

March 2013



WORCESTERSHIRE I.A. & LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Winter Newsletter

Max Sinclair - Heritage Angel!



Great News - Max Sinclair, a founder member of WIA&LHS, won the Industrial section of the English Heritage Angel Awards for his work on restoring the Droitwich Canals.

He and his family attended the awards ceremony in London in October with the other shortlisted candidates.

Here is an excerpt from the submission (available on the English Heritage website):

Abandoned in 1939, the Droitwich Canals are made up of the Barge Canal, opened in 1771, and the Junction Canal opened in 1854. They were built to facilitate the salt trade on which the wealth of Droitwich was founded.

By the 1970s the Barge Canal was overgrown, silted up, dewatered in places and missing most of its operational parts. In the late 1960s one local man started to fight for restoration of the canals. Max Sinclair wrote letters and lobbied locally, culminating in the creation of the Droitwich Canals Trust in 1973.

Since that time the Trust's thousands of volunteers have undertaken management of the channel and towpath and raised funds for

aspects of the restoration. This included the full restoration of the first three locks on the Junction Canal completed in 2000.

In 2001 the formation of the Droitwich Canals Restoration Partnership heralded the final phase of the project. Led by British Waterways, the Partnership secured £12.7 million funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Advantage West Midlands and 100 smaller funders and private donations for the sensitive restoration of nine broad locks, the construction of a new bridge under a dual carriageway and 1km of new canal and four new locks, the dredging of 5 miles of canal, the creation of a 5.5 hectare reed bed, installation of interpretation features and the involvement of volunteers totalling 3,300 days.

The Droitwich Canals were opened in summer 2011 after 38 years of restoration. The canals form part of a navigable 27-mile ring passing through Worcester and Droitwich. Over 3,000 boats have used the canal and there has been a 30% increase in towpath users and 50% in visitors to the local tourist information centre. None of this would have been possible without Max's drive and vision.

Not only that...

The Wiper family were also shortlisted for the Heritage Angel Awards for their superb restoration of the Regal Cinema in Evesham. This was well deserved, they have created a great facility. We hope to organise a WIALHS visit next year..





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Welcome!

We wish to welcome the following new members who have joined us recently: Keith Cole, Jenny Kimberlee, Peter & Diana Griffith, Jenny Haylings, Dennis Morris, Trevor & Carol Phillips, David & Anne Ray, Robert & Margaret Vernon, Dorothy Read, Jennifer Walton and Paul Jones.

New Website

Peter Wheatley has been providing an invaluable service to the society for many years now, in creating and maintaining the Society's website. Having an internet presence is almost essential these days and we are extremely grateful for the hard work he has put into it. However, technology has moved on and the old site was in need of a makeover, something that was difficult to achieve with our existing service which was still based on a dial-up connection! So we are in the process of evaluating options, and currently a new site is being set up on Weebly, using their free online creation service. So that it can

Programme Details!

Enclosed with this newsletter are details of this year's summer programme, as a separate booklet with a pullout booking form section. Please book as soon as possible.

For those of you who wish to plan ahead, we now have the dates for the 2013/4 Winter Programme: 13 Sept, 4th Oct, 8th Nov, 6th Dec, 10th Jan, 7th Feb, 7th March (AGM) and 25 April.

run in parallel with the old site for a bit, we have registered a new domain, which is actually a better fit for us than the old one, so we will keep it. Please have a look at www.wialhs.org.uk.

Please let me know what you think of the design and feel free to suggest changes or enhancements? For the time being, at least, I will be managing the new site, so please email me with any thoughts at jebeale@btinternet.com.

John Beale

Chairman's report

Michael McCurdy

This will be my last report as Chairman. I will be stepping down at the AGM in March after completing my term of office. It has been an interesting three years during which time we have had an excellent and diverse programme of summer visit and winter talks with subjects of appeal to all members. This summer, coach operators have increased their charges but we have tried to ensure outing are still very good value for money.

May I make one last appeal as Chairman; we are currently looking for volunteers for a "Heritage at Risk" project, which

is being run in conjunction with Worcester City Council and Worcester Civic Society. The project will look at listed buildings and is expected to commence in April and be completed by August this year. Training will be given so, if you interested, please contact me.

Finally I would like to thank you all, and particularly the committee, for all your help and support during the last three years.

Michael McCurdy, Chairman.

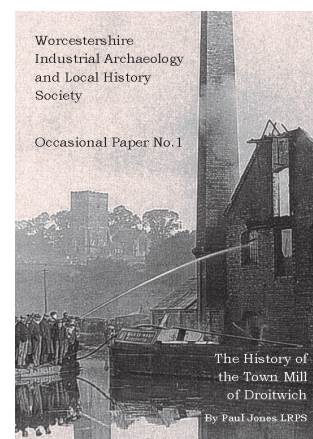
First Occasional Paper

Malcolm Nixon

After considerable discussion the Committee agreed to the principle of splitting the former Journal into two publications - the 'Newsletter' and the 'Occasional Papers' and it is with appreciable relief and not a little pleasure that I can announce the publication of the much awaited missing instalment - the first of the Occasional Papers. We are fortunate in having a 'guest' author for our first publication - Paul Jones, from Droitwich - who has undertaken a detailed study of the former Droitwich Town Mill and has generously allowed us to publish it as our first Paper. The article fills in a substantial gap in our knowledge of this now lost industrial site and benefitted from both documentary and site research, including the recent archaeological investigations carried out prior to redevelopment.

It is intended that the Society will publish further Occasional Papers as and when contributions come forward; we do have one - a major study of housing in Bromyard Road, St. Johns - but others are welcome, especially if of a similar length to Paul's. Just drop me an email and we will see what we can do!

Dr Malcolm Nixon



Summer Programme 2012 - Kennet & Avon Canal

Roger Tapping

22 September 2012

As we gathered and waited for the coach at the New Inn we thanked the fact that Mike had chosen what was to be the last warm sunny day of a dreadful summer.

The trip was to consist of a leisurely drive down to Wiltshire to the Kennet & Avon Canal at Claverton where we would make a short visit to the Claverton Pumping Station before boarding the K & A Trust's trip boat, The Barbara McLellan, for a short trip to the famous Dundas Aqueduct. En route we would be served lunch prior to arriving at the aqueduct where there would be time to look at this magnificent structure before completing our cruise to the canal wharf at Bradford-on-Avon.

As the boat is restricted to 40 seats we boarded a slightly smaller coach than usual, just as well in view of the narrow lanes that were to come.

We had a good journey and phoned ahead to confirm our arrival time, just 15 minutes away, and then almost immediately hit a travel problem on the outskirts of Bath. A delay of half an hour now put us behind schedule but we were treated to a drive through Bath where we could see all the magnificent buildings.

The canal was engineered by John Rennie and constructed between 1794 and 1810. It formed a link between the major cities of Bristol and London. From Bristol the R Avon was

used up to Bath when the canal then continued up to Newbury. From Newbury the R Kennet was used to Reading where the final route used the R Thames.

The route was wide beam, allowing boats of 13' 6" x 70' to travel along it and contained two major aqueducts over the R Avon which we would see. Just outside Devizes at Caen Hill a magnificent set of locks, 16 in total, climbed straight up the hill. As with most canals trade declined with the advent of the railways and for many years the canal was abandoned. Restoration by volunteers started in 1960 and was completed in the 1990s after which it was reopened mainly for leisure purpose. It has proved to be very popular especially as it provides a good broad beam route across the south of England.

Our first stop was to be Claverton Pumping Station, just a few miles outside Bath. But a point of interest as we passed through Sidney Gardens is the former headquarters of the canal company, Cleveland House. The house was built on top of a short tunnel and in the tunnel roof was a trap door through which papers could be passed between the clerks and the barges!!

The Pumping Station lies at the bottom of a narrow lane off the A36 so we had to park up at an adjacent bus stop and walk the short distance down a steep hill to the site. The coach then made its way to Bradford on Avon to wait our return.

This section of the canal was always suffering from water

Kennet & Avon Canal (Contd.)



CLAVERTON PUMPING STATION (*David Attwood*)

shortage, following, as it did, the valley floor of the R Avon and so Rennie proposed a very innovative scheme to supply water to this section, which was to pump water from the river level up 48' to the canal. This was achieved by use of a 24' breast shot water wheel, which was linked to two Bolton and Watt rocking beams. These operated the two lift pumps to raise the water to the canal.

The museum was opened for us but sadly was not working. A major restoration is taking place and it hoped to reopen for demonstration purposes only in 2013. All the major items are in place but the wheel is being refurbished. A welcome cup of coffee was available and the volunteer guides were all very helpful. The original principle is still used but electric pumps now raise the water.

Following our short tour we then made our way up the 48' to canal level where our boat the Barbara McLellan was waiting for us. This is one of a number boats run by the Kennet and Avon Trust. Seating was a bit tight and we were glad they were restricted to 40 passengers but the weather was good and we set off to enjoy the beautiful countryside. A problem on this section of the canal is the number of "live aboard" boats,



THE "BARBARA McLELLAN" (*David Attwood*)

which are illegally moored against the towpath. However they do provide a spectacle of most unusual, distinctive and a few downright scruffy boats.

After a short cruise we arrived at Dundas Aqueduct, the masterpiece of engineering designed by John Rennie. The canal is forced to make a right angle turn in order to cross the R Avon, skew bridges had not been invented then, and the result is truly spectacular. It is also a junction where the Somerset Coal Canal joined the Kennet and Avon. We spent some time here and refreshed ourselves with canalside ice cream and also cheese for supper from an enterprising 'cheese boat'. Whilst we were away from the boat the lunch was delivered and once back on board whilst cruising to Bradford on Avon we enjoyed a meal of Moroccan style. Maybe not to everyone taste but very interesting.



DUNDAS AQUEDUCT (*Mike Hayzelden*)

The canal is well used along this stretch as it is lock free and we encountered many canoes and day boats. Quite a hazard for our skipper but it seems he is used to them. Our next point of interest was the Avoncliff Aqueduct, not as stunning to look at as the Dundas but probably a little longer. Again the canal performs two right hand turns with very restricted visibility and only room for one boat at a time, especially as were wide beam. There was some delay before we could take our turn and cross.

We were now on the final leg of the journey to Bradford on Avon, passing very close on the towpath side to a fine 14th century tithe barn, well worth visiting if ever you make your way to this area. At last we reached a lock and rose the few feet to moor at Bradford Wharf. Here again we could have a coffee or ice cream before walking a few yards to the waiting coach.

We had a fantastic day out with superb weather.

Thanks Mike for making it all happen.

Roger Tapping

Winter 2012/3 Programme Reports

RAILWAY NAVVIES

Colin Bargery - September 2012

The talk on 14 September 2012 was by Colin Bargery from Bridgnorth. Colin has 40 years' experience of singing in Folk Clubs and also on local radio. His special interest is in songs from the time of the Industrial Revolution and he has recently begun a project with the National Railway Museum to establish an on-line archive of songs about railways.

The evening was totally different from our usual Friday evening - Colin told the story of the men who built the railways, their womenfolk, who they were, where they came from, how they lived and how they interacted with society at large.

The talk was illustrated with contemporary pictures, cartoons and photographs - it differed from our usual talks because Colin sang songs of the period and accompanied himself on a guitar. Several of the songs were created by the navvies.

Popular songs are a rich source for the social historian but to understand them fully one needs to understand the society in which they were written and sung. Colin showed us how the songs gave us a window into the lives of the people who heard and sang them.

Christine Silvester

THE DROITWICH CANALS - THE PAST COMES TO LIFE

Dr Malcolm Nixon - October 5th, 2012

The story of the decline and eventual reopening of the Droitwich canals is well known and in great part is the story of Max Sinclair and his dedication to and enthusiasm for the rescue of these waterways. Out of this rescue programme emerged a Heritage Lottery Fund supported campaign to record the history of the canals viewed from the perspective of what the canals meant to local people - their memories and their 'ownership' of the canals - abandoned but not forgotten. The speaker - Dr. Malcolm Nixon - was funded for a year, together with project manager Eliza Botham, to implement the "Community Mind Map", a project with simple aims despite the baffling title (not his!)

The talk linked in with the first winter talk - that given by Colin Bargery on the "Railway Navvies" - and offered an insight into the rich community store of memories and memorabilia and how these were able to bring to life a canal long abandoned. Colin relied on folk songs, Malcolm on the spoken memories of those whose lives have at some point in the past been closely entwined with the canals.

There were fresh glimpses into the history of the canal and a reminder that you do not need folk songs to paint a picture of the men who dug the first canal in 1770 - contemporary newspaper pleas for the return of stolen equipment being a case in point! However, the oral history recordings begin to paint a vivid picture, for the first time, of how the canal had been worked in the last days of trading. Stories of lock-keeper telephones and cargoes of bricks dragged down the Junction

Canal were interspersed with recollections of skating on the abandoned canal and falling in!

One of the key 'witnesses' interviewed by Malcolm was Max Sinclair and his stories of the canal and its rescue would form a talk in themselves, Malcolm had only scope and time to touch on some of these - including the meeting with Italian p.o.w.'s during the strengthening of Hawford Bridge and the role of barter involving jam sandwiches. However, it was soon apparent that the abandonment of the canals had left a vivid legacy of memories of dereliction which some found challenging (one Girl Guide walked the length of the Barge Canal and ended her explorer's badge trip at the railway bridge, not realising that the canal had ever existed in Vines Park!) By wonderful chance the 1967 holiday photographs of the Sindell family, when they walked the length of the Barge Canal, were generously donated to the project and brought to life the extent of the problem pioneers such as Max faced.

The rescue process lasted decades and some of the many who worked on the canals were happy to talk of their experiences - some mundane, some exciting and some comically dangerous as when those bricklaying on the bank side in Vines Park were suddenly deluged with water after it was decided to re-fill the canal, but not warn the Y.T.S. lads first!

Finally, Malcolm offered insights into the post rescue life of the canals - part of the story which involves 'legacy' and one which is still evolving - perhaps a story needing a new project, but preferably one not called a "Community Mind Map"!

Malcolm Nixon

CROSSING THE SEVERN

Heather Flack - November 7th 2012

Heather Flack gave a talk based on her research for a master's degree which had resulted from her interest in the history of the Wyre Forest area.

The River Severn in Worcestershire is around 35 miles long and there are now a total of 13 bridges spanning it - eight road, 2 rail and three footbridges. Starting in the north of the County:

- Arley footbridge
- Dowles Railway Bridge (demolished on closure of line)
- Bewdley - a Telford bridge from 1798
- Bewdley bypass (1987)
- Stourport (1870- replacing the original 1775 crossing)
- Holt a Telford bridge 1828
- Worcester's Sabrina bridge 1992
- Worcester Railway Bridge 1904
- Worcester City Bridge
- Diglis foot bridge 2010
- Carrington Bridge 1985
- Upton Bridge 1940
- M50

There is also pipe carrying water from Trimpley reservoir.

Winter Programme Reports (contd.)

These crossings are based on earlier foot and Ferry crossings, originally, where the water was shallow, crossings known as shoals linked the banks of the river at Arley, Bewdley, Stourport, Holt, Grimley and Bevere. although they were a recognised crossing point they were not as safe as fords. Loads too were a difficult crossing or ford. They developed in areas where goods needed to be transported by boat. During the summer there was a ford in Worcester between the Medieval Bridge and Diglis, but the tidal effect limited the use of fords, especially where the Severn is joined by the Teme. There are fewer fords down towards Gloucestershire because of the volume of water.

The fall in the River between Arley and Worcester is 21feet, From Worcester to Gloucester it is one metre. Weirs introduced around Stourport in 1843 led to increased depth of water below the town to allow larger boats to move canal goods, from 1870 the volume of water eroded the banks and the river grew deeper, leading to the subsequent decrease in the number of Ferries, river traffic decreased still further following the introduction of Railways.

Heather's study had followed the early maps and natural contours of the land to identify tracks which had led to and from the river indicating an earlier crossing. Illustrated with pictures of crossings, including coracles and an entire hunt on a ferry at Clevelode, it painted a graphic picture of life beside the River before our dependence on the motorcar demanded a better road network and more dependable connections over our River.

Sue Bradley

CROOME COURT

Phil Douce - January 11th 2013

The Court is currently managed by the National trust, although it was purchased by the Croome Court Heritage Trust.

In 1628 when the 1st Baron Coventry, then Solicitor General was awarded the Court and a Jacobean house was built on the site but this burnt down in 1690. A subsequent house also burnt down, allowing the 6th Earl the opportunity to redesign the house when he inherited it in 1751, employing Lancelot 'Capability' Brown as his architect to extend in the Palladian style, although some of the Jacobean construction still provides a shell for the rebuild.

Brown was later joined by Robert Adam who took over the building development, leaving him free to concentrate on the gardens, giving us the first Capability Brown landscape, draining the boggy terrain to provide a small river mirroring the flow of the Severn, moving the Church and providing many different follies to give focus to various views.

The National Trust has since restored these eye catchers, the Sabrina statue and the Grotto. 100,000 cubic yards of silt were recovered from the river and it is hoped that boats will be available this year for the public to use.

A thatched ice house is one of only four left in this country.

The gardens were second only to Kew, and the original planting plans still exist, the seven acre walled garden was second largest in Europe at the time surpassed only by Versailles and it is currently undergoing improvements by its private owners.

Adams' interior of the house was equally impressive, fireplaces and plasterwork most noteworthy, sumptuously decorated, including Library furniture designed by Adams and the first tapestry room in this country to display the Earl's Gobelin tapestries.

There were few changes to the house until it was modernised between the 1920's and 1940's but the Coventry's were forced to sell in 1949 to pay death duties, when it became a boy's school. Much of the furniture was sold, the bookcases are in the V&A, some items in the Metropolitan Museum in New York while others are in Kelmarsh Hall. It is hoped that many may be returned on restoration of the building.

From 1979 until 1984 the Hari Krishna movement owned it, their legacy being the beautifully painted plasterwork in the dining room which the Trust will keep. It was then bought by a series of property developers, until 2007 when the Trust took over. They have recently acquired the adjacent Red Building, former servants' quarters left to deteriorate by the previous owners.

Phil Douce has been a volunteer at the Court since it was taken on by the National Trust, his knowledge of its history is extensive and his enthusiasm infectious. It is hoped that the Society will visit in the Summer.

Sue Bradley

A WALK BACK IN TIME - BREDON HILL

Deborah Overton - 8 February 2013

Deborah is from Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, and her talk took the form of a walk up Bredon Hill.

The walk started to the north-west of Woollas Hall where the village of Wolvershull (Wolves hill) lay. Earthworks can be seen on both sides of the road leading to the hall. They consist of a series of house platforms with a hollow way running through the village and a back lane where the houses used to be. The village is surrounded by ridge and furrow which extends halfway up the hill to the site of St. Catherine's Chapel and well.

In the late 16th, 17th and 18th centuries sheep were introduced into Worcestershire and had a large part to play in the abandoned villages and eviction of tenants.

Kemerton Camp, an Iron Age Fort, is situated on the summit of Bredon Hill above the parish of Eckington. In 1935-37 it was excavated by Thalassa Cruso Hencken as part of an extensive research programme on hill forts, largely inspired by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and his work on Maiden Castle. (Only a small area of the 22 acre fort was actually investigated).

The excavation identified two styles of rampart building, the inner rampart now considered to have been constructed be-

Winter Prog. Reports (contd.)

tween 200- 400BC. Large quantities of scrap metal were discovered - possibly for reworking into tools and weapons. Examples of black burnished ware with a duck motif associated with Iron Age sites were among the pottery finds.

In the second phase the inner entrance was altered to form an in-turned passageway with dry stone walls crossed by a timber bridge and a diagonal gateway. The hill fort is still very impressive but only represents a small portion of the site as two thirds of it have been lost to quarrying. Parson's Folly is the square tower at the top of the hill, built in the mid-18th. Century by Mr John Parsons of Kemerton Court and the top is said to be 1,000ft above sea level.

Christine Silvester

The Last Voyage of the U234

This is a summary of the excellent talk given by John Mason in April 2012 which was regrettably omitted from the last edition of the newsletter - Ed.

The U234 was one of the last German submarines to set out on a mission before the end of the Second World War in Europe and the unconditional surrender of the Third Reich. The vessel was one of a small class of eight very large submarines built originally for mine laying but converted to cargo carrying during 1944 and 1945. Of this small select group U234 would be unique but its final mission would remain an enigma with the full story probably never known.

U234 now converted by March 1945, was loaded at Kiel with a secret cargo and a compliment of special passengers in addition to the crew of 50 and as she sailed from Kiel on March 24th under the captaincy of Johan Fehler, we were aware of the departure via enigma de-codes. What we did not know was the intended destination, the cargo and possible passenger list.

Unlike its sister ship the U864, which had sailed earlier in Feb 1945 on a similar mission and was sunk by the Royal Navy Submarine 'Venturer', U234 managed to depart without incident. (U864 is now causing an environmental emergency as its cargo of Mercury is leaking into the North Sea off Norway). U234 now safely on its way will head to Japan with a cargo consisting of the latest German weaponry including Jet Fighters, V1 and V2 components and many other high tech developments. In addition to these, highly trained staff to supervise the construction of factories and manufacturing the weapons in Japan, will accompany the consignment.

The most secret of the cargo was supervised by two high-ranking Japanese naval officers and consisted of a number of gold lined lead canisters on which they chalked the letters U235. This was not the mistaken identity of the submarine but the identification of the contents of the canisters- refined uranium isotope U235 for making an Atom Bomb.

At the outbreak of WW2 Germany was way ahead of the rest of the world in nuclear physics and by 1941 was well on the

Honour for John Bennett

You may have seen in the news that John Bennett has been made an MBE for services to the community.

We send our congratulations to John, a well deserved award.

John has been a member of WIA&LHS for many years. He and his wife Ruth take keen interest in local History. You may remember Ruth's article in one of our newsletters. She wrote about St Cuthbert's Chapel, which is on land belonging to their family at Manor Farm, Lower Wick.

Susan McCurdy

John Mason

way to producing an atomic bomb under the guidance of Werner Heisenberg. The German progress was severely set back by the loss of many key scientists who fled to the UK and USA between 1937 and 1939 and ultimately by the brave work of the Norwegian resistance who managed to deprive the Nazis of their heavy water stocks at Rjukan. By March 1945 with no hope of completing the atomic bomb the Nazis knew they had lost the war and were sending all their technology to help the Japanese continue the fight against the Allies.

Despite the constant attempts by the Allies to sink the submarine using the latest centimetric radar developed in Malvern, U234 reached Canadian waters near Halifax Nova Scotia and surfaced to update radio messages. To their amazement there was a message from Admiral Karl Doenitz ordering all submarines to surface and surrender to the Allies, Hitler was dead and the war was over. Despite protestations from the Japanese Officers who were Samurai, they decided to head south and give themselves up to the Americans where the USS Sutton would escort them into Portsmouth New Hampshire navy base.

It came as a severe shock to the US Security as no one had any idea how many vessels had managed to reach Japan with a similar deadly cargo' which ultimately the Allies would have to confront in Japan. It was the discovery of the uranium that sent shivers through the Pentagon to think the Japanese might be working on a nuclear weapon of their own.

On 6th August 1945 it was left to the American Air Force to do their bit and ensure the consignment of uranium did reach Japan when a Boeing B29 named Enola Gay delivered it on Hiroshima.

Mystery still surrounds the passenger list and we cannot be sure that some senior Nazis did not do a deal for safe passage to the USA in exchange for uranium which the Allies desperately needed for the 'Manhattan Project', or that some high tech components in the cargo were not used to detonate the Plutonium bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

John Mason

Winston Churchill's Worcester visit in 1950.

When Churchill received the freedom of the City he attended lunch at Worcester's Guildhall.. A family friend Reg Constance, a Council employee, was delegated to look after him. After a grand lunch Reg helped Churchill up the rickety stairs to the toilet. When he emerged Reg noticed his fly buttons were undone and cautiously pointed this out." Don't worry" said the great man, "Dead Birds can't fall out of the nest!"

First World War.

In 1916 my father was conscripted from the GPO in Burton to the Royal Engineers at Bletchley Park and then to Norton Barracks Worcester to train as a wireless operator.in the training school. which was probably the first military wireless school. They practised transmitting signals to a field station on Pitchcroft and in the winter to The Commandery my Grandfathers home .This is where he met my mother.

He was posted to France where he was gassed in the trenches then to Belgium where a snipers bullet passed through his uniform's epaulet while crossing a bridge. As the war ended he drove his wireless lorry with six men to Cologne where he found they were the first to arrive. On the way they saw a Dispatch Rider skid into a water filled shell hole. They dragged him out to find fathers brother Jack last seen in Burton.

In Cologne they used the Cathedral, Dom, twin spires to erect an aerial wire by firing a line with a bow and arrow across the gap. When they climbed down there was a commotion, drunken Germans were trying to set fire to the large wooden doors to loot the Cathedral. Father ordered

them to disperse and when they refused ordered his men to fire over their heads. For three days they defended the Cathedral from almost certain destruction until the Coldstream Guards arrived late. They had been polishing their uniforms for a Victory Parade through the City. The main task of the wireless station was to receive the mid-day time signal from Paris to enable the officers to set their watches. This involved a lorry,, large wireless sets, and tons of leclanche wet cell batteries and six watch keepers.

They then moved to the Bayer Chemical works at Leverkusen using the factory chimneys for their aerals. Here father started a training school to teach the New Zealand army wireless procedures, which were new to them. In the lunch hour they played 'International football' in the factory yard with New Zealand French German and British teams.

One day the ball went up an alley and father ran after it only to collide with Winston Churchill who had arrived unexpectedly to learn about radio. Fortunately he was amused and joined in the game. (The Mayor of Cologne presented Father with a pair of Krupp Engraved cut throat razors in a case in thanks. Unfortunately they were stolen on his 80th birthday with his medals from his Penbury Street home.)

By coincidence the Coldstream's Commanding officer was Brigadier Britten whose father Admiral Britten built Lower Broadheath Church where the Coldstream's German colours were laid on his return.

When there are recriminations about Dresden Cathedral remember we saved Cologne Cathedral.

Max Sinclair

Beeching in Worcestershire

Ian Hayes

The name of Dr Beeching is normally coupled with the word "infamous", but is this justified? Beeching was charged with bringing a railway network mainly designed for Victorian needs up to 20th century standards and it could be argued that he was broadly successful. Victorian railway stations were so spaced as to be convenient for passengers reaching them by horse, in a horse drawn vehicle or on foot. By the 1950s there were far too many stations, and indeed, the process of closure had started well before Beeching. The first station to go was Malvern Wells (Midland) in 1951, and subsequently some 35 trains a day in the County were withdrawn or modified in a sort of "mini Beeching" in July 1958. The background surveys for the Beeching report were done in the early sixties the report being published in 1963 with its recommendations becoming effective from about 1964 onwards. Any closures before that date cannot really be attributed to Beeching.

The findings of the survey showed that as a result of motor competition 50% of the stations countrywide were responsible

for 98% of the revenue. Of the 6Q stations in the current county of Worcester only 12, including the two stations at Worcester were attracting more than £5000 in revenue per annum.

The net result of the implementation of the Beeching plan within Worcestershire, disregarding the "lost" lands to the north was as follows:-

Total number of stations in the County in 1949	60
Total number of stations closed before Beeching	16
Total number of stations closed after Beeching	4
Total number of stations remaining in 1981	17
(Including Honeybourne, closed and reopened)	
Total number of stations closed directly as a result of Beeching	23

Beeching was ultimately responsible, therefore, for the closure of just over one third of Worcestershire's stations,

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)



TRAIN FROM EVESHAM 1961 (ABOVE)

SAME LOCATION - ALCESTER HIGHWAY 1997 (BELOW)



none of which made more than £5000 a year in revenue.

Looking at the distance between stations before and after, the line from Hagley to Worcester had an average gap before Beeching of about 2.6 miles; afterwards this became about 3.5 miles. However Hartlebury had only a couple of trains a day, which did weight the figure a little. As another example, taking the Honeybourne to Worcester line, the equivalent figures were 2.2 miles before, and 6.3 miles after.

As regards the actual railway lines only the Bromyard branch was recommended for complete closure. Stratford to Honeybourne was recommended for modification, but in fact closed in 1966, and Worcestershire lost Pebworth Halt.

The shock of the plan, and what caused so much reaction, resulted from the fact that changes which should have occurred gradually over a period of years were squeezed into a very short term in the 1960s. Some fine tuning was necessary, notably the reopening of Honeybourne, but all in all Worcestershire did not do too badly. The subsequent Serpell Report, luckily abandoned, would have left no railways at all in Worcestershire.

Experiences before and after Beeching

In the 1950s I lived 12 minutes' walk from Redditch Railway station, and travelled to Birmingham each weekday. The 0800 ex Redditch consisted of two carriages and a loco generally with a low head of steam - just enough to get us to Barnt Green. There were 8 or nine regulars and the guard would generally count us all in. All went well until a box containing a circus elephant was coupled on one day. We stalled on Grange Lane bank. Redditch station must have been hideously uneconomic with parcels lads, porters etc. everywhere.

Thirty years later I was transferred to Rugby and after a few trial runs motoring along the M6 I started to use the train. A gentle 25 minute run through the lanes to Hampton in Arden station enabled me to catch the 0811 electric train to Rugby. On the whole, over the years it was relaxing and enjoyable, and showed that you did not have to live on the doorstep to use it. In this connection one of the easiest ways to London from Redditch is from Moreton in Marsh, on the Cotswold line. In these cases, Beeching was perhaps right.

Appendix. Stations recommended for closure by Beeching.

Blackwell	Littleton & Badsey
Boughton Halt	Malvern Wells (W)
Bransford	Newland
Bredon	Norton Junction
Cutnall Green	Pebworth
Defford	Rushwick
Eckington	Stoke Works
Fernhill Heath	Stoulton
Fladbury	Suckley
Henwick	Wadborough
Knightwick	Wyre
Leigh Court	



WORCESTERSHIRE STATIONS CIRCA 1982

MONKEYING WITH THE BRASS POT

by Tom Griffiths. 223 pp. soft back,

Canonvela Publishing, Erdington, B'ham,

www.canonvela.com 2012, ISBN 978 0 9571749 0 0.

Price £14.99.

This odd title refers to "making adjustments to the carburettor to increase the performance of a motor car". This unusual book gives a very thorough review of the history of the motor car makers of Birmingham and I don't apologise for its non-Worcestershire area as I know we have a number of members who know the City well and maybe even lived there once. Birmingham was [as possibly still is] the city of a 1000 trades. Among these was the invention of the modern bicycle which necessitated a good knowledge of tube manufacture etc. Around 1890 with the advent of the petrol engine, motorcycles were within many bicycle-makers' capabilities with scores of now-rare makes produced. One other step around 1897 was the primitive car [or automobile], by then surely within the motorcycle engineers' remit - or was it? A large number of primitive makes, some looking like early De Dions or Renaults thrived for a while. Other innovations were the 3-wheelers, some with the passengers fore or aft of the hapless driver! By c.1903 most of these contraptions had been

abandoned by their makers - but - a new type of vehicle was, by 1906, the machine to be seen with; the cycle-car craze was upon us. These often unsafe and spidery cars lasted a few years until 1914 when more important things needed to be made. By 1920 almost all had disappeared, crushed by Sir Herbert Austin's famous '7'.

Few new makes were attempted after the Great War and then only to firms whose financial acumen was equal to Austin's. The 1920s new cars apart from Singer, Wolseley, Austin and BSA were few but nevertheless good yet expensive for what you got! The Calthorpe and Stellite were fine cars but could not compete. The only make established in the 1890s which lasted well was Lanchester which joined Daimler in the 1930s and was badge engineered thereafter. Therefore the vast majority of these cars are quite extinct though a lone Brocklebank in the UK now has a twin in Australia! Maps large and small, indexes, notes on car dealers like Startin, many, many photos especially corner garage units who made only a handful but still exist in another life! The author is kind enough to include a few makes which were planned but never made in Birmingham after all. One was the Castle Three made in Kidderminster!

Mike Wall.

William Humphries Stephens Sculptor of Worcester 1737-c.1810

Mike Wall

"William Stephens is the best of the Worcester school of statuary. His tablets, with their variously coloured marbles and well-carved details are a delight to the eye and are models of eighteenth-century good taste." So wrote Rupert Gunnis in his epic work *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660 - 1851*, published in 1951. When I first read these words several years ago, they struck a chord; many times I had noticed in Pevsner's *Worcestershire* reference to William or W H Stephens within the individual entries of churches and I became aware of the fact that this particular artist was a frequent contributor to their appearance. Their quality was underlined by my discoveries of Stephens's greater works, detailed and praised by Prof. Pevsner.

I have for some years been aware that the works of local monumental sculptors of the second half of the 18th century were generally passed over with little comment in books dealing with history and architecture of England's many churches. The bread-and-butter works which so adorn the walls are mostly passed over or mentioned rather dismissively at best. The more famous names like the Bacons or Chantrey rightly deserve their place but, sad to say, church guides seem blind to their lesser brethren and their craftsmanship, concentration being generally fixed on stained glass!

When time permitted with my retirement, I set out to find as many of Stephens's monumental tablets as I could. Was there an underlying pattern or type common to most of his

tablets? How many are still within our churches? How does he compare with his Worcestershire contemporaries and indeed those outside its boundaries? Does Gunnis's statement stand up to scrutiny?

In the following pages I have endeavoured to test the above queries by means of photographing all William Stephens's monumental works within Worcestershire and beyond its boundaries. With these I have attempted to draw some conclusions on his favourite patterns and detailing. William's wall tablets out-number those of his fellow statuary by some margin and we can conclude that his signed works were of lasting and high quality for about 50 years, pleasing to us 200 years later.

Perhaps a brief note here will suffice to identify William Stephens's place among his relatives.

Joseph Stephens, stone-cutter,

William Humphries Stephens, son of Joseph, b. 1737.

Joseph Stephens I or the Elder, son of William, b. 1773, d. 1834.

Joseph Stephens II or the Younger, son of Joseph I, b. 1808, d. 1872.

Part 1.

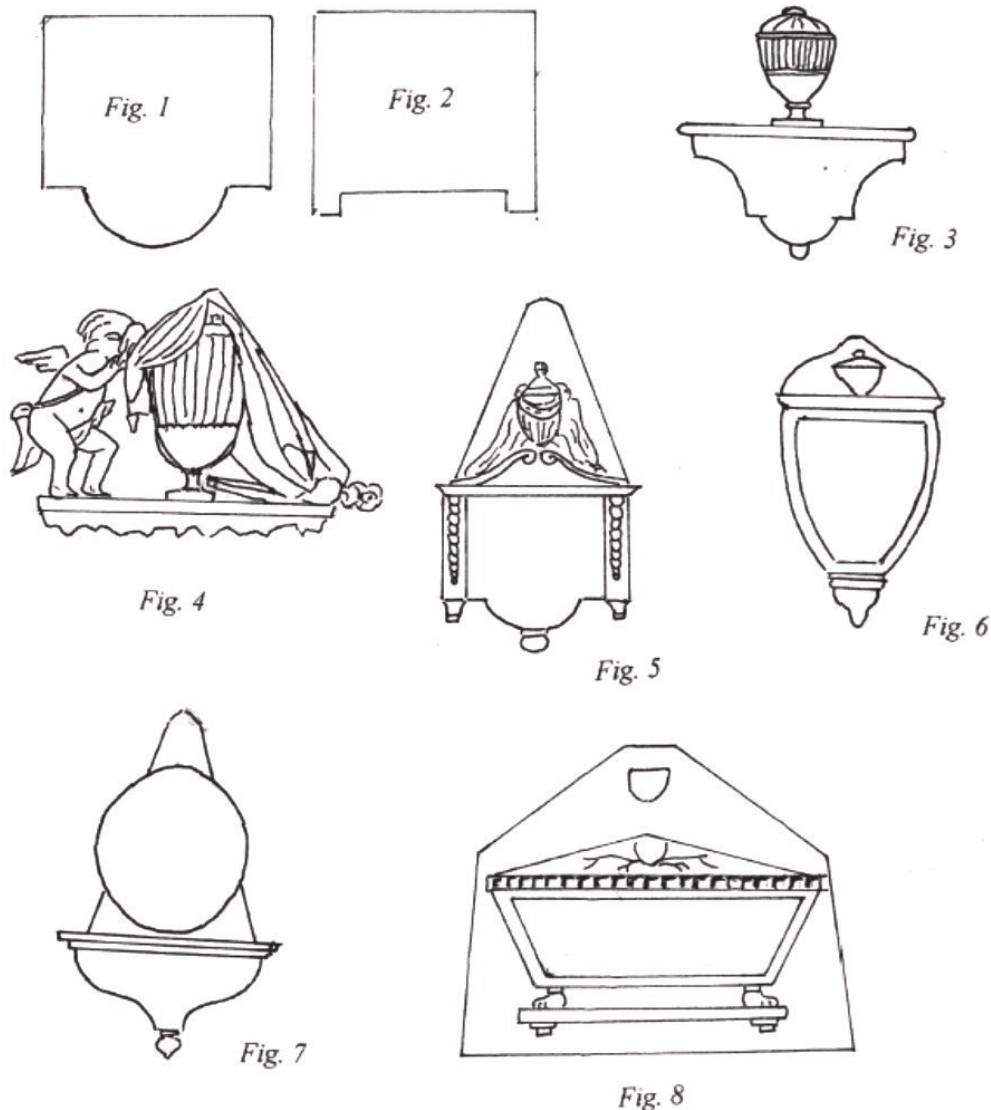
Drawing upon Gunnis's discoveries and research carried out by Mr Frank H Brown on his (Brown's) family history I

William Humphries Stephens (Continued)

have learned that Mr Brown's great-great-grandfather commenced his apprenticeship as a stonemason and sculptor with a Mr Joseph Stephens in 1807. This Joseph Stephens would seem to be the Joseph Stephens the Elder [or I] born in 1773, died in 1834, Joseph was the son of our William Stephens and he in turn had a son, Joseph Stephens the Younger [or II] who was born in 1808, died 1872. Joseph II was the last of the Stephens sculptors, the business being from then on taken up by the Brown family until more recent times. Joseph I's output was, according to Gunnis, inferior to William's in charm and quality. This I can certainly agree with but Joseph II's work is often rather more adventurous given the era in which they both flourished. During the 1790s and beyond into the early 1810s several monuments are signed by "Stephens & Co" or "W. Stephens & Co" which leads me to conclude that William in his declining years went into partnership with his son to produce tablets and other monuments in the then modern idiom of rather plain white marbles with little or no decoration or colouring compared to earlier work. One gets the impression that as Joseph I was taking on an apprentice in 1807, his father may well by that

time had given up active sculpture and probably retired. Sadly we do not know when he died.

Generally, in the late 18th century there would therefore seem to be a gradual move away from William's baroque leanings; some tablets seem to contain small decorations of the Greek style which, in the bulk of William's work are absent. There seems to be a 'grey area' at times with tablets signed by Joseph containing obvious William traits and vice-versa. These 'hybrids' we can deal with later. A few tablets seem to have been re-designed or even expanded over a period of several years. They were started by William and finished by Joseph! It all depends, even as today, on fashion and a continuation of record of deceased relatives several years after the initial tablet. Who then were William Stephens's contemporaries and possible competitors? William's earliest tablet dates from 1761 though, as always, dates on tablets themselves can be unreliable. The bulk of his work seems to span the 50 years from the 1760s and during this period his fellow sculptors, signing their work, were only seven in number and produced between them 32 tablets. William produced over 80 in the 50 years from 1763 to 1810.



William Humphries Stephens (Continued)

These 'rivals' were Parry of Bewdley [2 tablets], Laughton of Cleeve Prior [3], Richard Squire [21], Leonard Mole [3], James Withenbury [1], John Broad [1] and W. Hill [1]. Of these, Richard Squire was clearly the most productive and his tablets were often remarkable for their beauty and detail. He lived from 1700 to 1786 and his most productive time was prior to William Stephens's. They would seem to have been competitors for less than ten years. Squire's complex work is Baroque style as by the time William Stephens was at his height, the fashion was for a rather simpler form of decoration. Apart from Withenbury's splendid standing wall monument to Bishop Lloyd at Fladbury the remainder of the Worcestershire sculptors produced few and rather undistinguished works. Gunnis's remarks seem to be vindicated.

William Stephens himself was the son of Joseph Stephens, a stonecutter and was apprenticed to his father becoming free in 1760. His early career was as a partner to Mr Bott and there are three tablets signed "Bott & Stephens" or "Stephens & Bott". The earliest example of this partnership is at St John in Bedwardine, Worcester to the two husbands of Mary Rogers. It must be said that this particular tablet bears no resemblance to anything else from William's chisel! Its rectangular inscription is within a 4-eared frame with egg-and-dart. Thick, curly and seaweedy fronds, above and below, hold the now-mutilated arms. Perhaps the inclusion of golden brown marble in the frame inspired William to give other touches of the exotic to some of his many draped urns in future years!

Part 2.

We must now try to catalogue the works of William Stephens with acknowledgement given to the occasional and later works influenced perhaps by his son, Joseph I. As usual with memorial sculptors, much of his output was restricted to a few variations of a theme; the customers would have average wealth to pay for an average tablet, extra embellishments and more adventurous designs being the preserve of the more affluent. Very few of William's tablets are totally without any elaboration, the clients perhaps were mostly eager to commemorate their loved ones with some degree of style, hence Gunnis's favourable remarks.

The actual inscription tablet was always in white marble with two important variants. The bases may be a straight edge flanked by two small pegs like vestigial brackets [Fig 2] or a nowy base, [Fig 1]. The former's 'pegs' are often embellished by a few triangular grey or black stones inserted on their lower edge, reminiscent of crude guttae. The nowy is really a semi-circular or segmental addition and promises a somewhat more elaborate design elsewhere on the tablet. 55% of his output share these two inscription plates, [Fig. 1&2]. Minor decorations include rosettes, vertical lines of husks or chains of husks supported by cartwheels! Most of the inscriptions in Latin or English use the old-fashioned long V [like an f] and are neatly cut with care to symmetry. William's signature [mostly W. Stephens, Wares., Wm. Stephens, Fecit. etc] is usually immediately below the apron or lowest portion of the tablet; some are tricky to read as they tend to be incised lightly on black stone. Those on white marble are also

sometimes difficult when the paint has fallen away due to damp or overenthusiastic cleaning.

The inscription tablet was almost always used to support an urn, in a few cases twin urns. William and his staff were excellent at carving elegant urns, mostly with either fluted sides or with an anthemion inclusion. In many cases, usually with nowy base, the urn is draped. William's mastery of this awkward embellishment was superb. He was able to reproduce delicate folds with almost mathematical precision from tablet to tablet. The urns either had lids [usually gadrooned] with perhaps some smoke curling out from the top, [Fig. 3 part.] He even sometimes used rams' heads as side handles with small delicate drapes and occasionally palm fronds rising above the urn. Many of these frail additions have been victims of the wear and tear over the years but they can be traced if examined carefully.

We must now turn our attention to the backplate or ground, always different from the main tablet's universal white. They were black or on occasions had a marbled effect with dark grey and white. They were essential to support complex white marble structures upon usually uneven stone church walls. The shape of the backplate was usually an obelisk or pyramid, [Fig. 5 & 7] a favourite device of the period shared by Richard Squire with a remarkably tall one at Kings Norton, Birmingham. These may be quite high in comparison with the bulk of the tablet tending towards a proper obelisk. Where necessary a small coat of arms or wreath may be included high up on the obelisk. Oval backplates are sometimes used especially where perhaps height was at a premium or the client preferred simplicity. Six two-centred Gothic backplates were employed successfully near the end of William's career, probably under the influence of Joseph I as an apprentice.

Part 3.

We must now turn our attention to the remainder of William Stephens's products, bearing in mind that 55% of his work is described in Part 2. There are, however several variants of these, being rather specialised and based on Part 2's contents. The first one involves the cupid or putto mourning near the urn. They are all the same, leaning on the urn which has been shifted considerably to the right to accommodate the figure. One gets the impression that they are using the handle of the urn, hidden by draperies both sides to lean upon! They are naked apart from a flimsy cloth supported by a band at the midriff. The back of the cupid's hand supports the forehead as the cupid sobs silently. [Fig. 4] It is a poignant scene. Undetected by me [but cleverly discovered by my NADFAS colleagues] is a torch or flambeau lying opposite the cupid. It is nearly horizontal, its handle to the left, its flaming [or smoky] end just visible over the edge of the cornice of the inscription on the right. Downward pointing torches were a common feature on monuments from the early 17th cent, well into Victorian times, and denoted death - i.e. life is snuffed out. There are four of these mourning cupid tablets. However a tablet to Mrs Susannah Warren, died 1792, has an identical tablet to these in Worcester Cathedral, signed by Ricketts of Bath! Who

William Humphries Stephens (Continued)

copied whom I wonder?

Part 4.

These three tablets are derived from the nowy-base version in Part 2. They are large with volute brackets flanking the inscription in William's favourite luxurious buff veined marble. The volutes are further decorated by about ten discs [closely resembling a set of draughtsmen I once possessed!] They end in a pair of foliated brackets. Above is a superbly cut curled pediment in buff marble supporting a fluted urn with usual delicate-cut draperies. The veined grey obelisk is a finale of grandeur and this exciting tablet would stand out anywhere. [Fig. 5]

Part 5.

An unusual innovation. This is essentially a triangle with horizontal top and curved sides, like a shield, to a small apron with grapes. There is a coloured marble border to the similar shaped inscription. Above is an urn. It is all on a similar curved backplate. It seems to be an attempt to obtain the best use from a small tablet and it succeeds. There are four of these. [Fig. 6].

Part 6

This variety seems to be William's standard 'curved and angled' apron [or lower finial] enlarged to form a tablet in its own right [Fig. 3]. These two tablets have connections with Part 5 in that they are almost unaltered aprons from larger works but with its cornice supporting an urn of the usual quality; one of these has palm fronds as well. They are very pleasing and graceful in their simplicity. They have oval backplates.

Part 7

These five tablets [Fig. 7] seem somewhat retrogressive compared to the examples in Parts 1 to 6 but one gets the impression that occasionally, the oval inscription tablet was perhaps the most important item for the client. The usual moulded cornice with obelisk backplate contains an ultra-large oval inscription, almost dwarfing the obelisk. One of them has an additional large rectangular inscription supported by two proper brackets. There is room for palm fronds, arms etc.

Part 8.

These are a William Stephens speciality or perhaps his version of a familiar theme. No cherubs or urns now but a proper nearly flat sarcophagus [Fig. 8]. Seven of these exist and all are very similar. They seem to be confined to the landed gentry in most cases. The tablet consists almost always of a sarcophagus with lions' feet on a plinth with brackets. The lid is triangular with its lower border of Greek-key in light buff marble. The inscription is on the front and all within a triangular back plate. There is space for arms, palm fronds etc. They seem to be all the same size and are quite attractive compared with the usual cold-white sarcophagi. An exotic variant in St Nicholas, Worcester which is considerably thicker with its small tabula insarta [a

strange variant of the rectangular inscription with the four corners deeply cut into, rare in Worcestershire] on a strigillated ground. Strigillation is fluting with a gentle wave, also rare in this area.

Part 9.

We must now consider the remainder of William Stephens's output which do not fall into any proper classification. They are, in fact, his best works and well worth seeking out. It is at this point that comparisons with his nationally renowned contemporaries may be made, bearing in mind that William was a local artist but probably influenced by greater works. Not all were very large but all are unique within his known range. Some of these are complex combinations of the above examples which seem to fit well and make for an attractive tablet.

a. Edward Toldervy, 1761, [Clebury Mortimer, Shropshire] with eight other members of his family. A white sarcophagus [not like those in Part 8] with the usual draped urn on the lid plus a plinth forming a curved and angled apron. Apron and sarcophagus all white and simple with the other members of Toldervy's family recorded. It is probably by W. Stephens & Co and may well have been reconstructed in the 19th century to accommodate names of the descendants of those recorded on the sarcophagus. Nevertheless a pleasing tablet.

b. William Hawkins, 1771, [Dymock, Gloucestershire]. A large tablet where the inscription has been written on the apron leaving the remainder to be admired. This is a curled pediment with palm fronds supporting a flattish urn with two snakes guarding the lid! Much smoke emerging from the latter but damage to the tablet makes for some disappointment as smoke and fronds are mostly missing. Lamps and coloured marble enhance this once very fine tablet.

c. John Hodgetts, 1789, [Kinver, Staffordshire]. Unique and most un-Stephens - like! Two plain black urns beneath a heavy pediment supported by two plain and tapering short columns. A heavy and rather austere standing wall monument thought by Pevsner to have been derived from contemporary French architects. It has none of the playful decoration employed by Stephens even at that date.

d. Mrs Elizabeth Eaton, 1790, [Kempsey, Worcs.] Surely the most exotic of all Stephens's monuments, dominating the walls of the tower. It has a tall obelisk backplate with a fine anthemion fluted urn with garlands. This stands on the draped lid of a draped, deep sarcophagus. Instead of an inscription on its front, there is a charming family scene in relief on an oval palm-frond encircled frame. The lions' feet straddle a nowy inscription [one is tempted to say a Type 2 upside down!] flanked by heavy coloured pilasters with anthemion capitals. Alan Brooks [Pevsner 2007] is most impressed and it could be thought that this was William's best work.

e. Sarah & Ann Deakin, 1804, [Leigh, Worcs.] The inscription tablet is in the form of a thick plain sarcophagus supporting an anthemion fluted flat urn with plenty of smoke

William Humphries Stephens (Continued)

issuing from its lid. The influence of Joseph I is now evident but this has more character than much of Joseph's later work.

f. Jane Roberts, 1806, [Saintbury, Gloucestershire.] A late and large version of type 1 with William's favourite buff coloured marbles in strips down the volute sides of the inscription. The angled and curved apron squeezes nicely between the 'legs'. Above, however, instead of the familiar urn and cherub, we are treated to a well carved Greek lady, her forearm leaning on an altar or pedestal; her open hand gesticulates to a winged skull [surely uncommon in 1806!] on the pedestal which stands with waves around its base. Nearby a rather accurate anchor with ropes.

g. Mary Hall, 1794, [Worcester Cathedral.] The final and huge expression of Style 1. The footed inscription plate [with spelling mistake and attempted correction!] is now the platform for a splendid scene. A large and quite individually beautiful Greek lady sits on a pedestal, her head supported by her hand with one finger across her forehead. Head lowered, she concentrates on reading her book. Nearby is a large garlanded urn with gadrooned lid on a large pedestal upon which she rests her elbow. The pedestal depicts another urn in relief. This superb wall monument was almost never seen some years ago as it was hidden behind the now-vanished Vergers' information desk. Could this indeed be William's best work instead? h. William Romney, 1766, [Suckley, Worcs.] This tablet is early and could perhaps denote an experiment by William. The nowy-headed heavy backplate has, on its base a most unusual urn; perhaps more of a flower vase or even a twin-handled wine jug! The two handles, not hidden by draperies are delightfully curled with encrusted leaves and there is no lid on the narrow neck. The wide urn is half fluted with anthemion. The urn's base has William's signature proudly displayed, similar to a recently discovered [or rediscovered] example by Thomas White at Worcester All Saints'. The inscription below has a confident cornice and a pair of Type 1 'legs'. A lovely simple tablet promises good things to come.

i. Henry Roberts etc., 1761, [Broadwas, Worcs.] This could be another of William's experiments before he perfected his craft. There is a normal draped urn on a Type 1 inscription tablet. The backplate and remainder is pale grey and uniquely has a pair of fluted Corinthian pilasters supporting an open pediment. Below a curved apron contains palm fronds and arms. Yet another backplate, this time in conventional black finishes this rather stately tablet.

j. Bishop Hurd, 1808, [Worcester Cathedral]. This is by Stephens & Co and perhaps denotes the end of William's involvement or input. Hurd's standing wall tablet is principally a large sarcophagus of greater simplicity than those described in Part 8. It has a rectangular inscription flanked by tapered fluting on its front. On the plain triangular lid lie the bishop's mitre and crosier. No lions' feet but simple moulded legs on a massive plinth with a panelled centre which itself contains a cross beneath a sunburst. The sarcophagus backplate is grey but another for the entire monument is black and gothic.

k. Husbands of Mary Rogers, 1763, see Part 1 above.

Part 10

As ever there are always items which do not seem to fit any category but deserve their place. The tablets described in Part 7 have two vague variants. One is to Thomas Parker of Longdon, died 173 [5?] 1. The high obelisk backplate has indeed an oval inscription which states that 'In the old church were interred the remains of Thomas Parker... died 173 [5] 1. The first impression of this monument is that the oval inscription is from a former monument but this is clearly not the case. The longer inscription on the lower [standard Style 1] tablet, below the elegant sarcophagus in the middle, tells us that several of Thomas's descendants who died between the 1790s and 1806 were added perhaps to an existing monument with a good sarcophagus. The oval wreathed inscription may well be a replacement for a genuine 1750s tablet, now long lost. William has skilfully joined these disparate portions to produce quite an attractive result. A similar problem may have occurred on Rebecca Yarnold's tablet in Claines. Here the oval inscription is quite bare leaving the Style 1 below to deal with it. A change of mind, perhaps?

At Kempsey, the tablet signed by Stephens & Co for Ann Rudd, died 1809, is totally devoid of any decoration, looking like a host of dull tablets by all sculptors from the 1800s onwards to the 20th century. Also at Kempsey is the not unattractive tablet [simplified Type I] to John Snow, died 1808. One is tempted to guess that William's involvement ceased around those dates. In Tibberton Church a signed Joseph Stephens plain tablet has one of William Stephens's signed curved grey marbled aprons. Clearly Joseph I re-used his father's apron beneath an entirely new tablet of his own. I believe this is a unique occurrence.

There are two unsigned tablets to consider. One at All Saints', Worcester, partially hidden by the organ, is to Luke Spilsbury, died 1798; the impression is that this is by William Stephens - it just 'shouts' it! The Type 1 nowy inscription is surmounted by a much smaller and probably uninscribed coloured marble flanked by volutes. Above this is what appears to be a William Stephens draped urn. Alan Brooks, who wrote the 2007 Pevsner, is almost certain it is. The other, not far away in St Martin's is to George Wingfield, died 1785 and is almost identical. Do these fine tablets denote another Type that perhaps did not have many takers?

Even by studying a nationally minor local sculptor oddities appear to keep us on our toes. A rather rewarding choice I imagine, and, who knows what fascinating tablets, often neglected by researchers in other parts of England, would yield such interest?

Naturally, if any reader finds a signed William Stephens wall tablet, unlisted here, wherever it may be, I would be most grateful for the information.

Mike Wall, 2011

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William Humphries Stephens (Continued)

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During the summer of 2012, No.9 Droitwich Road, Worcester underwent internal refurbishment and among the debris which was removed from the premises, were several pieces of encaustic floor tile. The fragments offer an opportunity to discover a little more about where late 19th century speculative builders in Worcester were sourcing their materials and the range of products made by one of the local, short-lived tile manufacturers.



Not to scale extract from Worcester O. /S. Second Edition 1/2500 sheet xxxiii.3 surveyed 1901-2, published 1904. No.9 is the left-hand of the second pair of houses on the south-west side of Droitwich Road.

The St. George's Encaustic Tile Co. commenced the manufacture of encaustic tiles for churches in c.1878 and two years later this company was purchased by Jesse Carter (who had himself started production outside the county in 1873) and who rebuilt the works; tile manufacture continued under the name Carter & Co. until 1883 when the company was restyled Carter Johnson & Co. However, this venture ceased manufacturing tiles in 1887. The 1885 edition of the Littlebury & Co. Directory of Worcester and District, p.86, lists the St. George's Tile Works as belonging to Carter, Johnson & Co. and located adjacent to the Worcester Patent Brick works, St. George's Lane North. The Worcester O. /S. 1/500 sheets xxxiii.4.1 and 4.6, surveyed in 1884 and published 1886, indicate two separate works on the same, east bank of the canal.

Given the impressed reverse naming of the company, these tiles would have been made between 1880-3, but the presence of firing cracks might well indicate 'seconds' which might have been sold off after the company was renamed. However, this cannot be accurately ascertained and at present it is only possible to provisionally date the erection of No.9 to post 1884 and pre 1901-2 – a period of time after the tile works changed hands and perhaps supporting the suggestion that these tiles had been made some time before being used. Cor-



Reverse of tile – impressed "CARTER & CO / ST GEORGES / TILE / WORKS / WORCESTER / NO1"

roboration comes from the floor of the main entrance hall where random patterned encaustic tiles (including several identical to the two illustrated examples) were laid. No attempt was made to match patterns and it would appear that a random selection was used – suggestive of a factory clearance before the new business owners took over. While this is a frustratingly tenuous chronology, it is certain that developers working in Droitwich Road were accessing at least floor tiles from nearby manufacturers and further research will be necessary to ascertain whether the bricks for the main construction came from the adjacent premises.



Face of tile and tile fragment – both tiles are 5.3/4 inch x 5/8 inch square tiles and have an identical impressed reverse. Note 5/8 inch firing crack mid left hand edge of fragment and similar 1.1/4 inch on top edge of main tile – both would have been deemed to be 'seconds' rather than perfect. The fragment would be used independently; the whole tile was one quarter of a bigger tile design

If members have additional information on this company, do please let the Newsletter editor know!