who talked about the continued success of the Society, its full and varied programme of events and the strength of its membership.

He gave examples of some of the costs and income of the early years. In 1971 the membership charge was 50p per person. Coach hire to the



The assembled party

Forest of Dean was £32, catering for the Christmas Party was £45.98 and in 1974 we gave a donation of £10 to the Droitwich Canal Trust. We hosted our first Regional Conference at the Worcester College of Education, Henwick Grove in April 1975 and again the costs are quite extraordinary. Overnight accommodation at £2.24 per person, breakfast 35p per person, coffee 5p per cup and evening meal at 67p per person.

The evening closed with a vote of thanks to all our members, the staff at Boughton Park and to our Guest of Honour, Max Sinclair.

For the record founder members who are still members are: Max Sinclair, Cora Hemming, Robert Arrowsmith, Alan Kimber and Don Barton. *Roger Tapping*

<http://www.worcester-wia.co.uk/BulletinBoard.htm> for more photos.



Thank you to Jacky Hollis on leaving the committee

Inside this issue:

AGM Report	3
Gloving—and appeal for help!	3
Winter Programme Reports	5-6
Summer Programme Reports	6, 11-15
Winter Programme 2011/2	7
Other events	8-9
Opening of the Droitwich Canals	16

Special points of interest:

- 40th Anniversary Celebrations
- Annual General Meeting
- Review of recent Events
- Winter Lecture Programme 2011/2
- Aston Manor Transport Museum
- Droitwich Canals
- Welcome to new members

Regrettably, it became difficult to find enough high quality material to fill two issues of *The Journal* per year. As explained at the AGM, we have decided to produce *The Journal* once per year, and to evolve it into a quality record of the research and interests of the Society and its members. The new means of communicating news, meeting reports and programmes will be via this *Newsletter*.

We rely on members contributing articles and the frequency can be increased again if more content is forthcoming.

So, welcome to the first edition of the new *WIALHS Newsletter* which will

appear when required, probably twice per year. In future we would seek to keep costs down by asking members who use the internet if they would agree to receive their *Newsletter* and other documents by email. Sue McCurdy will have more to say on this later.

The current editor of *The Journal*, Glyn Thomas, has decided this is a good moment to “retire” and pass on the challenge of transforming it. Glyn has served the Society energetically over many years on the committee and has done great things with *The Journal* for a long time. I am sure you will all join me in thanking him and wishing him well.

Malcolm Nixon has risen to the challenge of re-launching and editing the *Journal* and is, like me, anxious to receive your views, comments, and—most of all—your articles!

I hope to see more members contributing meeting reports and items of news, reviews and similar. Please do not be shy! You can email them to me at jebeale@btinternet.com or pass them to me at a meeting. Articles for publication in *the Journal* should now go to Malcolm.

Meanwhile I hope that you will find this *Newsletter* enjoyable!

A Word from the Chairman...

Michael McCurdy

Welcome to our new style newsletter and I hope you approve of the changes we have made. John Beale has outlined the thinking of the committee in his article above so I will not duplicate his comments other than to reiterate our thanks to Glyn Thomas for his sterling work in editing *the Journal* and his valiant efforts trying to extract information, reviews, notes of meetings and visits from members. Thank you again Glyn.

On an entirely different topic, those of you who were at the AGM will be aware that one of our members raised an issue from the floor regarding pledging a donation to Aston Manor Transport Museum. After a discussion and a vote by members present it was agreed to pledge a small sum of money: this has been done.

This does however raise two specific issues in my mind:

Firstly I was reminded after the meeting that the constitution of the society states that the secretary has to be advised in writing at least one week prior to the AGM of any such resolution. Therefore, because no such advice had been given,

I should not have accepted the proposal from the floor. I apologise for this oversight. Discussion of such matters is entirely appropriate at an AGM to enable your committee to consider what has been said and recommend a course of action. Advance notice is needed so that all members can be aware of the motion that has been raised and can come prepared with arguments for and against and be ready to vote on the issue.

Secondly, it raises the question of whether our society should be subsidising other volunteer organisations or groups. The view of your committee is that the very limited funds available to the society should not be used for such purposes. You may recall that the series of Bill Gwilliam lectures, held a few years ago, was primarily instituted to raise funds for the furtherance of the aims of the society and publication of research by our members. The difficulty is where we should draw the line as to which organisations we support. We all have our favourite groups and organisations, mine is WIA & LHS, but if everyone wanted WIA to support other organisations we would very quickly run out of money. Our sub-

scription rates have remained constant now for several years and due to good stewardship we remain financially very strong, thus we all benefit.

I appreciate there are lots of similar groups around, some of which may well be struggling in the current economic climate. Whilst I have sympathy with such groups I suggest that, anyone who feels strongly should support them as individuals, and not use our society funds. Perhaps in hindsight, in this particular case, it may have been of more benefit to write a letter of support and encourage others in our sphere of influence to make pledges. It is possible we may have raised a bigger overall pledge by this process.

On a happier note another successful summer season is drawing to a close and I would like to thank everyone involved in its organisation, especially Mike Hayzelden & Christine, for all their hard work in ensuring we have an interesting and varied programme of events.

Welcome!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mr Barrie Blackwell,
Mr Michael Davis
Mrs Patricia Davis
Canon John Everest
Mrs Ann Hawkins



Mrs Jane Kerley
Mr Clive Lloyd
Mrs Carolyn Mann
Tim Richards
Ms Bryony Silcott
Mrs Carole Webb

AGM Report

The 14th annual general meeting of the society took place on Friday, March 11, in the lecture theatre at RGS Worcester.

After the formal proceedings, Chairman Michael McCurdy introduced a slide show of some of the old industrial buildings which had been demolished in Worcester in the last five years to make way for new developments in Lowesmoor and Pheasant Street, the old hospital and the Butts, and the Porcelain Works. These have been, or soon will be replaced by a shopping complex featuring Asda, the new university cam-

*Adapted from the report in
Worcester News contributed by
Sue Bradley*

pus, library and residential accommodation. This highlighted how important it is to recognise the location of our disappearing industrial strengths.

It was followed by a film made by Peter Wheatley earlier in the year on Alwyn

Gloves — Worcester's last remaining glove factory. The owner Les Winfield is in his 90s and there are few staff left able to produce handmade gloves. At its peak, the factory employed 26 workers and produced 60,000 pairs a year. Today, production is a fraction of this, but they are still sent all over the world. This is a valuable visual record of the operations of the sole remaining Worcester glover, bringing into perspective life before the intensive mechanisation of the trade, which made it impossible for the city to retain its once important position in the industry.

Gloving – your project !

Malcolm Nixon

This summer the society secured the preliminary (but crucial) support of the Heritage Lottery Fund (H.L.F.) to mount a full bid for funds to study, record and publicise the surviving parts of the Worcester gloving industry – and in particular – Alwyns.

As I write these notes (in July) the required documentation is being prepared and when the Newsletter is published, the bid should have been completed and awaiting the formal decision from the H.L.F.

Integral to the bid will be the involvement of our society members – whether as volunteer interviewers, researchers, photographers or cataloguer of business

APPEAL!



records - the scope is limitless, challenging and above all exciting!

Members may well see this as a chance to acquire new skills (training provided!) and experience first hand (sorry for the pun!) the intricacies of an industry all but forgotten in our community.

This is our heritage and if you would like to discover more about it then why not volunteer? If you want to find out how you can help just telephone (01905 453426) or email:

malcolm.nixon@gloscol.ac.uk

Dr. Malcolm Nixon: Project Leader

Postbag Query—Can you help?

"In 1884 a past relative of mine, Henry Emmanuel Hill, from Nottingham, a lace maker, received £826 from his grandfather and moved to Worcester where his daughter, Kate was born in 1885. Her birth certificate records him as licensed victualler of Market Hall Vaults Chambers. In 1891 the family were back in a little terraced house in Nottingham, a few doors down from their earlier house.

I am wondering whether Henry Emmanuel used his windfall to buy the above premises, and, with no experience in the licensed trade, failed to make it work, and returned to Nottingham, all his money gone. His step-brother was a successful publican in Essex and Henry may have sought to emulate him.

Is there a record of Worcester licensed victuallers of around that time, where I might find confirmation of Henry's situation?"

John Hill, 24 Sycamore Avenue, Sedbergh, Cumbria LA10 5EZ (email supplied)

Use of E-mail for Communications

The committee have discussed ways of keeping costs down in order to maintain the membership subscription at its current level. One way of doing this would be to send mailings and newsletters electronically to members who would be happy to receive it this way.

Members who have given me an email address have already been contacted. I would be grateful if members, who have not already done so, would contact me on suemccurdy@yahoo.com if they are happy to receive items such as the newsletter, AGM notification and other short notice items by email.

Some members may be concerned about the confidentiality issue of their address being used for group emailings. I can assure you that communications will only be sent to WIA&LHS members and I will, in future, hide all addresses so confidentiality should not be a problem.

Any comments you may have will be passed on to the committee for further discussion.

Sue McCurdy, Membership Secretary.

Aston Manor Transport Museum

The problems currently facing the Aston Manor Transport Museum were highlighted by Roy Fido at the AGM. As a result of a vote taken at that meeting (see above) your society has now pledged £75 in support.

The future of this museum is in some jeopardy. When it opened, in 1992, there was an agreement with Birmingham City Council that the commercial rent of £43,750pa would be paid on its behalf by City Museums to the City as landlord. In return the museum was required to open a minimum of 100 days each year, approximating to every weekend. This was easily achieved. Now, with Birmingham City Museums budget having been cut from April 2009, they have no longer been able to cover the rent, The museum itself can-



Aston Manor Transport Museum Exhibits

not afford it either.

The museum wishes to raise £500,000 towards either the freehold or a long lease of the site and some funds towards redevelopment plans.

Aston Manor Road Transport Museum occupies the building which was once Witton Tram Depot. It was built in 1882 and still bears the name of Borough of Aston Manor Tramways Depot on a

large stone sign above the front entrance. When you see inside the building, all the original tram tracks are still there.

The museum houses a collection of historic and classic vehicles and related exhibits that bring back memories of a bygone era. Amongst the collection are a number of BMMO (Midland Red) built vehicles which were once common in and around Worcestershire.



History of Boughton House, Worcester Golf & Country Club



Boughton House (David Attwood)

The following brief history of Boughton House, now the Club House of Worcester Golf & Country Club, was made possible through the help of Miss Gill Farnsworth, Deputy Curator of the Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum.

Boughton, or Boulton, was originally part of the manor of Wick Episcopi. In 1429 the estate was bought by Henry Cower who built a house on it. The early history of the house is simply the story of the Gower family for the next 300 years. It was sold in 1739 according to Nash, the Worcestershire historian, to pay gambling debts. The new owner was one Joseph Weston a Worcester wine merchant, Mayor of Worcester in 1720.

In 1778 Mary Weston, widow of Joseph Weston, sold a portion of the estate to William Lilley and the remainder to Thomas Bund. The Rev. John Lilley, son of William Lilley, sold part of the land to Elias Isaac and the remainder to

Joseph Helm. In 1814 Elias Isaac bought Helm's share of the land and so became owner of the estate and Boughton House.

This Elias Isaac, who is the gentleman of the portrait in the Club House lounge, was a member of the banking house of Berwick & Co. In 1819 he became Mayor of Worcester. From 1821 to 1835 he was an alderman and in 1821 he was also High Sheriff of Worcestershire. In 1806 he married Harriet Whitmore of Dudmaston House in Shropshire and the couple took up residence in Boughton House in 1814. Harriet is the lady of the companion portrait in the Club House lounge. Elias died in Boughton on November 21st 1841 and the upkeep of the house and estate passed into the hands of his son, John Whitmore Isaac who had been born in 1807. John Whitmore also succeeded his father in Berwick's bank. He married Charlotte Holland of Dumbleton who was related to Josiah Wedgwood, the famous potter and to the naturalist Charles Darwin. John Whitmore, who was keen on improving the estate, regrouped and reshaped the smaller fields within the estate, growing wheat and flax and establishing as a vegetable garden the ground where the 12th green is now and at that time was known in the family as the 'roundabouts'. He also became very keen on arboriculture and it was he who introduced and planted in the estate a considerable variety of trees many of them from Europe or North America.

John Whitmore Isaac lived on in Boughton until he died at the age of 77 in 1884. His mother Harriet, Elias' widow, also lived on in Boughton dying in 1867 at the age of 80. Unfortunately John Whitmore's son, John Swinton Isaac died before his father and the estate and house passed to Arthur Witmore Isaac who was John Swinton's son by his second wife, Anne Amelia Crofton. His first wife, Elizabeth Ann Isaac died in 1870.

Arthur Whitmore Isaac was killed in action in 1916 in World War 1, but before his death the estate and house was leased to a Lancashire industrialist named Marriage. One of Mr Marriage's daughters married a Colonel Winnington. Later the family moved to Bowbrook House near Pershore. The estate which was then being managed by a Trust on behalf of the surviving members of the Isaac family was bought in 1927 by the Worcester City Golf Club of Tolladine and became the Worcester Golf & Country Club.

The deed of sale was signed on behalf of the golf club by Russell Randall the secretary, William Badgery and Francis Marrian and for the trustees by Arthur Whitmore's friend, the then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who later became Earl Baldwin of Bewdley and Lucy Isaac (formerly Lucy Vernon) Arthur Whitmore Isaac's widow.

R.J. Henderson, Captain 1972-3

Winter Programme Reports

Thanks are due to Sue Bradley and others contributing reports and notes for this section. It would be appreciated, though, if more members could volunteer to write up brief notes or reports on future events. They are an important record of our activities and are valued by those members who could not attend for whatever reason.

WINTER PROGRAMME EVENTS

10 December 2010

The Nocturnal Starfish

John Mason - WIALHS Member

We are grateful to John for stepping in to give his talk replacing one by Brian Draper, who was unable to appear as advertised.

The project named Starfish, was a British system of wartime decoys for sites which were vital to defences during the Second World War. Retired Army Colonel, John Turner, was charged with building decoy airfields around the country, using dummy aircraft and equipment manufactured by ex-employees of the film industry to fool reconnaissance aircraft. Similar tricks were also used to make real airfields and installations look like farmland. The main feature and hence the "nocturnal" reference, was the system of lights installed to lure and confuse enemy bombers at night. When enemy aircraft got their bearings on a decoy site, the lights were dowsed and fires lit to simulate bomb strikes to encourage aircraft that this was the correct location for their bombing raid. QL was the code used for lights, QF for fires.

Starfish sites were a two man operation run in conjunction with the Civil Defence. Sites in Worcestershire includes decoys near Kempsey and Leigh.

The project was then developed to decoy more sophisticated sites, requiring permanent lights or perhaps the simulation of steam from railway locomotives, or areas of water to simulate docks. Examples include decoys for railway marshalling yards near Rolls Royce in Derby and for dockyards including Hull, Falmouth and Portsmouth. The decoy site at Hayling Island successfully drew 60% of the bombs intended for Portsmouth.

Similar defensive tactics were used abroad, including a dummy Suez Canal, the covering of tanks and lorries in Africa with shields, and the creation of three massive assembly points out of cardboard to trick Rommel into dividing his forces. Using 'the man who never was' convinced Hitler we were going to invade Greece not Sicily and making him move his forces from Italy to Greece.

We had become masters of deception, once using the help of a National Geographic article to provide details of insignia for a non-existent army to increase the apparent size of our forces. The edition was hurriedly withdrawn, creating suspicion that secrets had been betrayed, but it reinforced the deception of Operation Bodyguard - making it impossible for the German forces to combat our invasion of France. Confusing them over our intentions delayed their response for 7 weeks while they redeployed their troops.

The Germans tried to conceal their V2 sites and also built their own brand of starfish sites but using the same plan made it easier for our forces to identify from the air.

2,220 tons of bombs fell on Starfish sites during the war. The German strategic bombing finished in 1942, although V1s and V2s continued the attack.

Similar deceptions are still in use today, false tanks now provided with heat signatures to be even more misleading.

John Mason gave a brilliant and entertaining talk, for which we are very grateful. Brian Draper's talk has been rescheduled for the coming season.

Based on report by Sue Bradley

14 January 2011

Members Film Evening

Three films were shown during the evening:

Reflections on Sabrina

Peter Wheatley presented a film in produced with help from Worcester Camera Club, narrated by Ruth Bennett, covering life along the River Severn from the time of the Roman occupation. It covered the iron ore smelting at Pitchcroft, leisure on the canal at Diglis Ba-

sin, the agriculture and wildlife, the Severn Valley Railway and other local events such as Dragon Boat Racing and the Upton Jazz Festival.

It was a lovely gentle evocation of life in a very beautiful and interesting County.

Llandaff Cathedral Organ

The original organ was built in 1900, and rebuilt in 1937. It suffered bomb damage in 1941 and was temporarily repaired before later being hit by a lightning strike! Could there be an unluckier organ in the country?

It was better luck, though, for Nicholson's of Malvern who got the job of building a new organ for the Cathedral. It was to be the largest organ build for a British cathedral since Coventry. It took 3 years to build and install, and assembly began in May 2009. The wooden carcass stands 5m tall and contains 4870 pipes.

This was a brilliant photographic record by Peter Wheatley of a truly monumental project.

Parys Copper Mine

For those of us who had been on the WIALHS weekend away to Snowdonia in 2008 and can remember our trek around the Parys copper mine on Anglesey, this re-awoke the sights and beautiful colours which were one of the highlights of our tour of one of Europe's greatest copper mines.

This was an official video produced by the Parys Mine.

Sue Bradley

11 February 2011

My life on the Severn

Chris Witts

Chris spent a large part of his life working on the River Severn, starting at fifteen as a 'lad' on the oil tanker Shell Steelmaker, one of a crew of five - skipper, mate, engineer and two lads - on a voyage from Gloucester to Swansea.

Finding the 7-day a week job exhausting, he had lasted three weeks when he overslept one morning and found the boat had left without him.

Winter Programme Reports (Continued)

He moved onto the Wyesdale H, a tanker owned by Barker's of Yorkshire but managed from offices in Gloucester. It was too low at the front to get to Swansea but had very good accommodation; the crew had a cabin each, there was a rest room and toilet. All boats carrying petrol started with "W" and ended with "dale".

On 25th October 1960, in a thick fog combined with a dangerous tide, they were hit by the Wyesdale H which collided with the Arkendale H, both of them going on to hit the Severn Bridge that carried a gas pipeline, exploded and burst into flames. Two spans of the bridge collapsed and five crew members were killed, but no-one on Chris Witts' boat was hurt.

Like many of the tankers' crews he could not swim. One day his mother had a dream that he would fall from the sky and drown. He was thus forewarned when he slipped and fell between two boats, luckily to be rescued.

It took nine hours from Swansea to Sharpness and missing the tide after 8pm generally meant waiting until 5am to sail to Worcester, another seven hours, plus four hours pumping out. Nights ashore in Worcester often included a trip to the Chinese restaurant in the High Street. Up again at 5am to get back to Gloucester, taking on river water as ballast to clear the bridges if the river was in flood.

After spells on other boats he left the river to become a fireman when Barker's lost their contract on the completion of the M5.

Returning to the river in 1993 on his retirement, he ferried a 130ft. grain barge carrying 250 tonnes of grain (10 lorries worth) between Sharpness and Tewkesbury Mill. The job continued until 1998, the mill closed in 2005. When the barges were sold in 2007, he brought one of them back from Tewkesbury to Sharpness unladen, which proved difficult to control as it was too light to steer against the flow and arrived one and a half hours late, missing the official welcome he had arranged in Gloucester.

Chris Witts has also surveyed the bridges on the Severn, produced several books, become a local broadcaster and been Mayor of Gloucester. Reliving his

eventful life with the use of film, he is an interesting man with colourful tales to tell. *Sue Bradley*

1 April 2011

Baron Ash of Packwood House

Mike Miles

This was the last meeting of the Winter Season.

There was the tale of a young man born into a wealthy industrial family which had made a fortune from galvanised metal, trading as Ash and Lacy. He was not from aristocratic background but christened "Baron".

He knew he wanted Packwood House the minute he saw it advertised, then spent years finding and recycling authentic materials to restore it as a Tudor manor house. He became an important member of the local community and High Sheriff of Warwickshire, living happily at Packwood House for 42 years.

He gave his house to the National Trust, and moved on to a new restoration project in Suffolk, the ruin that was Wingfield Castle. Again he became respected for both his hospitality and generosity to many local organisations - including Norwich Cathedral.

He became very disillusioned with the management of his old home, after the National Trust belatedly realised that, although beautiful, they had acquired a mongrel, none of the features of the building were original and Baron had kept no records of their origins.

An interesting and complex man his tale was illustrated with slides and told with passion. He died aged 91 in 1980, having never married; leaving an estate valued at £3 million pounds and was buried in the family vault at Packwood.

Sue Bradley

6th April 2011

Visit to 214 (Worcestershire) Battery RA (Volunteers)

At 6p.m. a group of 18 members met at the new TA Centre in Pheasant Street. The building is a Grade II listed building that was once the great filling hall of Hill, Evans and Company, Vinegar Works and dates back to the 1850's. The building has, what was once the largest

Summer Prog.

unsupported iron beamed roof in Europe. I was very interested seeing how this enormous space had been reused.

Inside it is quite amazing, corridors with offices, storage rooms, a gym, large catering facilities etc. The centre is a huge drill hall open to the roof. We were shown the quite wonderful collection of Regimental Silver and other treasures and had a brief look at the archives. Our guide, Clive Doughty showed us his flat, he is required to live-in as the caretaker and the excellent views from his windows but also how the ceiling height had been lowered to make a more domestic space.

The Officers Mess was rather splendid with furniture that I recognised from the Silver Street Depot and the Other Ranks Mess looked prepared to be very well used. There is a secure car park on the site but the Military vehicles are still stored in Midland Road.

The building is so huge that we thought that they would never use such an enormous space, but recently the Government have suggested more T.A. Soldiers and fewer Regulars so it may well be a very fortunate move for the T.A.

Christine Silvester

14th April 2011

Visit to Oxford by Train

Oxford by the canal development, late C18th & C19th

Having worked in Oxford for 20 years, the train ride into town was familiar as an old friend, although it could as often as not become a nightmare! Still this day was a pleasant experience. Even in my short time travelling this approach to Oxford has dramatically changed from old marshalling yards and thriving businesses, later waste lands and now new colleges and student and private residential estates. Even the station changed from decades as a 'temporary' timber structure to the new steel & glass shed. This was not the first. The Midland had a station, (still used as a garage 20 years ago) where the Siad Business School now sits directly on the town side of the current one. Built with the same style prefabricated cast iron sections and Chance's glass as the Crystal Palace.

The only remnant is the 'preserved'

Continued on page 11...

EVENTS & INFORMATION

PULLOUT Page 1

WIA&LHS Winter Programme 2011/12

All talks will be held in the Lecture Theatre, RGS Worcester (Upper Tything, Worcester, WR1 1HP), and will start at 7.30pm.

Non-members are welcome on payment of £1.00.

If you have any queries or problems, you may call Christine Silvester on 01905 354679.

FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER	THE HISTORY OF BARBOURNE	Terry Wardle
	Terry is a local author, historian and publisher of several local histories including re-prints of some of Bill Gwilliam’s books.	
FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER	WATER OVER MY WELLIES	Brian Draper
	This is the talk that was, unfortunately, cancelled last year. Brian is an authority on rivers and wildlife in the county. The talk is about his life and work.	
FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER	STOKE PRIOR SALT WORKS	Rev. Alan White
	Alan is one of our members. This talk is particularly appropriate as the Droitwich canal ring will be completely open this year.	
FRIDAY 9 DECEMBER	AN EVENING WITH HENRY	Henry Sandon
	Another enjoyable evening with our Patron, complete with mulled wine and mince pies to start the Christmas season.	
2012		
FRIDAY 13 JANUARY	C.W. DYSON PERRINS - A QUIET HERO	John Handley
	John is a local historian and author. Dyson Perrins - responsible for the Perrins Hall and numerous other local features - was a wonderful benefactor who lived a quiet and unassuming life.	
FRIDAY 10 FEBRUARY	WILLIAMS OF PITMASTON	Murray Mylechreest
	Williams of Pitmaston Park in Malvern Road did not develop the William pear but he did develop a great many other varieties of fruit and had a huge and important nursery.	
FRIDAY 9 MARCH	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	Details to follow
	To be followed by films, objects of interest, etc. by members including a presentation by Len Holder on one of his travels. Please let us know if you have anything you would like to present.	
FRIDAY 20 APRIL	THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE U234	John Mason
	John is one of our long-serving members and the creator of the illustrations in our Journal/Newsletter. His title is deliberately enigmatic but a local connection is assured!	

EVENTS & INFORMATION

PULLOUT Page 2

Public Events you may Find Interesting...

The following events are not organised or supported by WIALHS but may be of interest to members:

COTSWOLD LINE REDOUBLING

Several special events are being organised to celebrate the completion of the double track between Evesham and Charlbury.

COTSWOLD-PORTSEA EXPRESS: On **Saturday 10th September**, in conjunction with First Great Western, the Cotswold Line Promotion Group is arranging an special train to Portsmouth and Southsea and Portsmouth Harbour. Starting from Hereford and calling at most stations to Oxford, the train will then go via Swindon, Salisbury and Eastleigh. First class fully booked at time of writing.

THE CATHEDRALS EXPRESS: On **Saturday 17th September**, Vintage Trains Ltd (from Birmingham Railway Museum) in conjunction with First



6043 at Kingham in 1963

Great Western, is running a very special train from Tyseley (museum platform) through Birmingham Snow Hill, Worcester Shrub Hill and the Cotswold Line to London Paddington and return. It will be hauled throughout by GWR Castle locomotive 5043 "Earl of Mount Edgecumbe". This loco operated on the line in the last days of steam for BR, and has now been lovingly restored and will haul the train at up to 75mph on the main line. Call 0121 708 4960.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE RAILWAY LINE BETWEEN GREAT MALVERN AND HEREFORD: Weekend of **17th/18th September**. The CLPG is planning a series of events to mark this anniversary and completion of the work to re-double the track between Charlbury and Evesham.

SOUNDTRACKS TAKE 2: 21st October at the Evesham Arts Centre 7:30pm (£10 full price adult, £6 concession). A performance of exciting new instrumental and choral music, poetry, dance and drama in celebration of the redoubling of the Cotswold Line. The show allows us a window onto the fever of excitement as the railways came into being, the heroes of the hour and the human cost. It makes reference amongst other things to the land and geology, Brunel and the Battle of Mickleton Tunnel.

OTHER RAILWAY EVENTS

PEEP BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY, 3-4th September. Extra charge for access to workshops etc.

There is an unconfirmed report that a **STEAM EXCURSION** will run from or via Worcester on **Saturday 22 October** hauled by possibly 6024 "King Edward II": Worcester-Solihull-Leamington-Stratford-Shirley-Worcester-Evesham-Oxford. Check with John Beale who will be listening out.

BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY MUSEUM (TYSELEY) OPEN DAY: Sunday 23rd October 2011. Featuring train rides, locomotive line-ups, works viewing gallery, demonstrations - locomotive cavalcades, turntable & shunting. The museum no longer opens regularly so these open days are your only opportunity and they make an effort to put on a great show with many locos on display and many in steam. www.tyseleylocoworks.co.uk/tlw_ods/

BUS MUSEUMS

Wythall Bus Museum is holding **OPERATING DAYS** on **Sunday 28th August**

and **Monday 29th August** and a **LEYLAND DAY** on **Sunday 9th October**.

The Oxford Bus Museum at Hanborough Station is holding a **BUS AND CLASSIC VEHICLE RALLY** on **Sunday 16 October**. Parking at the northern end of Kidlington Airport, access is from the A4095, postcode is OX20 1QF. A frequent free vintage bus service.

ON THE WATER

THE WATERWAYS MUSEUM, GLOUCESTER is running, amongst others, a **BOAT TRIP TO SHARPNESS (10AM-5PM)** on **Sunday 4 September 2011**. Enjoy passing through the fourteen bridges on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal with stunning views of the Severn estuary, picnic lunch included. (£24 per person). 01452 318200

SEVERN CRUISE on **Thursday 18th August** with MV Conway Castle, from Upton-Worcester and Return. 01684 593 112.

The historic MV BALMORAL is currently operating in the Severn Estuary, and members might be interested in the following trips with IA interest. **16th August** from Lydney-Sharpness-Ilfracombe-Penarth and return by coach. **24th August** from Penarth and Clevedon to Bristol and return including a cruise of the Avon Gorge and the historic docks. **25th August and 7th September** from Penarth and Clevedon, then a 3 rivers, 5 bridges cruise. See www.waverleyexcursions.com.

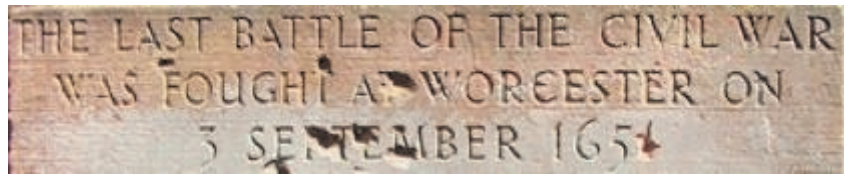
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COMBE MILL STEAMING AND WATER POWER DAY on **18th September**: Combe Mill (Long Hanborough, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX29 8ET) shows off its water-power together with the usual working beam engine, small steam engines, stationary engines and demonstrations of craft tools. 10am-5pm.

EVENTS & INFORMATION

PULLOUT Page 3

THE RAILWAY & CANAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL CLINKER LECTURE : 29th October 2011, 2.15pm at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret St., Birmingham, B3 3BS. "Sir William Cubitt 1785-1861" by Peter Brown. Free entry, no need to book.



360 Years since the Battle of Worcester

To mark the 360th anniversary of the Battle of Worcester a number of events are being staged in and around the City. Listed below are the key events

On **23rd August** The Mayor will be handing over the Mace to Charles II on the steps of the Guildhall.

The English Civil War Society will be performing in 17th Century dress on **3rd and 4th September** at the Commandery.

On **Saturday 3rd September**. A service will be held in the Cathedral at

1100, addressed by Lord Falkner.

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th September an enactment of the Battle of Worcester will take place on Powick Hams (entrance from Old Powick Bridge) Small entry fee.

Drumhead service in Fort Royal Park at 6pm on **Saturday 3rd September**

Other events including street theatre, guided walks and Cathedral tours, will also be available.

Full details are available from Tourist

Information Office (The Worcester Shop) and from the Battle of Worcester Society website:

www.thebattleofworcestersociety.org.uk

Incidentally, should you wish to act as a steward etc for the re-enactment events the Battle of Worcester Society are looking for help. Contact them direct on the above web page or phone Brian Bullock on 07508 017013 after 6pm weekdays.

Worcestershire Local History Forum Day School 2011

By the kind invitation of the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust and with the permission of the Church Commissioners, Worcester Local History Forum will host the annual Day School at Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury, Worcestershire on **Saturday, 29 October 2011**.

Tickets are £10 a head

Picnic lunch available at £5 per head.

Further details can be obtained from either

Marlene Price at secretary@wlhf.org.uk or

www.dayschool2011.wlhf.org.uk

The topic this year is WORCESTERSHIRE CASTLES AND HOUSES LOST AND AT RISK.

All profits will be donated to the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust for its attempt to save the Castle from commercial development.

Heritage Open Days 2011

WALES:	From 2nd September all month (including weekdays): www.civictrustwales.org
ENGLAND EXCEPT LONDON:	8-11th September: www.heritageopendays.org.uk
LONDON ("OPEN HOUSE"):	17-18th September: www.londonopenhouse.org

AIA Regional Conference, South Wales and West 2012

Somerset IA Society are hosting the 2012 South Wales & West Region IA Conference.

It will be held on **21st April 2012** at the

Kings of Wessex School, Cheddar.

Further details will be available in due course. Anyone offering to speak is welcome to volunteer via the WIALHS

secretary, David Attwood.

Latest information on the SIAS website at www.sias.me.uk

EVENTS & INFORMATION

PULLOUT Page 4

Devizes Industrial Archaeology Symposium 2011.

A day long symposium on the industrial archaeology of Wiltshire.

The Symposium takes place at the Wharf Theatre, Devizes (SN10 1EB), commencing with registration at 9.45am and finishing at 4.30pm. Tickets £10.50 excluding lunch.

The subjects and speakers will be:

Milling, paper and brewing at Slaughtertford - the history of a small industrial village, by Mike Stone.

Cold War Monuments in the West Country, by Bob Clarke.

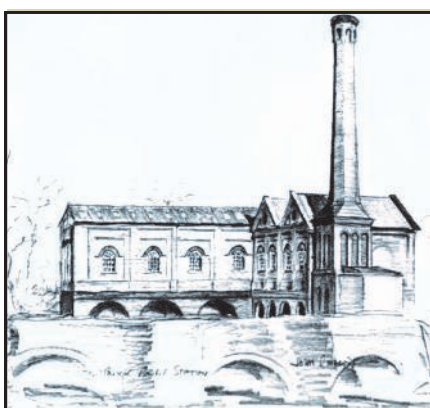
History of the Nestles Factory at Staver-ton, by Peter Lavis.

Quarrying Bath Stone underground at Monk's Park in the 1990's, by Mike Dodds.

Recent Work on the Wilts and Berks Canal, by Chris Coyle, Company Secretary of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust.

01380 727369 (10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday) or www.wiltsheritage.org.uk

Your society is a member of the **Worcestershire Local History Forum**. Members are encouraged to visit their website at www.wlhf.org.uk for details of forum activities and a full listing of events being planned by other local history societies and organisations across the county.



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Summer Programme Reports (Continued)

Continued from page 6

swing bridge over the navigation channel. However, the first was Great Western, who had their station to the south alongside the Abingdon Road, built in 1844. The current location was an agreed rationalisation, but that Victorian station was demolished in the 1970's. The current station is also temporary as



we were planning for the station to migrate slightly to the south onto the redundant railyards, adjacent to the ice rink and coach park, complete with light rail/tram connection to Cowley, since Leyland-Rover-BMW no longer use the goods line.

Our visit was a short exploration north along the canal, passing into the area known as Jericho.

The Oxford to Birmingham Canal finally reached Oxford and was opened in 1790. Although it created new jobs and encouraged some new industry, the city's economy was still dominated by the University and the services it required. The fastest growth took place between 1821 and 1831. The number of houses doubled in the first half of the century. Much of the development was in the St Ebbe's area on low-lying land near the river and the city's gas works, built in 1818. The area was damp, poorly drained, frequently flooded and blighted by the smell and dust from the gas works. Other housing before 1850 was in Jericho around the University Press, in St Thomas's, St Clement's and Summertown.

The Victorian period retained the medieval street plan and some of the earlier character east of Cornmarket Street, but fundamentally changed the appearance of the old city and ringed it with substantial suburbs. Our walk took us up the canal, past the last boat works (closed in 2002 against much opposi-



tion, for housing – still unbuilt (photo above) to the site of Lucy's old factory.

Like Hardy & Padmore in Worcester, Lucy's, which was still active 10 years ago, was the town foundry works, casting all manner of street furniture. They also moved into pressing of metals and although the foundries closed after the war, the metal pressing and had the contract for all the traffic signal and telephone switching boxes, known, of course, as Lucy's.

The walk returned to town to Nuffield College, which fills the site of the coal wharf and is therefore the third major occupant of the site. William Morris (later Lord Nuffield) the motor car manufacturer acquired the site in the 1930s and had designs prepared for the college. War intervened and the college was not opened until 1956. The former headquarters of the Oxford Canal and the adjacent boundary wall are the only parts retained as the Master's house and garden, but it is still called "Canal House". *Mike Hayzelden*

7th May 2011

Visit to the Black Country Museum

As usual our Commandery coach left from outside the New Inn, Ombersley Road and a smaller than anticipated party headed north for Dudley at about 9.15 a.m.

The weather was not good and upon arrival, after sorting the tickets, the majority of us headed to the coffee shop in the hope that the rain would ease off. This was to be a very different trip for me as I had no wife or grandchildren to stop me straying to the very distant parts of the site, indeed I discovered many exhibits that I had never seen before.

The trolley bus service was not available, as some kind souls had nicked the overhead cable to make a few bob! So it was to be a leisurely stroll around the

site. I started up in the corner from whence the trolley bus should have started and discovered a small but very interesting collection of vintage vehicles and very surprisingly a fully equipped mechanics workshop, which was being run as an independent business restoring vintage cars.

From here, and for once reading the map as I went instead of looking at it when I got home, I had a few minutes to spare before we were booked as a group for a visit down the coalmine. I spotted a pair of semi-detached houses, which were described as being built from cast-iron plates and indeed they were. The one side had been set up as a 1930s house and the next door housed a fabulous collection of all things metal made in the local area. Not enough time was available to explore thoroughly as I had to set off in the rain down the hill to the coalmine.

We assembled in the anti-room and were duly called through to the entrance where we were given hard hats and torches. Our guide was very knowledgeable, telling us not only about the mining techniques but also about the local geology from which the coal deposits were formed. Considering the whole thing was a man-made showpiece, built under a strong concrete roof, it was very authentic and in many places quite awkward to walk along when you are 6'2" tall! I was very impressed with this exhibit another first on my day of self-indulgence.

Time was passing all too quickly and lunch was calling. I skirted the fairground (the beauty of having no kids with me) and passed the new chip shop where I thought the prices were a bit high, and headed off to the pub where I recalled in the past I had obtained a good pint of beer and a cheese and onion bap. I was not disappointed and enjoyed both in the company of one or two more of our members.

I was now in the area of the boats and once again being unencumbered I set off to thoroughly explore that area and hopefully bag my way on board the n.b. "President", which was moored on the outside of its butt. I looked at all the old workshops, peered in the replica boatman's cabin and struck up a conversation with one of the volunteers, but sadly President was locked up and I

Summer Programme Reports (Continued)

could not get aboard.

Not to be defeated I now looked at the other side of the basin, passing once again a mixture of society members and then headed off to the tunnels where we had a pre-booked ride on one of the electric boats into the tunnels. This organisation is now very slick and like clockwork we all boarded, wiped off the wet seats and enjoyed our second journey underground. Once again a very good trip, and this time I didn't have to leg the boat to impress the grandchildren! A further trip that caught my eye and one I would like to do is an extended 5-hour tour, which goes through the Dudley tunnel to Parkhead and returns via the Netherton tunnel, including passage through two locks.

On returning from this trip I then ventured over to the limekiln area and then walked further on to the top of the kilns, again an area I had never been to before. On route I came across a lovely little park area, nicely grassed over and with plenty of seats and was surprised to see one of our members there quietly reading his paper.

Nearly time now to set off home so on my way back to the coach I called again at the two cast-iron semi's to have a longer look at all the metal objects, mainly as you would expect made from cast-iron.

Back to the coach and a leisurely drive back to Worcester after a really enjoyable day. *Roger Tapping*

19th May 2011

Behind the Scenes at Malvern Theatres

A group of about 30 members met at Malvern Theatres for a 'behind the scenes' talk and tour.

We did not actually go behind the scenes but were given a very good insight into the running of the theatre and especially the costs.

The Director gave us a brief history of the theatre told us how the programme is organised and how the various spaces are used for films, concerts and regular theatre. There are also art exhibitions and the bar and restaurant.

We were also told about the building work and how when they were excavating below the tower the pit filled with

water - a problem where there are springs everywhere.

We were allowed on the set and I for one, was not aware that the stage slopes towards the audience a rather odd and disorienting feeling that is probably second nature to the professionals.

I came away feeling that I should support them more often, I hope other members felt the same.

Christine Silvester

25th May 2011

Visit to University of Worcester New City Campus

A group of about 20 members met at 6:30p.m. at the New City Campus. Dr. Martin Doughty, Pro Vice Chancellor met us and took us on an interesting tour of the building. We all knew Worcester Royal Infirmary and recognised the building but had never seen it like this, everywhere was bright clean and light.

The entrance hall was stripped of all old fittings, the stone floor looked pristine and the few items of modern furniture emphasised the elegance of the building.

The board room, off the hall, where Charles Hastings set up what was to become the BMA, was also beautifully renovated. The paintings that were originally hung there will be returned from the Charles Hastings Museum, when copies have been made.

Through the board room to the Chapel, which was built with money raised from a concert by Jenny Lind, known as the Swedish Nightingale. The chapel is now de-consecrated and looks peaceful and ideal for quiet study.

We visited several of the lecture rooms and were delighted with the transformation. The University had worked with the Conservation Officer to retain all the Georgian features but to have clean bright modern spaces.

On the top floor most members were probably more interested in what they could see outside - The Hive - and Martin was very informative, with details of what is happening and promised to give us a tour of the building before it opens in 2012. *Christine Silvester*

10th June 2011

Elan Valley Tour

Brian Draper

Brian was our knowledgeable and entertaining guide around the reservoirs of the Elan Valley.

The weather was fine as we called at Hereford for coffee and continued to Hay on Wye for lunch. Several members were unable to resist the temptation to buy books in Hay. As we continued through Kilvert country toward the Welsh border the skies darkened. Brian explained a brief history of the dams, which were constructed between 1894 and 1904 to supply Birmingham with fresh water.

To make way for the reservoirs 100 people were displaced, but only landowners were compensated.

Construction workers were housed in a purpose built village of wooden huts on the site of the present Elan village. Many facilities were provided for the workers including street lighting, powered by hydro-electricity. Across the river from the village was a doss-house where new workers were deloused and checked for infectious diseases prior to entering the village.

Brian had hoped to take us inside one of the dams, but his contact, who held the key was on maternity leave.

The site of the reservoirs was chosen because of its high average rainfall and the weather that afternoon proved the point. Nonetheless the day was very enjoyable and informative.

We look forward to hearing from Brian again when he speaks to us in October as part of our winter programme.

Michael and Sue McCurdy

26th June 2011

Visits to White Ladies Aston and Peopleton Churches

On a hot sunny day, Mike Wall, one of our members, conducted us around two of the less well known churches close to Worcester. He was the ideal person to lead us having written the guidebooks to both churches.

The first was at White Ladies Aston. The approach to the church was along a yew tree lined path. The church has an

Summer Programme Reports (Continued)

attractive splay footed wooden spire, surmounted by a splendid golden weathervane. The building itself is Norman, heavily restored by the Victorians in the 1860s but the interior is very light and welcoming. The font is unusual in that it is twelve sided, of uncertain date, but possibly medieval. Mike gave a brief history of the church, its stained glass and monuments which included one recording the Revd. Henry Martin Sherwood who died aged 98 having served the parish for an incredible 70 years.

We then moved on to Peopleton church. Although the outside is not as striking as White Ladies Aston, nonetheless the interior shows all the signs of being a well used and loved church. The main treasure is the Rood Beam. This is a beam which supported the screen of the Rood Loft which once ran across the chancel arch. The Rood loft itself has long gone but the beam, and its supporting brackets, is preserved at the western end of the Nave. The organ dates from 1806 and is an example of a chamber organ of its time, suitable for country houses. Mike also discussed the monuments, which are dominated by the Dineley family who were Lords of the Manor between 1682 and the mid 19th century. Afterwards tea and selection of home made cakes were served.

All in all a lovely way to spend a sunny Sunday afternoon.

Sue and Michael McCurdy

30th June 2011

Bewdley Museum & its Lost Industries

Bewdley Museum has recently seen a major renovation and improvements (cafe, etc. by me in the day job at a Worcester architectural practice) and is a little gem, together with the (Silver) Jubilee Gardens behind. The pewter gallery removed during the works, but I had not known such an industry existed in Bewdley; and there was a piece sitting on our shelf at home. Ruth Finney, the curator suggested that were we to arrange a society visit they would be encouraged to revive the display and reintroduce pewter demonstrations (Ruth sadly left the day before our visit, but her replacement, Suzanne Duffield, was already working to arrange this). I had also been in contact with Heather

Flack of the Bewdley Historical Society, regarding an old pewter trail that had been produced in the 1980's. Heather (Fenella Flack) publishes a number of local history leaflets and monographs for the local society and for the museum and this was the impetus to arrange an industrial trail. It's at her suggestion that the remit of the visit expanded to include most, if not all of the lost industries, a leaflet guide and also to guide a walk, for which we more than grateful as with such a large number this had to be done twice in three hours!

Bewdley Museum

We enjoyed a guided tour with Suzanne, the new curator. It is two years since my involvement in the renovations and most of the museum's re-installations works and exhibitions are complete with the brass foundry again open for visitors. For a small museum the breadth and depth of local guide books and publications in the shop is outstanding. It was also interesting to visit the upstairs chamber (former courtroom with fine views of Load St.) in the Guildhall of 1808, whose lower open arcade [former market] forms the entrance to the museum, the core of which once formed the row of shambles [photo-below], dated 1802 complete with 3 prison cell lock-ups. It now incorporates the former buildings (late C18th) of Christopher Banks' brass foundry (1697 to 1828) on one side and a sawmill the other which now houses craft units and the courtyard cafe.



The Wribbenhall Tour

Heather's short walk covered the back lanes of Wribbenhall. This was the heart

of the pewter trade, including Pewterer's Alley, where the 'compting house' of John Duncomb (a pewterer from 1718) once stood [till Lord Sandys moved it in 1841] and is now Park Cottages Ombersley. Heather pointed out a whole host of long since disappeared 'industries' including capping (High St.), horn & tanning (Severnside), bricks (Jubilee Gardens), chemical works and rope makers. Though only a few warehouses and notable houses remain the



ropeworks of the Lowe family is the only notable industrial works retained (although converted) in a recognisable form, evidenced from the restored works gable wall with its original name blazoned high and the original works clock. *Mike Hayzelden*

8th and 9th July 2011

Visits to Hadley Quarry

This has only recently been made available to visit for organised groups. It has also recently secured funding as part of the Community Earth Heritage Champions Project [from the Heritage Lottery Fund], which paid for the excellent guide leaflet we all received. The site is tucked away between Ombersley and Westwood Park, Droitwich, down narrow lanes and obscure gates and drives. Once a hive of activity it is now a forgotten backwater, completely overgrown with ash and beech, until the present owners {Mr & Mrs Bob Barningham} decided to uncover the woodland part of their garden.

Geologically, the quarry is cut into Triassic sandstone of 250 million years age, formed when England was near the equator. The stone is a very good building stone, being whitish grey rather than the red sandstone which occurs further north, although a few bands were visible on one face. The quarry is on the fault line between the Keuper marl and Keuper sandstone which tends to follow

Summer Programme Reports (Continued)

Hadley brook.

Our Quarry Tour entered from low level between the stone revetted banks of the cartway out to the lane (no indication of any tramways one enters the dank woodland before emerging into a small clearing with a 15m rock face ahead. It is only after a few minutes explanation from Bob that one realises that the ground is all made up of waste material and we were stood only at mid level. A steep, unevenly stepped track leads to the bottom [treacherous, when I first went, on a wet evening – photo below].



The quarry produced 'dimension' stone, i.e. blocks of varying size, which were pick dressed in a herringbone fashion. It was these pick marks that were evident in all the remaining faces of the quarry. Bob demonstrated the method of splitting the stones with wedges to create the dimensioned blocks (he has plenty to spare!) Bob is an engaging chap, a jack of all trades, built his house extension [using his own stone of course!] and cleared the quarry himself.

The quarry closed at the end of the nineteenth century, and the method of extraction is clearly shown where they stopped working. What was remarkable was that the quarry was not worked out but just seemed to have stopped one day or at the end of one season. Blocks were left ready for splitting, grooves cut and some undercut, each man's work left as if it were ready for next day, however every workman left with his tools as only a single wedge and blunt pickaxe head have been found.

Documented Records are scarce but it is thought that the quarry was worked in the 1600's. Stone was used in the restoration of the cathedral, and in the building of St Nicholas church Droitwich and St Stephens church Worcester; from Berrow's Journal July 1860:

"The plans and specifications for the erection of a new church at Barbourne are now lying in the office of Mr Curtler, solicitor, in Sansome Place, where tenders are to be sent in before the end of July. ... There will be a nave, chancel, side aisles, vestry, entrance porch and tower. ... The new church is to be completed by August 1, 1861. F.Preedy, of York Place, Baker Street, London, late of this city, is the architect. The stone used for the construction of the church will be obtained from the Hadley Quarries and presented by TG Curtler." Mike Hayzelden

16th July 2011

Visit to Lichfield

There should be few rules governing Society visits – but the one that might be considered crucial is "never go anywhere without checking how close it is to St. Swithun's Day" – our visit to Lichfield with Malcolm was certainly memorable and given that it rained on the Saint's day, it should hardly have come as a surprise to find that we arrived at our destination and the heavens opened!

Flexibility became the watchword for the tour of this fascinating cathedral city – the opening talk on how everything that we were going to see fitted into a context was given inside the coach rather than walking round – but given that our initial arrival point was the municipal bus station that was not perhaps too big a burden to shoulder!

Malcolm explained how the city was in the wrong location and was in fact three towns not one! On the way in we were shown the area where the Staffordshire Hoard had been discovered and the location of 'Letocetum' or modern day Wall and both figured prominently in our foray into Lichfield's past. When the Romans crossed the Watling Street (London to Shrewsbury) by the Ryknield Street (the south-west to Derby and Lincoln) they established Letocetum - a coaching town complete with baths, shops, industry and villas.

When the Romans departed they abandoned the settlement and it fell into total obscurity until the arrival of St. Chad (AD669-672) who, wishing to convert the pagan Saxons to Christianity and found a suitable base for his new Diocese, built a cathedral over Celtic springs and maintained a continuing sense of worship in a location several miles to the north of the almost forgotten Letocetum. The Saxon attempt at naming the new cathedral after the Roman town became garbled and Lichfield emerged as an understandable equivalent!

The Staffordshire Hoard is a potent reminder of just how wealthy and powerful the Mercian Kingdom with its royal palace at nearby Tamworth had become and Lichfield was an important part of this power base. After the Norman Conquest the See of Lichfield was transferred to first Chester (1075) and then Coventry (1102) where it remained on a shared basis with Lichfield until 1541 when it reverted and stayed at Lichfield. During this period the local roads were diverted to focus on the need to travel to Chester and Coventry rather than London or Shrewsbury and all of these 'new' and 'old' roads were shown during the visit.

Finally Malcolm explained how an early Bishop – Roger de Clinton (1129-48) – used funds siphoned off from Coventry to enlarge the cathedral in Lichfield, endowed charitable hospitals (including St. John's Hospital close by us) and lay out and start the building of 'his' new town to rival that already established outside the cathedral close and governed by the manor. Given that the Cathedral Close was always self governing, Lichfield was effectively three communities!

After the introductory talk we started the visit proper – and the rain became heavier and heavier – viewing St. John's Hospital or early 19th century town houses or the medieval grammar school – became more heroic than 'Hellenic Tours' and after passing the site of the former 14th century friary (now a County Record Office) the first of Lichfield's many coffee shops came into view – and was invaded! A few braver souls managed to reach the timber-framed shop in Bore Street and enjoyed coffee and cake while they dried out.

Rain never stops a society outing – and

Summer Programme Reports (Continued)

it certainly didn't stop the many troupes of Morris men who were dancing in the pedestrianised streets of Lichfield to mark the end of the local music and arts festival. Just one of the many surprises for us during the day!

Between drying out and lunch we walked round the Market Square, admired Samuel Johnson's birthplace and St. Marys Church (both museums), explored the manor 'suburb' with its timber-framed houses and explored the former Saxon route into the town from the north and the later site of the conduit delivering fresh water to Lichfield folk. The cathedral were happy to share their water supply with the town – but built the conduit when there were complaints that the "loose and disreputable ladies" were upsetting the clergy whilst collecting their water from the tap in the cathedral close!

The views of the cathedral across Minster Pool were spectacular but put into context when it was explained that Walpole in 1743 felt that "The bog in which the cathedral stands stagnates and makes its citizens as sleepy as its bishop and cannons"! It was from this vantage point that the role of the cathedral and its heavily defended close during the English Civil War could be properly understood and how both sides were responsible for spectacular destruction – the Royalists of the town and the Parliamentary forces who destroyed the central spire when the Royalist magazine was hit and on entering the close, used the ruins as a huge stables! The cathedral would eventually be rebuilt by Wyatt and subsequently Gilbert Scott – both adding their own brand of 'historical' authenticity!

Finally the party saw the close and then the houses on Beacon Street – one of which was the home of Erasmus Darwin and the meeting house for the late 18th century 'Lunar Society' which was the world's foremost forum for intellectual debate and discovery during the industrial revolution.

Lunch in Lichfield is a struggle – which of the many coffee shops and small restaurants to sample – but one heroically borne by the party who then emerged into warm sunshine for the final part of the outing – the free choice afternoon. Some sampled the National Arboretum at Alrewas, some the two museums and

for others (the really brave ones) another walk, this time round the cathedral and its close.

Lichfield is one of the smaller of our cathedrals – but one full of exquisite memorials and richly decorative late 19th century ironwork, much by Skidmore. Parts of the cathedral were closed while the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra practised for an evening concert – but missing areas were more than compensated for by the musicians and their snatches of rehearsed music.

The tour ended in bright sunshine – a delightful counter to the morning rain and a reminder that perhaps one can plan for visits so close St. Swithun's Day after all!

Dr. Malcolm Nixon

28th July 2011

Visit to Fladbury Mill

What a most pleasant way to spend a warm summer's afternoon; sat by the River Avon tea and cake at hand, with the rushing waters at ones feet and the hum of electric generator powered by the water wheel! David Wynn and his wife were extremely accommodating to us and it seems David knows and was keen to explain the renovation of the mill and its restoration of power generation.



The Fladbury mill sits on the west bank of the Avon at the south end of the weir with Crophorne Mill on the opposite bank at the north end of the weir. The parish boundary is down the centre of the river.

Historically, The Bishop of Worcester held the mill at Fladbury at Doomsday. The present mill has late C17th but most of the building is early 18th century. The corn mill had two wheels, one in the centre of the building and one at

the East end [photo-top of next column], both breast-shot type. In 1888 electricity was first charged from the original east end waterwheel to supply the Manor house.

Electricity supply was offered to the village when a Company was established in 1899. This was formed and Young's of Birmingham replaced end waterwheel with turbines. Power was taken in an underground cable to a central point in the village and then aerial to the houses and street lighting. Power was supplied only one hour before sunset until 11 pm. and from 6.30 am. on winter mornings until daylight. There were 7 street lamps (there is one in the garden) for which the yearly charge for power was £1.00 each. Other users paid ten shillings per lamp.



The original turbines were removed in by a restored turbine that had been made by Gilkes in 1937. We had a comprehensive technical account of the trials and tribulations of installing and running a private generator, as the current turbine powers only the house and does not meet the stringent requirements to be sold to the grid. There is even one of the street lamps in the garden, made by Edward Humphries Ltd. of Pershore (photo-follows; anyone have information on them?) The original village lamps were apparently converted to town gas before reverting again to electricity!

With our hosts knowledge and explanations of this and the smaller demonstration generator he has running on the restored central waterwheel it was a long and delightful afternoon sitting by that river bank. *Mike Hayzelden*

PICTORIAL

RE-OPENING OF THE DROITWICH CANALS

Official Opening , 2 July 2011

Roger Tapping



Finally, on a fine sunny day, the restoration of the two canals was complete and they were declared 'officially open'.

The Vines Park area of Droitwich proved to be the perfect venue for all the activities with at least 80 boats being squeezed into all the available water space. Various trade stands were operating along with two or three boat hire

companies and the whole area was decked with bunting. The crowds were tremendous! It looked as though most of the population had turned out to witness this historic occasion.

After lunch Mike & I made our way the big marquee and after collecting our 'goodie bag' we took our seats towards the back of a very hot and sticky area, hoping to get a bit of fresh air. The VIP guests duly arrived by boat having made their way from close to the Railway, on board a Viking Afloat hire boat.. Among the opening speeches were those made by the leaders of BWB, Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire County Council and the local MP, Peter Luff. Thankfully the speeches were not too long and we were soon able to step outside to witness the Official Opening Ceremony

by Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. (That really is some title!!). A Parade of Boats followed this and the canal was now officially open. Our own Max Sinclair also said a few words to complete what must have been a very special moment for him.



Hawford Lock Walk, 4th August 2011

John Beale, Photos : David Attwood



35 members enjoyed a pleasant, warm, sunny evening by the Droitwich Barge Canal, guided by our President, Roger Tapping. Roger was very much involved with the restoration, working alongside fellow committee member Mike Hayzelden, recording the features of the canal before and during the works. Roger is now a volunteer guide and was proudly wearing the polo shirt and badge!

This was a short walk and may be the start of a series covering the Droitwich Canals, Having parked by King's

School, Hawford, we ambled along Lock Lane, along the private gravelled drive and down the new access steps to reach Lock 1, giving access to and from the River Severn. Roger then gave a brief history of this section of canal, the key parts are that it was an early example of a Brindley canal and was designed for 64ft long 14ft beam Wych Barges. It was connected to the Severn before it was canalized so Lock 1 is extra deep to cope with the tidal range. All the locks on the Barge Canal were lengthened to 72ft to allow narrowboats to use then, when the Droitwich Junction Canal was constructed in 1850. Lock 1 had been absorbed within the garden of the adjoining house and it was a major task to build the retaining wall seen in the photograph. No trace of the barge allegedly sunk in the river to stabilize the bank was ever found.

We walked further up to Lock 2 which was the one in worst condition prior to restoration, then finally up to Bridge 3,

one of the original Brindley bridges. One the way we passed under the A449 in the new tunnel, the most expensive civil engineering project of the restoration. Roger explained how it was constructed.

We had a thoroughly pleasant evening and Roger was a mine of information as usual, and had even laid on three narrowboats and a hot-air balloon—keep it up!

