

Harvington by Candlelight



Winter Newsletter



A highlight of the Winter Programme, for me, has been our first visit to Harvington Hall by candlelight as part of their pre-Christmas opening.

Harvington is a moated medieval and Elizabethan manor-house south-east of Kidderminster. Many of the rooms still have their original Elizabethan wall-paintings and the Hall contains the finest series of priest hides anywhere in the country. During the 19th Century it was stripped of furniture and panelling and the shell was left almost derelict. The Elizabethan House was built in the 1580s by Humphrey Pakington. On his death it was inherited by his daughter Mary, Lady Yate. In 1644 it was pillaged by Roundhead troops. In 1696 the Hall passed to the Throckmortons of Coughton Court in Warwickshire, who owned it until 1923.

The visit was organised by the Summer Programme Secretary as an “add-on” to the Summer Programme, but the weather was damp and dark, but thankfully not too cold for our visit on December 18th.

This was a special Christmas event, open to the public, but Harvington Hall kindly reserved the first two tours on this day for us, so approximately 40 members and guests were split into two groups.

During our tour, the Hall

was lit almost exclusively by candlelight and the knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides wore period costumes. On our tour we were first treated to mulled wine and later we were entertained by costumed musicians and dancers. The atmosphere seemed particularly magical and mysterious and we all enjoyed seeing the ingenuity of the priests hiding places and hearing about how they would be organised to go into hiding as soon as soldiers approached the house. For those like me, who may have thought that the priests would hide for a few hours or so at a time, it was a shock to learn that they may have to stay in their hiding places for many weeks at a time.

At the end of the tour we met in the refectory for mince pies and coffee.

John Beale

Photographs by David Attwood



Annual General Meeting

John Beale

When the current Winter Programme was published in the last Newsletter (Issue 45), there was an omission. The meeting to be held on 13th March 2015 will be (as usual) our Annual General Meeting. Wendy Cook is also unable to give her short talk so there will be two films as shown below. I apologise for these changes. Papers for the AGM will be circulated with this Newsletter or shortly afterwards. For the first time the Winter Programme was not printed on a separate sheet, which caused some confusion. It is clear that the separate sheet of paper was convenient and valued, so this will be included in future.

Winter Programme Reminder 2015

Christine Silvester

All meetings (except where stated) are held on Friday evenings in the lecture theatre RGS Worcester and will start at 7.30p.m. All queries please phone Christine Silvester 01905 354679

13 FEB 2015 PAMELA HURLE - MALVERN WOMEN OF NOTE.

The cultural, social and economic achievements of some very interesting Malvern Women.

13 MAR 2015 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Followed by (as a change to that previously advertised):

Mike Jackson will talk and show a short film on "M5 Sights".

John Mason will show a short film of him learning to drive a London bus!

17 APR 2015 COL. STAMFORD CARTWRIGHT - WORCESTERSHIRE YEOMANRY WW1.

This will be the first of our WWI TALKS. Stamford is the curator of the yeomanry archive and has a wealth of fascinating stories.

AIA Regional Conference 2015

This year's South Wales and West Regional Conference of the AIA is being hosted by the Devonshire Association (Industrial Archaeology Section). It will be held on 18th April 2015 at Petroc College, Tiverton, Devon. Cost: £18 including lunch and tea/coffee. The WIALHS Secretary has the programme and booking form, or contact: brendanhurley@fastmail.co.uk

Membership Matters

Subscriptions are now due for everyone except those who joined since September 2014, their subscriptions are carried over to 31st December 2015.

Unless you pay by standing order please let David Sharman have your subscription as soon as possible. I can let you have a form if you wish to set up a standing order, to pay with immediate effect and then on 1st January each year.

Standing orders make it a lot easier for David and I. You have complete control over them, unlike direct debits, where you sign a mandate allowing an organisation to take funds from your account. Your bank only pays the sum you have stated on the standing order form and there are no problems cancelling it when you wish to do so. If you choose to set up a standing order on line, please let David and I know, so that we can amend our records.

From time to time I email information from other organisations which may interest some of our members. If you do not receive these it is because I do not have current email address - to be added to my email list please contact me on membership@wialhs.org.uk

We wish to welcome the following new members who have joined us since the Spring 2014 newsletter:

Ian Bedford
Peter & Libby Cutler
Chris & Sandra Gatley
Alfred Holloway
Michael Holloway
Nigel & Pat Law
Andy & Hilary Martin
Beverley Milne
Richard & Angela Poppleton
Pauline Ranson
Ann Skerm
Jacqueline Smith
Neville Swanson
Sylvia Traiforos
David & Marian Walters
Peter & Debbie Morris
Kay Vincent

Sue McCurdy

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ANNUAL VILLAGES CHURCH TOUR, MAY 11TH 2014

This year Mike Hayzelden arranged three churches for our inspection, all roughly between Bromsgrove and Droitwich-cum-Kidderminster. Your ancient church-crawler was bullied into producing this account.

Upton Warren, St Michael seems to have a rather solitary existence but on finding it on the road near the Swan pub near *Webbs* a number of houses appear. The grounds at *Webbs* back onto a stream over which stands St Michael's. It seems to be a substantial building from a distance with its tower awkwardly positioned on its south wall. The entrance is further along the south wall near the west corner. The exterior stonework is plain and pierced with several Gothic windows on both long sides.



Upton Warren, St Michael's Church

Mike Hayzelden

The church dates from the 18th century, but old records claim that a Norman doorway once existed on the west wall, now gone. The Chancel seems to date from 1724 but the tower with spire seems to be a genuine relic of the 14th century.

Within we see a cheerful church with little stained glass to dim the interior; the east window with remarkable stained glass showing parts from Revelations of unusual scenes and well worth a good look; perhaps best to take a New Testament with you on further inspections! The original box pews have long gone apart from some fragments, and have been replaced by ordinary benches.

There are several wall tablets, one by William Stephens of Worcester. Others include one from 1594 to John Sanders,

a 'local boy made good' of 1594. Another featuring the Biggs family, rich relations living in Norton-by-Lenchwick! At the west end is a gallery like all good Georgian churches have. A most entertaining and surprising building compared to its dour exterior.

Elmbridge, St Mary stands on its modest hill-top churchyard overlooking the fields to the south. It has spent the majority of its existence as a chapelry to St Augustine north of Droitwich at Dodderhill. There were several chapels to assist worship in this large area. With St Mary's the local people had to plead with the Bishop to free it from the inconvenience of taking funerals and burials all the way to Droitwich across muddy tracks in the winter. The kindly Bishop allowed them to obtain independence and a jolly good thing too!

This church from the outside is obviously fairly small, its entrance is a solitary Norman doorway on the west end of the south wall. Above is a modest bell-cote housing two bells - hardly an oddity in Worcestershire! Within it has a north arcade of Norman origin if not full completion; it has been considerably lowered as can be seen.



Inside Elmbridge, St Mary's Church

Mike Hayzelden

The north aisle now formed has normal seating ending at the east end with the Purshall Chapel (there is a Purshall Hall nearby). There is a short set of Communion rails of uncommon construction, that is pierced balusters similar to those in Castlemorton Church and even those were made up from other rails elsewhere! The Purshall Chapel rails were removed from the Hall in 1946 to where they are

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now.

There are two stained glass windows within the aisle, one by Herbert Bryans 1906, east end and Hardman on the north wall. There was considerable interest in these finding the signatures! There are a few monuments, a fine cartouche with even finer skull at the base to Edward Bookey 1774 in the Chapel. On the opposite wall is a tablet to the Penrice family, 1872, by Forsyth - a mistake in the guide book says 1782! A smack on the author who wrote the Guide and this article!

The Forsyth family also made the font of complex but fine design and the Bromsgrove Guild modernised the Sanctuary, etc. Near the doorway is suspended tithe map of 1841, an unusual addition to a most interesting church.

Rushock, St Michael was the last church of the afternoon. It lies some distance from Elmbridge and completely different. After this, everyone regaled themselves at a café at Stone. Everyone but me, but I trust all were satisfied!



Inside Rushock, St Michael's Church

Mike Hayzelden

Rushock is a quite different type of church from the foregoing. It stands on high ground and was built by Roger Eykyn of Wolverhampton in 1756. About 120 years later it was restored by Baker of Kidderminster and a pretty extensive job he made of it. The result is a tidy and welcoming church with some Georgian features still traceable. No box pews now but the north and south transepts are still just about there, the north one still has its chimney for the usual fireplace for the vicar or the lord of the manor.

The gallery contains the organ, its entrance being immediately after the south door. The areas of the various parts are

still more or less untouched, the north-east wall has surely the smallest stone plaque in the County! The nearby east window was glazed by G J Baguley and the font is a fine one but not, it appears, a Georgian one!

Also in the nave on the north wall is Royal Coat of Arms from the reign of George III, 1767. He was still a young man at the time, miles away from his sad health of later years. The floor contains many encaustic tiles, so no fancy ledger slabs for me to enjoy and record!

Altogether a fine little church, light interior and happy atmosphere. The churchyard contains a modern stone grave to a rather famous pop-musician of whom I cannot remember the name, so minute is my experience of them all!

So endeth the annual pilgrimage to Worcestershire churches; if we keep this up we may have to spill over into Gloucester!

Mike Wall



Members taking tea!

David Attwood

ABBEY PUMPING STATION LEICESTER AND THE GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY, WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE

This coach trip, on a very wet day, was based on a combined visit to Leicestershire with the morning spent at the Abbey Pumping Station and the afternoon at the Great Central railway, Loughborough.

The Pumping Station is a typically magnificent of Victorian 'over the top' engineering. The pumping station, opened in

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1891, was built to deal with the ever increasing problem of sewage in the city and the basic design was such that the sewage, approx. 200,000 gallons/hour, would be pumped from the city to a 'farm' where the effluent was allowed to settle before being 'harvested' for land fertilisation. The surplus liquid, after filtration, was allowed to run off into the local water courses.

The site is of particular interest to me as I grew up in Leicester and the farm, known as Beaumont Leys, was always a good topic of conversation. The whole area was decommissioned in 1964 and after a short while became the site for a vast new housing estate, reputedly growing the best vegetables in town! It also is the area where Walkers have their crisp and sandwich factories!

The pumping station was converted to an industrial museum in 1972 and at that time housed many artefacts of industrial interest from the city. This collection was later divided up, many of the exhibits going to the new industrial museum at Snibston, Coalville. (See our visit notes of 2006).

The pumping station itself houses four steam engines and was constructed by local company Gimson & Co. They later went on to supply passenger and goods lifts all over the world.

The four steam engines have been progressively restored by a very active group of volunteers and it is now the only site in the world to display four working engines of the same type. The adjacent boiler room area has many interactive displays about Leicester industry and some very good displays about water supply and sewage disposal.

Altogether a very good visit, many memories from the past and a good solid old fashioned museum display. For those of us who have not visited, next door is the National Space Museum, also well worth a visit with the grandchildren.

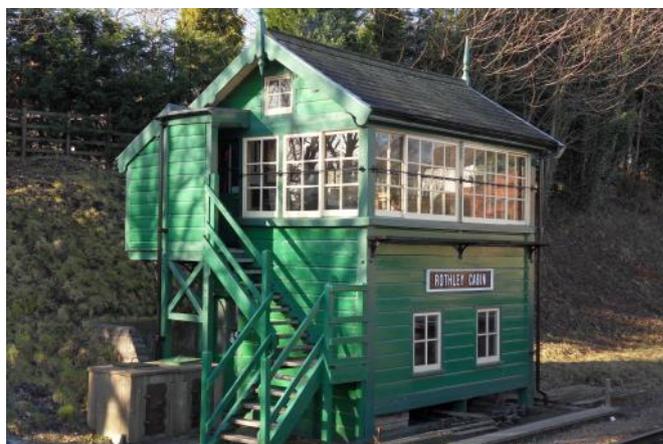
Roger Tapping

We began our trip on the Great Central Railway (GCR) from the nearby **Leicester North Station**, the southernmost station on the GCR which was opened in 1990, just south of the original Belgrave & Birstall station (closed in 1963). A few of us found the pleasant café a little way from the station, the rest huddled under the canopy till our train arrived, the waiting room and refreshment bar no longer open weekdays!

Rothley Station was constructed by the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway (becoming "**Great Central Railway**" in 1897) and opened in 1899 with a typical island platform, with pedestrian access provided via a staircase from the road bridge over the line. The platform, the waiting rooms, booking office, and toilet buildings are restored as it would have appeared in 1912, with lighting provided entirely by restored gas lamps in all buildings and platform (it never had electricity!). This creates a unique ambience which can

be enjoyed by passengers on evening dining trains. A few braved the rain to look around, but it does have the reputable Ellis's Tearoom in the car park!

The typical signalbox is a GCR box, but from Blind Lane, Wembley. It has a 20 lever Railway Signal Company frame with direct tappet locking (this company supplied most GCR London Extension signal box frames).



Rothley Cabin (signalbox)

John Beale (from an earlier visit)

Many of us descended at **Quorn & Woodhouse Station** (opened in 1899), again a typical double-sided island platform, reached from the road bridge, but locked to us! This forced us to visit the goods yard to get to the café in the car park, past a set of GPO travelling post office carriages, courtesy of a recent steam weekend. (They use these on such occasions to demonstrate the mailbag apparatus installed near the signalbox—worth seeing! Ed.)

During the 1920s the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) was an occasional visitor as he enjoyed an outing with the Quorn Hunt. Express trains were stopped specially for him and he changed into his riding habit in the booking office with a porter posted outside. Again the station rooms were locked to us (seen through the windows), but have been restored to a 1940s theme (repainted LNER, brown and stone colours as at the Grouping of the railways in 1923), with a selection of barrows and trolleys and a collection of luggage and goods in transit. The **Booking Office** is typical with a genuine ticket rack dispensing proper Edmondson (cardboard) tickets. The **signalbox** is MS&L box of circa 1886 vintage (making it the oldest structure on the railway), but from Market Rasen in Lincolnshire with the apparatus used to transfer mailbags to or from moving trains.

Many of us reached **Loughborough Central** after lunch, when the rain had ceased, and it is the busy headquarters of this railway. Opened in 1899, it was a large station for what was a comparatively small town on the Great Central Railway's line to Marylebone station in London, again island style, with an extensive canopy, restored between 2010 and 2013. Those with time to spare visited the small museum

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beneath the wonderful mahogany booking hall. The rest of us followed the path off the end of the platform past the water tower to the locomotive sheds for our guided tour.



Loughborough Central Station

Mike Hayzelden

This is the base for the restoration, repair, maintenance and preparation for running of all the locomotives, both steam and diesel, on the railway. All manner of work is carried out there including the manufacture of boiler stays, nuts, bolts and linkages, the white metalling and making of bearings, the tubing of steam locomotive boilers to the complete stripping down and re-building of complete locomotives and diesel engines. Many locomotives have been restored from scrap yard condition to a standard that fits them for running on the National Network. Construction of the shed started in 1973 when it was placed over the former two running lines of the Great Central Railway. The ambition to reunify this to the Midland Main Line, north of the shed, means it will have to be moved. The site of the re-location has yet to be determined.

The signal-box at **Loughborough Central** is situated at the north end of the station on the Down side of the line. It is the only original box left on the Great Central Railway between Loughborough and Leicester. The box is also the only original box and is a Grade II listed building, brought back into use in 1985. It has a 50 lever McKenzie and Holland frame, which was recovered from Ruddington signal box.

Mike Hayzelden

Editors note: The GCR is notable in being the only preserved heritage railway in the UK with dual running lines, which run over about 2/3 of the line, between Rothley and Loughborough Central. Recently a short section of quadruple running track has been installed at Swithland Junction, consisting of the mainline plus two loops, all of which are cleared for passenger use. To correct Mike, slightly, the GCR(North) is a separate undertaking, currently running between Loughborough (by the Brush works) and Ruddington, on the edge of Nottingham. It is the plan to reunify these two sections of the GCR route that Mike refers to, which involves a new bridge OVER the Midland Main Line. Then it will be possible to travel by steam train between the suburbs of Leicester and Nottingham!

DRAKELOW TUNNELS, WEDNESDAY 28 MAY (EVENING)

On a cool and wet evening we met outside in a dark, overgrown, but man-made gully in the hillside. Once past the massive rusty steel door, inside was somewhat dryer, damp underfoot in places and down the walls, lit by fluorescent lighting (and torches), but with a mild even temperature. Although it exuded a general air of dereliction, the colour of rust predominated (including the sandstone rock walls), but where we gathered for the introductory talk there were signs of old displays on the dry inner walls with collections of items intended for (future?) display, representing the efforts of a special trust that has been set up to turn the site into a tourist attraction and to preserve a part of a 'secret military history' of the United Kingdom that few people knew about.

We were split into two groups for our guided tour of the seemingly endless caverns that were originally constructed for use by Rover in WWII under the Ministry of Aircraft Production's Shadow Factory Scheme. The tunnels were mainly used for machine workshops and additional storage for Rover, which would have been used to build aircraft engines should the main supply factory in Birmingham ever have been bombed. The cost of the facility was originally estimated at £285,000, and construction, which began in June 1941, was expected to take just one year. In the event, the underground factory achieved full production in May 1943 and the final cost exceeded £1,000,000.

The extent of the tunnel system rapidly became evident as we soon lost our bearings (it covers 250,000 sq.ft or 23,000 sq.m, with a total tunnel length of around 3.5 miles or 5.6 km) and the other group, which we never saw again that evening, except as lights and ghosts far beyond, in the tunnel system.

Much of it just dark empty cavernous grid of tunnels, but after WWII part got a second lease of life during the Cold War. The Government took control of the site as a Regional Seat of Government (RSG) in case of a nuclear attack. Less than a half of the site was converted for use during the Cold War period, where new rooms and equipment were installed (dormitories, storage areas, workshops, electrical equipment, toilets, offices, a BBC studio, a GPO Telephones

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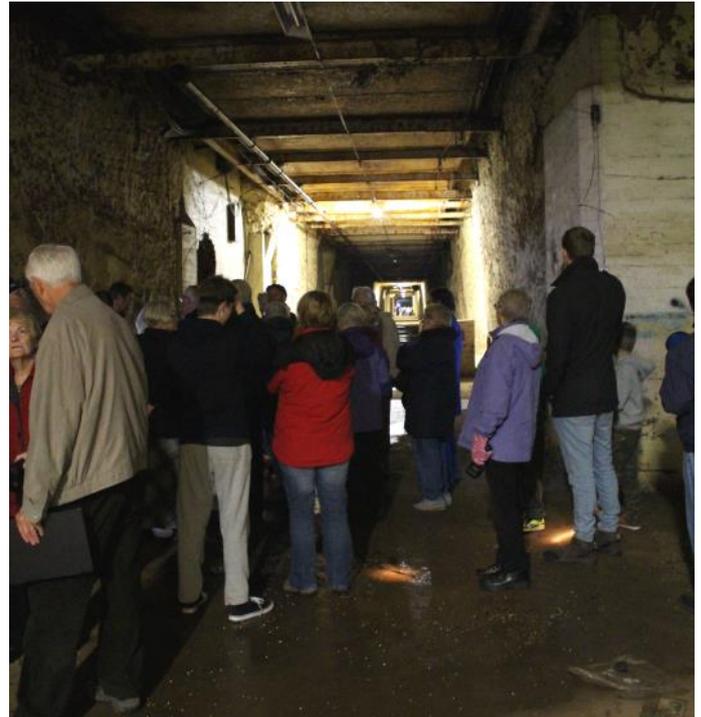
Drakelow Tunnels in Production

Carl Duke

communications facility plus other facilities). This now is largely derelict with enigmatic notices, rust piled kitchens and abandoned pipework, cabling and communication gear. It would have accommodated important local and national government personnel as well as the armed forces and a few medical staff.

The 1980's saw the Government refurbish many parts of their installations, but this was short lived as at the end of the Cold War, in the early 1990's, the site was sold off. It is surprising after 25 years so much has perished under mould and rust; the effect of sealed 'caves' and the essential ventilation system being turned off. It will be an expensive effort to restore even part of this and maintain a modicum of 'archival' conditions for any museum style of tourist displays or attraction.

Mike Hayzelden



Not ghosts in the machine, but the other half of our party at the far end!

Carl Duke

WORCESTER'S PORCELAIN PAST, WITH MALCOLM NIXON, SUNDAYS 22 JUNE AND 27 JULY (AFTERNOON)

This is a very brief resume of the second walk around some of the Pottery sites of Worcester led by Dr Malcolm Nixon, one of our members, on 27th July 2014.

The walk started in Upper Park Street at Christine Silvester's house. From nearby we were able to get a glimpse of Park House, built for Humphrey Chamberlain II (1762-1841) whose father was a porcelain painter. Humphrey was also a painter and rose to become a partner. Has was also an Alderman and Mayor of the City. In the garden to the south of Park House he built several cottages for his workers, none of which survive.

Continuing a short way down London Road, Malcolm pointed out the early 19th century houses in Green Hill London Road, several of which were homes of second generation Chamberlains including James (born 1785), an Alderman and wine merchant, and Walter (born 1801) the last Chamberlain proprietor who married one of his paintresses much to the dismay of his family who felt he had married beneath himself and considered her loud mouthed and uncouth.

We then moved on to Haresfield House, at the Sidbury end of Bath Road, which was built in 1740 and was the home of Robert Chamberlain II. His grand-daughter recalled her wid-

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owed grandmother keeping bluebottles as pets.

A little further along Bath Road we stopped at the site of James Hadley's works beside the canal. James Hadley (1837-1903) was a very skillful modeller who worked for Worcester Royal Porcelain but eventually set up his own works which was very successful until his death: the site was quickly sold to WRP who closed it in 1906.

Our next stop was the site of St Peter the Great Church which was located close to the canal at Sidbury. This was the parish church for many Porcelain workers and glovers. (The site is currently being developed as more apartments for the city).

Malcolm then indicated the site of the "Chequers Inn" a few yards further along King Street. The Chequers was owned by the Chamberlains who regularly paid their workers there. This encouraged the workers to spend much of their weekly wage at the bar. Thus the money came straight back into the family coffers.

We then moved into Severn Street almost opposite the main entrance to the WRP works. Malcolm spoke about the Works Institute which was built in 1876; and still stands, to provide their employees with some education and also a place to eat their lunch. Among activities recorded as being held there were talks on Ancient Egypt and Philosophy. In 1885 the manager was recorded as claiming £1.7s.7d in expenses for papers. Malcolm then explained in some detail the development of the main WRP site between 1783 and 1850's.

Along Deansway we saw the site of Warmstry House (under part of the Heart of Worcestershire College and Copenhagen Street car park). Malcolm explained the history of the site from Thomas Flight in 1783, through to the 1860s.

Continuing into the High Street, we were shown where Robert Chamberlain opened his shop at number 33 in 1789.

We continued further along the High street and into Foregate Street, where there was another fine china shop, this time run by Grainger's. Thomas Grainger (1787-1839) was an apprentice in Robert Chamberlain's factory and eventually set up his own independent business in 1801 in direct competition with Chamberlain. The shop was opened in 1860's and closed after being sold to WRP in 1888.

Grainger's Factory in St Martin's Gate was our final port of call. Thomas rebuilt the factory on this site in 1809 after a fire. It was closed after the death of his son George in 1888, when the shop and factory were sold to WRP who closed the shop fairly quickly but retained the factory, using it as a satellite until 1902. They tried, unsuccessfully, to sell it so it was used by Scouts and the TA until it was finally sold in 1919. The site retained a covenant for *No Ceramic* use until the 1950's to reduce competition against WRP. This site contained the only remaining fragment of a bottle oven in Worcester, which was "rebuilt" as part of the Vinegar works

development. An extensive archaeological dig was undertaken on this site.



Showing part of the WRP Works Institute and part of the main WRP factory on Severn Street (M. McCurdy)

From there we all trooped back up the hill to Upper Park street where we enjoyed tea and cakes at Christine Silvester's house.

The walk was an excellent introduction to the personal side of some of Worcester's porcelain companies giving us an insight into the complex inter-relationships and eccentricities of the characters involved.

Michael McCurdy



Grainger's Factory in St Martin's Gate prior to the Vinegar Works development (M. McCurdy)

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JCB FACTORY TOUR AND SUDBURY HALL, THURSDAY 10 JULY (BY COACH)



JCB Visitor Centre

Mike Hayzelden

The weather was hot and sunny for our visit to the JCB factory at Uttoxeter. We made an unaccustomed early start, leaving Worcester at 7.45. Traffic was unusually light on the motorways, but we hit the rush hour in Stafford. Nevertheless we arrived at the planned time and were welcomed with good coffee, served in china cups. *The JCB Story* is an impressive visitor centre, which is unusual in being dual-purpose, to entertain dealers and potential customers, and to inform visitors such as ourselves. Everything was very tidy, well equipped and very well organised, and the guides were excellent.

The first part of call was the theatre, where we were treated to highly professional videos on the history of the company, their products and a health and safety briefing.

For those who had complied with Mikes instructions and had worn sensible shoes, the first part of the tour was round the factory. Unfortunately we were not allowed to take photos. The reason given was that the workers might object to their photos being taken, but I wonder if the reason was due to the risk of industrial espionage.

We were both very impressed by the way the factory was run. The areas were clean and very tidy. Most of the parts, except engines and gear boxes, are made on site, not just bought in to be assembled. Engines used to be made by Rolls Royce, but are now made at another JCB factory.

Very few of the raw materials are kept in stock, they are mostly delivered on a daily basis on the principle that money should not be tied up in stock. This is known as "just in time" stock control. Vehicles are built to order.

The first part of the factory that was visited was the department

that makes the hydraulic equipment for all of the JCB products. These are the hydraulic rams that power all of the digging and lifting arms. They were very keen to show us the friction welding apparatus used to join the parts of the ram arms. The two parts are rotated with respect to each other and pushed together under huge pressure, the heat generated melts the metal and created the weld. As with most of the factory, the process was completely controlled by computer with the components being loaded onto the machine by robots. Workers merely supervised and checked the quality of the work from time to time.

On the day of our visit they were assembling backhoe loaders. We saw the complete process of assembling the backhoe arms, from the laser cutting of the metal, through the huge presses to form the shape, robotic welding, thermal stress relieving and painting.

Then we moved on to the assembly line, where each part was mechanised, leaving little room for human error. Parts were stored on shelves and were picked up by a robot, put on a trolley on rails and moved to the men who were assembling that particular part of the vehicle. I say men because I did not see any women working in the factory.

The final part of the factory we saw is where the quality control is carried out, where independent analysts take parts off the production line and try to find fault with them. JCB were also keen to show us their medical facilities, which included a dentist so that workers can be treated without having to take time off work.



Some of the WIALHS party in the JCB Story

Mike Hayzelden

The second part of the tour was around a museum telling the JCB story in great detail. I found it fascinating.

The Bamford family set up in business in Uttoxeter in the 18c as blacksmiths. By 1881 it had grown to become one of the country's largest makers of agricultural machinery.

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Bamfords International Farm Machinery was exported all over the world. The company ceased trading in 1986 and that would have been the end of the story had it not been for a disagreement between Joseph Cyril Bamford and his grandfather, who was chairman of the board.

J C had worked in the family firm briefly before being called up for National Service. On being demobbed in 1944 he worked for English Electric, developing electric welding equipment. This was to prove valuable experience. He returned to the family firm, but his ideas for moving the company forward caused friction within the family and he was released to set up on his own. His uncle said he had "little future ahead of him". How wrong could he be? On J C's death in 2001 the company was the largest privately owned engineering company in Britain, with a staff of 4,500 in 12 factories on 3 continents. They made 30,000 machines a year and had revenues of £850m from 140 countries.

On leaving the firm J C spent a short time selling Brylcreem until October 1945 when he set up his own business, renting a small garage for £1.50 a week and buying a prototype electric welder for £2.50. Using scrap steel and war surplus axles he made a farm trailer, which he sold for £45.

J C's drive and innovative ideas were phenomenal. He never stopped making improvements to his products and his philosophy influenced the workforce. What made him different from most other engineers was that he was also a marketeer. JCBs were made to work and if any of them were off the road, awaiting spares, he wanted to know on a daily basis. This gained him the respect of his clients and he had 95% of the owner-operator market in the UK.

His initials JC also stood for his motto "Jamais Contente - because I am never content." This and other sayings, such as "our customers can manage without us, but we cannot manage without them" and "Focus on what you do best, be innovative, and re-invest in product development and the latest manufacturing technologies." are painted on the walls of the staircases.

He paid above a fair wage and gave annual bonuses. In 1967 he personally handed out cheques to the value of £250,000. His workforce were inspired by him and during the strike prone 70s and early 80s the average JCB worker was 7 times more productive than other British workers. In appreciation of him, his staff commissioned a bronze bust which he proudly displayed in his office and took with him on his retirement. After his death it was returned to his former office, where it stands today to be seen by visitors to the museum.

He retired to Switzerland in 1975 and handed over the business to his two sons. They could have sold up and enjoyed a life of luxury, but fortunately they had inherited their father's entrepreneurial spirit and continue to move the business forward. So well known is the company that JCB has become the generic term for much equipment, even if it is made by a rival company in the same way that vacuum cleaners are known as "hoovers" and ball point pens as "biros".

The JCB story is truly inspirational and an example to us all.

Following the JCB visit we travelled to the National Trust property of Sudbury Hall with its Museum of Childhood. Sudbury Hall is a late 17th-Century house, the country home of the Lords Vernon, featuring exquisite plasterwork, wood carvings and classical story-based murals. The Museum of Childhood explores past childhoods, including stories, toys, Victorian child labour and education. Much use was made of the tea room and pleasant grounds!



Sudbury Hall staircase

Mike Hayzelden

Sue McCurdy, with additions by John Beale (in italics)

Fauld Crater visit: The RAF Fauld explosion was a military accident which occurred at 11:11am on Monday, 27 November 1944 at the RAF Fauld underground munitions storage depot. The RAF Fauld explosion was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history and the largest to occur on UK soil.

On our way from Sudbury, the coach stopped in the nearby village of Hanbury. A path to the crater leads from near the Cock Inn, rebuilt after the explosion of 1944, which the group followed with great expectation. After ten minutes we came to an open field and could see a line of trees in the distance marking the edge of the crater. A reluctant decision

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was made due to time and the distance to call off the visit at this point. Below is an account of a visit I made disregarding Health and Safety which in any case hardly existed then anyway.

Away back in time during the mid-1980's I visited the British Gypsum mine at Fauld which formed a part of the mine complex involved with the explosion.

Gypsum (alabaster) has been mined in the area for many hundreds of years, being used for carving intricate statues and in particular tomb epitaphs. Very little high quality gypsum now remains in the mine for this purpose but its use in the manufacture of plaster board is still in demand. Apparently the decorative alabaster was mined from shallow workings during winter months by locals when farm work was slack.

Following my visit, at the time, I simply could not resist with others having a look at the crater both from the top and from its inside at the base. We set off under the fence and made our way down. We thought it would be easy, not a chance, the sides were strewn with massive loose boulders, loose clay and other material. The whole decent took around twenty minutes and at the bottom we were confronted with a cross formed from white gypsum marking the site, possibly the centre of the explosion. Twisted rail and roof tunnel reinforcing lay scattered about, a very eerie and disturbing place.

Nothing really prepares you for the scale of the crater, impossible to photograph with my simple camera, so I took two photos at the crater rim forming a panoramic view when joined longitudinally.



Fauld Crater Panorama

Steve Southwick

The photographs taken at the crater bottom shows the bent and twisted metal work whilst in the background you may be able to see what is left of the roof pillars and the outline of the pre-existing tunnel. The explosion threw material not only upwards but outwards, following the line of the mine workings. The actual explosion must have been like a super gun, directing material towards Burton on Trent eleven miles away.



Steve Southwick in the crater bottom

Steve Southwick

Out of view and to the rear of these pictures, the mine tunnel remains are fenced off.

My visit to the explosion site would have been some forty years after the event and even then, apart from brambles and young scrub the site looked amazingly fresh.

Steve Southwick

GLoucester BY TRAIN, FRIDAY 1 AUGUST

On a very hot Friday in August, at Gloucester (by train from Worcester), we met guide, Frank Colls (our GSIA guide) outside the station in the corner of the station car park, the site of the first, standard gauge, "Gloucester Midland" station of 1840. He provided us with 1902 OS maps and our walk began via the subway under the station and into Great Western Road (a couple of redundant gas lamps line this path, circa mid-C19th?), turning east past the site of the Gloucester Union Workhouse, former sidings and goods depot (now businesses and modern office developments). A short row of Victorian terraced housing, shown on our 1902 map, remained.

We stopped at Horton Road with on our right the remains of GWR loco sheds and sidings and opposite the derelict site, where the South Western Gas Board's holder station once stood. At the level crossing, Frank pointed out a large gate, being the line of the former Gloucester and Cheltenham horse drawn Tramroad as it too had crossed Horton Road after coming down Elmbridge Road and Armscroft Road. Beyond the level crossing, on Millbrook Street, we rejoined the Tramroad route taking us past former Midland Railway sidings (now a primary school). Passing the side of ASDA's superstore their car park was once the site of the Midland station built in 1896, shown on our 1902 OS maps with its very long footbridge connecting it to the GWR station.

Summer 2014 Programme Reports (Continued)

GLOUCESTER STATIONS

The first standard gauge station, was the "Gloucester Midland" (Birmingham & Gloucester Railway) of 1840, sited under the current station car park. In 1844 a broad gauge station, the "Gloucester GWR" (Cheltenham & Great Western Union and Bristol & Gloucester Railways) was built closer to the present day station. This became mixed gauge and from 1851 it became a Midland station (until 1854) as by then a second broad gauge "Gloucester GWR" had been built for the Gloucester & Dean Forest Railway and the South Wales Railway. This was on the current station site, but it proved inadequate and a third station, the "Gloucester GWR" was built in 1855, stretching over this and the 1844 station. This included the extra-long platform, which is still in use today (the longest in the country). Between 1951 & 1975 it was known as "Central Station" before becoming simply "Gloucester".

A Midland station was built in 1896 (causing the closure of the very first station of 1840), on the a new Tuffley loop. Known as "Gloucester Midland" (until 1951 when it became "Eastgate station") it closed in 1975.

Crossing over Trier Way (A4301) we followed it to Barton Rd, the site of Barton Gates level crossing on the High Orchard Branch rail link through to St Ann Way and the Docks. The imposing housing on the western side of Trier Way was for the wealthy compared to the small Victorian terraces we had passed on its eastern side.



Two replica tramroad wagons

Mike Hayzelden

Our walk followed the Tramroad route into Park Road, past the Tramroad depot, making a short diversion (due to a brick wall also on our 1902 map!), down Parliament Street (its curve following the original Roman settlement boundary wall), and re-joining the Tramroad route by Chillingworth Mews. It looked like a narrow back lane but was called "Old Tram Road", becoming Albion Street before meeting Southgate St. Crossing this we went through the narrow

Tramroad entrance to the Docks. A surviving entrance pier (of the 1848 dock wall) bears a plaque about the Tramroad, with close by, two replica tramroad wagons set on some original cast iron rails on stone blocks.

Our tour now concentrated on the redeveloped area of the Dock basins and continuing over Llanthony Rd into High Orchard St. Frank indicated the plaque for Fielding and Platt's Atlas Engineering Works 1866 - 2003, covering the whole area occupied by the Quays shopping arcade. This great, Gloucester engineering firm pioneered hydraulic machinery; produced Britain's first vacuum cleaner in 1902; and the aluminium plate stretcher that helped build Concorde in 1963. Leaving by St. Ann Way brought us in front of the former extensive Gloucester Carriage and Wagon Works of 1860. Although it made mainly coal wagons, it also produced horse drawn passenger trams for Gloucester; carriages for the Ffestiniog Railway (in 1879 & still in use today); Churchill Tanks; pivoting sections for the WW2 Mulberry harbours; carriages for the first subway in Toronto; and trains for London Transport. It was demolished in 1989 for the Peel Centre & Toys R Us.

At Baker Street and from the towpath of the Sharpness Canal, we had a view of the Downings Malshouses (1876, 1895 & 1901) and the Fosters Oil and Cake Mills (1862 & 1891-3), all in various states of dereliction. Crossing Orchard Bridge (2008) to the south once had timber wharves and a timber holding pond, at Monk Meadow (became an oil depot in the 1920's).

TRAMWAY STORY

Frank told us the history of the Tramroad, constructed to transport stone from the quarries at Leckhampton to Cheltenham (developed rapidly in the late C18th). Coal and other goods still came by horse wagons from Gloucester Docks wharf, nine miles away, so a horse tramway (on 3'6" gauge cast iron rails) between the two towns (and one quarry), was authorised in by Parliament in 1809 (the first in Gloucestershire). In 1831 two steam locomotive trials, using 'The Royal William', were not successful (it broke the cast iron rails and the boiler blew up!). In 1836 the Cheltenham & Great Western Union (CGWU) and the Birmingham & Gloucester Railway (B&G) combined to buy the tramroad for its access to the Docks and, in 1840, the B&G gained full control of it. Standard gauge rails were laid, in 1844, along this route between the docks and Gloucester Station; however wagons had to be horse-drawn so it was not satisfactory. A new railway, the High Orchard Branch, was built in 1848, from the first Gloucester Station to the docks. The tramroad then struggled and was abandoned in 1859 and, in 1861, it was sold (cast iron tracks went for scrap). Its depots at Cheltenham and Gloucester followed shortly afterwards.

Summer 2014 Programme Reports (Continued)

We continued past the new Gloucester College and the Llanthony Lift Bridge (watch it rise for boats leaving the basin). The main basin had been dug with shovels and wheelbarrows from 1794 to 1799 with stone quays on the west and north sides, but the east and south remained just earth banks. It wasn't until 1812 that the basin was brought into use via the River Lock. In 1815 the southern end of the canal was extended from Berkeley towards Sharpness with a junction to the Stroudwater Canal (1820). The Barge Basin was completed (with the east quay wall) in 1825 with yards on both sides, each with a siding from the Tramroad. The canal reached Sharpness in 1827, (a large dock was built in 1874) bypassing a difficult winding stretch of the R. Severn, allowing Gloucester to develop as an inland port.

Our walk then took us across the 1819 and 1853 dry docks (now Tommi Nielsen traditional restoration yard), along the West Quay to the River Severn lock by the North Warehouse, the first to be built in 1826. After the decline of the docks it took the City Council's renovation of the North warehouse in 1986 (for Council Offices) to trigger further renovation with warehouses conversions, such as the 3 warehouses we passed (Herbert, Kimberley and Philpotts) built in 1846 to deal with increased trade following the repeal of the corn laws and the City Flour Mills, still operating until fairly recently but now converted for residential use. The Customs House was built in 1845 (now the Soldiers of Gloucester Museum), and the Victoria Dock in 1849 when additional quay space was required, now a marina for small vessels. On the west side of Victoria Dock we passed the Britannia Warehouse (after a fire in 1987 it was rebuilt using original bricks), then across the swing bridge over the narrow channel linking the two dock basins, arriving at the Mariners Chapel built in 1849. This is still open and in use for services today. We then cut through to the Barge Arm basin with its collection of historic vessels and the Steam Dredger, beside the Llanthony Warehouse (1873) the renamed Gloucester Waterways Museum (following the change from BWB to the new Canal & River Trust). This concluded the morning tour.

After lunch a smaller group met again by the River Lock and observed the basin dredging now done by agitating the silt and opening a lock paddle to carry the silt out into the river. The lock (55m long, 5m deep) can hold up to 6 narrowboats

HIGH ORCHARD

High Orchard was once part of Llanthony Priory but was cut off by the canal. This Augustinian Priory from the Black Mountains was set up here as Llanthony Secunda following Welsh rebel attacks around 1136. After a long history, (dissolved in 1538) its tower was demolished in 1643, during the Civil War, to prevent it being used by Royalist forces; Gloucester was a Parliamentary town. We passed by what little remains of their extensive range of buildings, however recent efforts to conserve these makes a separate visit worthwhile.



Llanthony Warehouse

Mike Hayzelden

and takes about 15 minutes to empty. Half way along one can see where a middle gate used to be, the two smaller locks being combined in 1892. We crossed to Alney Island (between the West and East Channels of the R. Severn - now a nature reserve), which had been the site of coal fired Castle Meads Power Station built in 1942/3. The Empire Reaper coaster brought coal from Barry via the Canal, Docks & Lock to access the Wharf where we saw remains of mooring points and crane rails.

We retraced our steps onto the original town Quay (on the east channel of the R. Severn - tidal until Llanthony Weir), which had a stone wall built in the 1870s. We crossed into Quay Street by the 1580 Old Customs House, then Lower Quay Street, where Foreign Bridge once crossed a third arm of the R. Severn (now silted up), past St. Nicholas Church (lying at an angle to the road, opposite the Folk Museum) and up Westgate St. Here bollards, in the shape of needles and pins, are in recognition of Gloucester's main industry of pin making, which employed 20% of the inhabitants early in the C19th. Westgate St. meets Eastgate St, Northgate St and Southgate St. at the Cross being the four main roads of the original Roman Town. From here we made our own way back to the Station for the train home. Although most of us were rather tired by this time due to the heat and length of the walk, we all agreed that it had been a very interesting and alternative guide to Gloucester.

Vivian & Leonard Williamson (edited by Mike Hayzelden)

BURTON-ON-TRENT, THURSDAY 7TH AUGUST 2014

Another great WIALHS day out - worth putting up with the boring one and a half hour motorway travel each way. The only interest for me on the journey was seeing the hundreds of motor way traffic cones along the road works north of Worcester. Did you know that traffic cones on our roads now come in green to show the entrance to a work site and yellow for overhead high voltage cables. You can buy cones on the open market from prices starting at 99p and sizes

Summer 2014 Programme Reports (Continued)

from 5 centimetres. Most seem to be made in China and India. Seattle has a giant 7 metre red cone in a public space as a sculpture. Cones are usually used for traffic management and were first used in Britain on the M6 to replace red lanterns in 1958.

For me the delight of the day was the Claymills Victorian Pumping Station Stretton, which is a few miles north of Burton, off the A38 between Lichfield and Derby and next to the railway line. The pumping station was completed in 1885 and originally pumped sewage from Burton-upon-Trent to farmland about three miles away. The station needed to be large during the time of the breweries to cope with the amount of effluent that came from them.



Claymills Pumping Station

Mike Hayzelden

The original old brick buildings on the site contain four beam engines by Gimson of Leicester 1885, five Lancashire boilers, a steam driven generator, a Crompton open frame dynamo of 1889, a steam driven workshop, a blacksmith's shop with original tools that have been collected from all over the country, and a joinery. Much of this has been lovingly restored by volunteers since 1993. The whole place won a Queen's award for volunteers and I'm not surprised. I have never seen so many happy retired engineers, especially our tour guide who was delightfully enthusiastic.

I am not an engineer but to me all these valves, pipes, cylinders, pistons, wheels, boilers, etc. were like sculptures in an art gallery – and you could touch them! Piles of waste wood on the ground out the back were donated and used with coke to heat the water in the boilers to make the steam for the open steam days when you can see the steam engines actually working. It takes four days to heat the water. Look in their web site www.claymills.org.uk for these steam days. Talk about a living museum. It was wonderful, but a word of advice to ladies is don't wear long skirts or sandals because there are lots of iron stairs to go up and down.

The National Brewery Centre Burton-upon-Trent had a volunteer tour guide to tell us about the legendary Bass family and their great wealth from brewing, the strong women who rolled the casks at Bass during the First World War, the shovelling of the malted barley, the advantage of Burton – upon-Trent water in making the pale ales that became popular in the 1830s and 40s and how today hop pellets are used instead of the actual hops. We enjoyed seeing the two Clydesdale shire horses as a reminder of the importance of horses in pulling wagons in early brewing days.

Our guide was full of brewing anecdotes about 'minding your p's and q's' coming from pints and quarts, 'brewers droop' probably coming from the soporific effect of working with hops, and the remedial effect of real cask ales in preventing osteoporosis. How true this is I don't know but it's a good excuse for me to drink these ales in my local pub.

Included in the tour price was a taste of real cask ales. We could have a quarter pint each of Bass, Doonbar, Stairway to Heaven and Exmoor, or any combination of the four.



National Brewery Centre

Mike Hayzelden

The London St Pancras railway station connection with beer is interesting. When this station was built in 1866 the huge void beneath the station platforms was turned into storage for barrels of beer and the length of a beer barrel became the standard unit of measurement for the spacing of the columns that supported the roof. The new light ale was very popular in London and three trains loaded with casks arrived every day from Burton-upon-Trent. Today this area is used by Eurostar passengers.

Gill Holt

BERKELEY ALMSHOUSES FRIDAY 22ND AUGUST 2014

(Ed. I received no report for this visit, only photographs, so here is an adaptation of Mike Hayzelden's briefing notes)

This visit closed the summer outings with a look at one of those historic sites hidden in plain sight at the heart of the

Summer 2014 Programme Reports (Continued)

Worcester. Guides were due to explain the history of its foundation and show us the site and its chapel. We were limited to 20 this year and over-subscribed, so it may be possible to arrange another visit next year.

By the site of the Foregate (demolished 1702), on the corner of Shaw Street, Berkeley's is a splendid early C18th almshouse group, slightly Dutch in appearance, endowed by Robert Berkeley (of Spetchley), 1692. The chapel is dated 1703 and the complex completed c. 1710. Fronting the Foregate are two five-bay two-storey blocks. These were for the chaplain and the warden, and have hipped roofs with pedimented dormers, slightly mottled brick with stone dressings and moulded window surrounds. Small doorways, with broken curly pediments decorated with foliage and the Berkeley arms, face the opening between the two blocks. The gates are fine with rusticated gate piers with animal finials and iron gates. These lead into the courtyard, lined with the single-storey almshouses, originally six either side; each has a doorway with broken curly pediment and again the Berkeley arms, flanked by two windows. The chapel stands in the middle of the far end. It has five bays, round-arched windows, a wide central doorway with broken segmental pediment on carved brackets. Above a round-arched niche has the statue of the founder and composite curly pediment. The interior has

been stripped out. It has three rectangular windows to the rear.



WIALHS Group Visit Berkeley's Almshouses

Mike Hayzelden

A Tale of Two Wyches (Rita's Salwych and Droitwich Spa)

By Paul Jones, LRPS

"Rita" (Eliza Margaret Jane Humphreys née Gollan) was born at Gollanfield Inverness, Scotland in 1850, and achieved writing success at the age of 27 when her first novel was published in 1877. She was certainly a very famous and popular author during her lifetime, with her 1892 novel *Asenath of the Ford* being proclaimed by the critics of the time to be a second *Lorna Doone*. Her writing is very descriptive, and it was only on rare occasions that she would describe a location without ever having actually visited it herself. Until relatively late in her career, most of her readers would only have known her by her nom de plume of "Rita", thus enabling her to keep her life largely private. With the exception of official occasions, Rita tended to opt for anonymity, and few of her fans would have recognised her by sight.

It was in 1906 that Rita stayed at Droitwich, in order to take the brine cure for her rheumatism, and the town and its surroundings soon began to evolve into the setting for her next novel, *A Man of No Importance*, first published in 1907. Rita's stay at the Worcestershire Brine Baths Hotel is listed in the *Droitwich Guardian's* Brine Baths Visitors' Rec-



RITA AROUND TIME OF DROITWICH VISIT

ord. The paper was published every Saturday, and the issues that record her as being present are dated 8th and the 15th of December 1906 – listing her as "Mrs. D. Humphreys of Parkstone Dorset". Rita also briefly refers to *A Man of No Importance* and Droitwich on page 281 of her 1936 autobiography, *Recollections of a Literary Life*.

The novel's plot is undoubtedly semi-autobiographical, as it mirrors the events from Rita's own life in and around 1889, when she was pregnant by her Irish lover (later to become her second husband) William Ernest Humphreys, and in the process of separating from her first husband – Carl Otto Booth. In reality, these events of c.1889 largely took place in London, and of course, other facts have also been altered by Rita in her fictional account. In *A Man of No Importance*, Droitwich is transformed by Rita into Salwych, and many familiar places within Droitwich and its environs are beautifully described in this novel, albeit with slightly altered names.

It was and still is common practice for authors to use real people and places as templates for their fictional places and

A Tale of Two Wyches (Continued)

characters, and Rita was certainly no exception. It was during her 1906 visit to Droitwich that Rita met my great, great grandmother, Eliza Skerrett, and also Eliza's brother-in-law, Charles John Skerrett. Rita received treatment for her rheumatism at the Royal Brine Baths, where Eliza and Charles both worked, and then decided to use Eliza and Charles as models for characters in her new Droitwich based novel – forming them into Michael and Betty Chance.

Other identifiable characters in the novel include: Sir Lester Sallust – Carl Otto Booth, Conall Ronayne – William Ernest (later Desmond) Humphreys, Marah Sallust – Rita herself, and Aunt Norah – Henrietta, Rita's favourite aunt. Antoinette, Marah's French maid, is possibly based upon Charles Skerrett's French daughter, Gabrielle. Charles's wife – Catherine – was also French, and after Gabrielle had spent some time in a convent (which also features in this novel's plot), they both came to England with Charles, to live in his hometown of Droitwich. Gabrielle was most probably adopted by Charles, and would have been 22 at the time of Rita's visit in 1906.

The central character in the book – Conall Ronayne – is sent by his doctor for a fortnight of treatment to the *Salwych Baths* (the brine baths at Droitwich), and stays at the *Salwych Hotel*, which is based upon Rita's own experiences at the *Worcestershire Brine Baths Hotel*. It is in this hotel that the opening scene of the novel takes place:

The second gong had sounded. Its dying echoes penetrated the corridors and staircases of the hotel; set themselves to a sudden noisy opening and shutting of doors; the rustle of skirts, the tap-tap of crutch or stick, the alertness of invalidism bent on at least one hour of common enjoyment with more fortunate mortals...By twos and threes, or in single aloofness, the various inmates of the hotel sauntered or hobbled into the dining-room; dropped, or were assisted, into chairs...Black-coated waiters hovered to and fro. The suggestive clatter from behind the "service" screen was a note of attention to humanity's needs. The lights were soft and subdued. Warmth, good food, and comfort spoke of assuagement of physical ills, and for a time even the petulance of pain was subdued to murmurs of tolerant patience.

The hotel was full of guests. It belonged happily to a place that had no special season. It catered for the comfort and convenience of visitors in a well-bred, semi-exclusive manner. It had suites and private sitting-rooms for the wealthy invalid, and pleasant sunny apartments for the ordinary or temporary visitor. It was an hotel run by a company and managed by an individual, and did infinite credit to the enterprise and the management. Looking at it and its entourage as a first experience Conall

Ronayne confessed that his doctor might have done worse than advise a "cure" at the Salwych Baths, and a fortnight at the Salwych Hotel.

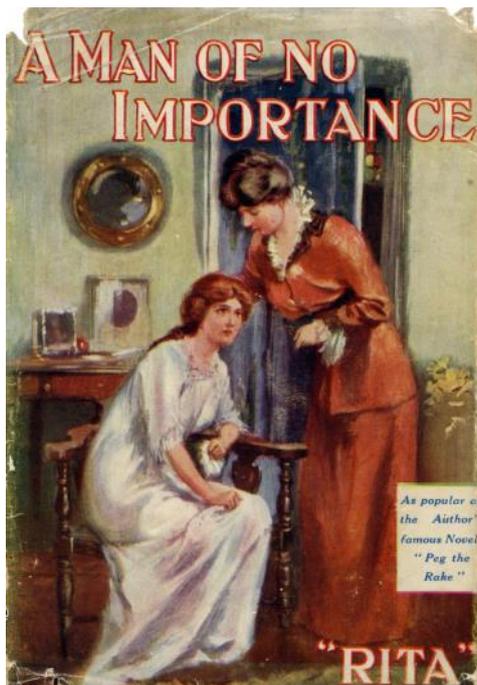
Later on in the novel, Rita describes this rather cheerless scene in the hotel:

The day was cold and gloomy. A soft drizzling rain fell with melancholy persistence. There was no prospect of a walk, and the corridors and reception-rooms were full of grumbling invalids to whom chill and damp meant corresponding misery in body and mind.

There are several references to pony bath-chairs in the novel, and Covercroft is referred to with its name unaltered, as is Hadzor, Copcut Lane, Malvern, and Birmingham; though the village of Salwarpe is shortened to Warpe, and Worcester becomes Warnchester. Many other Droitwich landmarks are used within the book – The Raven Hotel for example becomes The Magpie, Salter's Hall becomes The Salwych Hall, and St Andrew's Brine Baths become the Salwych Baths:

He [Ronayne] stood for a moment in the porch [of the hotel] looking at the grounds as they lay before him bathed in the clear cold moonlight of a December night. The air was keen and sharp, with some prophecy of frost in store. He turned up the collar of his coat and set forth.

The gravelled drive led to the principal entrance gates. Opposite to them were the famous baths. Their half-timbered facade looked quaint and picturesque, as did the chequered black and white of another building, called the Salwych Hall. Further on, to the right of the hotel, stood another quaint black and white hostelry carrying out its title of the "Magpie" with more success than usually falls to the lot of inn designations.



A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE NOVEL COVER

After this, Conall Ronayne walks to St Peter's Church via Corbett Avenue:

Ronayne took the road to the right of this hostelry and found himself ascending a steep hill. On one side was a row of detached houses, on the other a range of fields sloping down to a level stretch of valley land, its distance topped by the square tower of an old church. He stood for moment looking down at that wide space over which the moonlight shone so clearly. Then he pushed open the turnstile and took his way by a narrow path across the fields...With the natural disinclination of a born walker to take the same route back, he opened the gate of the churchyard and, passing the old ivied building, crossed again to the narrow lane that twisted itself in the direction of the hill he had left behind.

Ronayne then comes across Betty Chance's home, the description of which closely matches Eliza Skerrett's home at

A Tale of Two Wyches (Continued)

Hill End Droitwich, though the location has been slightly altered. He then meets Betty Chance literally by chance, who refers to “The baths yonder” – these being The Royal Brine Baths in St George’s Square. She then invites Ronayne to visit the old baths where she works, rather than attending the “grand new ones at the top o’ the town” (St Andrew’s Brine Baths).

A walk leading past the High Street, over a canal bridge, and along a lane (which could be Crutch Lane) is also described. This leads to “a small stone house standing in grounds of orchard and meadow”, which is referred to as apartments belonging to Betty Chance’s sister. Eliza Skerrett’s sister-in-law – Selina Skerrett – owned apartments called Albion House, which stood between Ashlea and Severn House on the Worcester Road, opposite the Worcestershire Brine Baths Hotel. It is therefore possible that Albion House was Rita’s model for the “stone house” – though moved to a different location for the sake of the story.

Betty Chance’s talk of the old baths (the Royal Brine Baths) influences Conall Ronayne, and he therefore decides to go there for his treatment:

“You’re at the wrong entry, sir,” said a cheery voice. “Leastways, if you want the gentlemen’s baths. This is my side. Oh, no! There’s no one here just now. ‘Tis a bit early. You may look around, and welcome.”

Ronayne was confronted by his friend of the lane [Betty Chance] and the previous night. In her clean print gown and neat apron and cap she looked just the sort of buxom comfortable person to cheer up an invalid, or wait on physical afflictions....He was following her up one passage and down another. He saw a range of doors—some open and some closed. A short, wizened old man with an armful of bath towels suddenly confronted them.

“That’s my ‘usband, sir,” said the garrulous dame. “Michael Chance, that’s his name”....

The bath was a large long wooden receptacle, with a wooden bar across the centre. At the top was a sort of neck-rest to support the head. The taps were at the foot, and as Ronayne stood watching the process he saw a wide stream of dull brown-tinted water gradually filling the bath.

“What an awful colour!” he exclaimed.

“Colour? Why, that’s the brine, o’ course. Sometimes ‘tisn’t so dark as others. After rain it’s muddy lookin’, I grant. But that’s nothin’ to do with the quality o’ the water, as you’ll find.”

At one point in the story, Rita refers to the 20 minute sand-glasses that were used at the brine baths. There is also this beautifully written description of the High Street:

The old black and white houses leaned against each other as if seeking support. The pavement was uneven and the ground fell constantly away into hollows. The general aspect was that of a place recovering from a mild shock of earthquake which had shaken it gently, but not destructively, into an atti-tude of seeming helplessness. Everything inclined from strict canons of the perpendicular. The middle of the road was black and miry, like all the soil of Salwych.... Roofs and chimneys were a variety of stunted or crooked shapes, and narrow lanes burrowed from right to left to where the sluggish canal waters on the one side, or the public park and avenues on the other, sounded their note of prosperity.

The salt works, Vines area, and St Augustine’s Dodderhill are also described by Rita:

There were lights at last and a clean gravelled road under his [Ronayne’s] feet, and before him the quaint little town with its



CHARLES AND ELIZA SKERRETT, ROYAL BRINE BATHS

landmark of tall chimneys, and above them, set on a hill which rose sheer and steep from a dark maze of crooked houses and muddy canal and salt works, stood another small, square, and very ancient church.

In this description of the Vines area, Dodderhill becomes Dodshill:

They [Marah and Conall Ronayne] paused a moment on the bridge spanning the dark sluggish waters of the canal. It was a weird and ugly spot. Even the sunshine seemed unable to lighten it or give a touch of cheerfulness to its aspect. To the left lay the miry banks by which the barges were moored. Ugly crooked houses shadowed the narrow lane. Groups of shabby women and dirty ill-kept children spoke of the poverty of this quarter. The dark chimneys of the Salt Works, the heaps of refuse, the piles of unused brine, the melancholy waiting barges, the steam and smoke that shroud-

ed it all as with the mantle of some brooding genie—all these were significant of the trade of the town, as well as of a certain monotony of dreary lives spent in that service, and rewarded with no greater benefit than the bare means of subsisting in its melancholy atmosphere.

There was no apparent energy. The listless women and the dirty children lounged about on the canal banks or their own half-sunken doorsteps, or did the family washing in a negligent fashion that boded little benefit to the articles washed.

Conall turned away after brief inspection. “It reminds me of the coal quay in Cork,” he said. “What a depressing place!”

“It is the dreariest and ugliest in Salwych,” said Marah. “But one has to pass it to get to Dodshill, as they call it....We can go by the road, or up these steps. I think the road is pleasanter.”

So they took the road, which was less steep, and wound round to

A Tale of Two Wyches (Continued)

the churchyard...It was all very old and very neglected. The gravestones had fallen into the universal "slant" which the houses and the streets below affected...Some were embellished by a bunch of herbs or immortelles in a pickle bottle. The path struggled in an indeterminate way to the church, and then branched off and wound by a low stone wall to a field path that led to the golf links.

It is whilst contemplating these grim surroundings that Marah says:

"Do you suppose those poor souls down there would come up to look at this view and find it compensation for their hard lives, or their children's hunger, bare board, and unpaid rent?"

Salt and brine history, King John, and the Civil Wars are also referred to in the novel. This quote relates to the war-damaged Dodshill/Dodderhill Church:

One wing [of the church] had been destroyed in the Civil Wars when royalist soldiers used it as a retreat. In the quiet field below, Cromwell's guns had rested, and from this vantage point the king's troops had kept the rebels at bay.

Like many authors of the Victorian and Edwardian periods, Rita went out of fashion in the 1930s, and this caused her work to become rather unfairly neglected. But should you wish to read Rita's Droitwich based novel in its entirety, it can now be purchased from www.blurb.co.uk/bookstore for only £8.50, and many more of her skilfully written novels can be purchased from Amazon and Ebay.

Rita passed away in 1938, and her final resting-place can be found near to the top of the hill in Bath Abbey Cemetery, only a short distance from her Combe Down home. Wildlife



DROITWICH HIGH STREET AROUND TIME OF RITA'S VISIT

is abundant in the cemetery grounds, which also boasts magnificent views of the city of Bath. A complete account of her life, entitled "Rita" the Forgotten Author by Paul Jones LRPS, can be purchased from www.amazon.co.uk

Paul Jones (Paul is the author of our first Occasional Paper on Droitwich Town Mill)

Engineering Entrepreneur - John James Cam 1850 - 1919

In 1903 — John James Cam (JJC) opened his new Engineering Works in Charles Street. He had more than 30 years' experience in engineering behind him, at the side of his Father, John Cam, in the family Excelsior Works, 32, Shambles. John James Cam took over the reins of the company with his younger brother, William Henry Cam in the Shambles before moving to Charles Street, south side. That's where the exciting inventions took shape.

The combustion engines JJC built did not run very smoothly which resulted in the first ever down-draught carburettor being made, which 'worked with absolute perfection'.

His next problem was his engines kept over-heating, so he invented a thing called a Radiator which solved that problem. On the motor cycles he built, the only way to stop was to switch the engine off. So another improvement of utmost importance was required. A lever was invented attached to the handle bar, to increase or decrease a motor-cycles

speed. Somebody had to do it!

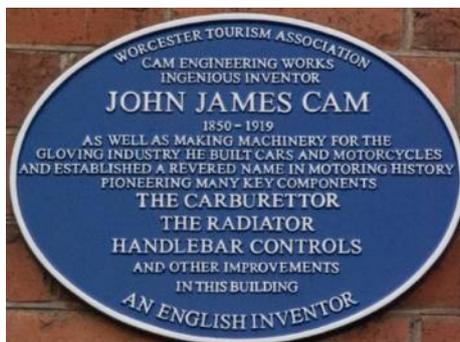
John James Cam was a founder member of the Worcestershire Photographic Club, a keen cyclist and also into hydraulic engines for organ-blowing. The ones he made for the Public Hall would blow the organ for a full Elgar concert for a total cost of six pence for water. All this time he still made specialized production tools for the gloving industry. In his spare time JJC could be found on his steam-driven boat on the Severn.

Some of the present day descendants, who live in Malvern, are delighted to see that their famous ancestor is at last being acknowledged as a true English

Inventor. (A blue plaque was installed in Charles Street in 2012—ed.)

We have to thank Michael Grundy's Memory Lane Volume 11 for this information.

Godfrey J. Harvey — Worcester Tourism Association.



Winter Programme 2014-15 Reports

THE STORY OF LONDON UNDERGROUND RAILWAY, PART 2

John Mason - 12 September 2014

(This was the second part of a two-part talk given by John Mason. The account that was printed on the last edition covered both but is repeated here, with some updated content, for the benefit of new members—Ed.)

London Underground consists of two completely different systems of construction and for this reason it is best looked upon as two separate railways, hence London Underground Parts one and two.

London Underground is the world's first underground railway and evolved out of necessity when the Victorian era of 'Railway Mania' had resulted in all the newly formed railway companies seeking to terminate in the capital.

The influx of railways heading into London caused great concern among the city fathers who along with the City of Westminster, were determined to not allow railways to encroach upon the valuable city real estate. This resulted in all companies such as GWR, LSWR, LNWR and GE being forced to terminate on the outer fringes of the territory of both cities. Between 1855 and 1870 the cities of both London and Westminster became completely encircled by no less than ten termini.

Passengers from Bristol to London could now reach Paddington by train but had to continue to the city by road transport or walk another four miles, likewise for arrivals at Kings Cross, Euston and Waterloo; which like London Bridge (the first of the London termini), was on the south side of the river. Great difficulties also arose for passengers wishing to connect with train services from another terminus across the city. It could take longer to get from Kings Cross to Waterloo than from Waterloo to Southampton.

The mad hustle and bustle of daily life in the crowded city streets was now compounded by the addition of thousands of people trying to get from one terminus to another for onward journeys. Obviously an interconnecting rail link with the main stations was needed but as this was not acceptable to the London and Westminster authorities, some strange mad-cap ideas were put forward. One scheme suggested by the famous architect Joseph Paxton was for a 'Grand Promenade' with a railway running on elevated balconies above the covered walkways of the main thoroughfares in the city but this along with many other ideas was rejected.

It was a London solicitor named Charles Pearson who came up with the idea of tunnelling under the main east west route from Farringdon to Paddington and placing a railway directly under the road surface while leaving regular spaces for ventilation in the process. He was ably supported by John Fowler who had previous railway experience with some of the main railway companies (including the Victoria bridge on S.V.R.); and it was this scheme that would develop into the world's first underground railway and be known as the Grand Metropolitan Railway.

The railway would be built from Paddington Station to Farringdon in the City of London a distance of about four miles, much of the way directly beneath Marylebone Road, Euston Road and Holborn in an East West direction. Public subscription would be raised and 40% of the share capital and all rolling stock would be supplied by the GWR with I.K. Brunel overseeing much of the civil engineering process.

The construction of a railway to run underground and be powered by the only means available at the time steam: would present it's own problems of ventilation and this became a prime consideration throughout the construction. As the GWR had the controlling influence during construction, the railway was laid to Brunel's broad gauge format and platform spacing etc. would reflect this in station design with Baker Street station becoming the headquarters for the company.

After work had started and the principle of an underground system established, the idea was copied by a Scot named James Staats Forbes who was given permission to build a similar railway to run West to East about two miles to the South of the Grand Metropolitan starting at Kensington and running as far as Westminster with a view to continuing eastwards to the City of London and this railway would be called The District Railway and would run on standard gauge track.

It was during this era of massive disruption of the London streets that the problem of the 'Great London Stink' arose where over many years the overloaded and sometimes non-existent ex Roman sewers of London deposited their effluent into the River Thames and by 1850 in the summer months it became unbearable and at one point the government were forced to adjourn from Westminster due to the stink. Joseph Bazalgette the eminent engineer was appointed to solve the problem once and for all and he was responsible for constructing the famous Victorian sewer system and pumping stations that are still giving good service today.

As part of the project Joseph Bazalgette was required to remodel the River Thames and in so doing created the famous Embankment running along the north side of the Thames from Westminster to Blackfriars in the City. With new embankments on either side, the Thames was considerably narrowed in London making for more real estate and also deepening the river and making it faster flowing. The embankment from Westminster to Blackfriars also incorporated a tunnel for the District Railway to continue its expansion Eastwards to the City.

The District Railway being held up at Westminster while waiting for the embankment to be constructed, found financial problems had caught up with James Staats Forbes and he was obliged to hand the business over to an American Tycoon named Charles Tyson Yerkes who already had railway interests in many cities of America.

In a similar way the Grand Metropolitan had also run into financial problems and they were resolved when a young railway entrepreneur from Manchester who already had control of the Great Central Railway, the South Eastern

Winter Programme Reports (Contd.)

railway in Kent and the East London Railway bought a controlling interest and his name was Edward Watkin. Having acquired control of these overlapping companies Watkin's dream was now to be able to run trains from Manchester through London to Dover then by under channel tunnel to Paris. Work started on the tunnelling using a system previously developed by Marc Brunel (father of I.K. Brunel when constructing the walkway tunnel under the Thames from New Cross to Wapping).

This ambitious project vital to Edward Watkin's dream was started between Dover and Folkestone with another similar excavation running from the Calais end towards England. The whole project developed into a political football, resulting in the government forcing the abandonment of the project on political grounds as the fear of any French invasion in the future could be made easy by mass rail transport.

With the completion of both the Grand Metropolitan and the District railways each servicing a number of mainline terminals, they still did not connect to form a convenient circular route to enable full contact between all termini. This impasse was due to the constant verbal war that existed between Edward Watkin and his counterpart at the District Railway Charles Tyson Yerkes, and it was only by direct government intervention that the two were eventually forced to co-operate and the lines were joined to form a continuous circular route. The District on standard gauge and the Grand Metropolitan on dual gauge and this would ultimately become the famous Circle Line familiar with millions of passengers today.

The next move of Edward Watkin was to double the tracks between Kings Cross and the south of the river to allow for more freight traffic and this was immediately followed by requests from LNWR and GE to utilise the short route (for a fee) and Watkin was only too pleased to take their money. At this point the GWR who had been the main supporter of the Grand Metropolitan from the very beginning, showed their opposition to others using the facility by pulling out all their finances and rolling stock.

This did not cause any problems for Edward Watkin (now Sir Edward Watkin) however as the other companies were only too pleased to step in with finance and replacement stock and at this point the removal of broad gauge tidied up the whole system.

Having lost his dream of an under-channel link, Watkin now had another dream: to build a tower in London taller than the recently finished Eiffel Tower in Paris and named after himself. This would be on land he owned adjacent to his Great Central and Metropolitan lines in North London.

After a competition (in which Eiffel would not take part), a winner was selected and work proceeded until the structure reached about one hundred and fifty feet high, whereupon Watkin died. After his death; public interest was lost in the project and after some years the structure was demolished and the site utilised for the Great Exhibition and ultimately Wembley Stadium. Today we have not a towering monument to Edward Watkin as a London landmark but a

massive illuminated steel arch heralding the position of the new Wembley Stadium.

The expansion of the Grand Metropolitan to link up with the Great Central Railway took the tracks well out into Middlesex and on to Buckinghamshire and by purchasing large areas of land adjacent to the railway, the company set up an estate company to sell off the land for high quality housing development. This company was registered as 'Grand Metropolitan Estates' and would prove to be a very wise move with the desire for Londoners to be able to live in an extremely pleasant environment and still get to the office in central London by fast train. The Grand Metropolitan now had a captive customer base, a very healthy diverse business portfolio (not entirely reliant on train fares) and in so doing coined the phrase 'Metroland' later to be honoured in verse by John Betjeman.

During the late 19th Century deep tunnel underground systems were developing as the new electric traction was introduced and many new companies were formed in London with private subscription and as a rule went quickly into financial meltdown such was the capital investment needed in building deep underground.

The saviour of many of these companies would be Charles Tyson Yerkes who had by now introduced electric traction from America to the District Railway and this forced the Grand Metropolitan to follow suit for the central London routes at first to be followed over the years by extension to the outer reaches of the network as far as Rickmansworth. Steam traction remained however on the extension to Aylesbury until the 1960s, (Aylesbury was reached in 1892).

The influx of so many new loss making underground railways in London undermined the fare structure of the whole public transport system and the government was obliged to use legislation to control the situation. By decree, the government formed 'The Underground Group' under the directorship of Albert Stanley later to become Lord Ashfield and he appointed Frank Pick as managing director. All existing and future underground companies would now become absorbed into the Underground Group with the exception of the Grand Metropolitan who (on account of their very profitable estate side were financially sound enough to stand alone) and the Waterloo and City direct link line owned by the LSWR.

The Underground Group under Frank Pick would have a standardised livery, rolling stock and corporate image and it was at this time that famous red and white painted trains became a feature of London underground and the world renowned underground 'Target' logo established for station signs, one that has been copied all over the world from other railway companies to coffee bars and strip clubs!

In the years between the two world wars the problem of competition within transportation in London became acute and ultimately led to the government once again stepping in to resolve the issue, which by now had affected the above ground services such as trams and buses as well as the underground. In 1933 London Passenger Transport Board

Winter Programme Reports (Contd.)

(L.P.T.B.) was formed still under the direct control of Lord Ashfield and Frank Pick and would incorporate (kicking and struggling) the Grand Metropolitan into the organisation and above ground all trams, buses and trolley buses would now come under direct control of L.P.T.B. London Transport as it would be known now had a standard livery for all trains trams and buses with the famous target logo adopted for trolley bus and bus stops.

Probably the most fundamental culture change to undertake the London Underground was during the hostilities of the two world wars when the deep tunnel systems came into their own as air raid shelters for large numbers of the London inhabitants. The shelter programme was further developed toward the end of WW2 and into the Cold War period when the deep tunnel facilities were expanded to create potential 'Atom Bomb' shelters for key Government Departments and public the alike.

During the nineteen twenties and thirties London Underground was the envy of the world and many foreign governments copied the system to produce their own rapid city-transport systems. The most notable being Soviet Russia when on the instructions of Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev visited London for a tour of the system and on his return to Moscow Stalin ordered the construction of the Moscow Metro. To any traveller the stations on this railway might resemble cathedrals of classic art and culture but during WW2 the system did provide as in London very valuable shelter for the inhabitants from Nazi bombardment.

The world famous London underground route map developed by Harry Beck in the 'Underground Group' days was regularly improved and is still with us today and the Art Deco architecture of Charles Holden are still accepted as brilliant and outstanding station designs along with his masterpiece 55 Broadway, the headquarters of London Transport (now to be developed into housing) until it was dissolved with the appointment of Ken Livingstone as Mayor of London, not to be confused with the Lord Mayor of The City of London.

Under the new Mayor all public transport within the confines of Greater London come within the remit of 'Transport For London' and today include taxis and even bicycle hire. And much to the chagrin of many motorists, clean air and congestion charges.

With the opening of two new deep tube lines in The Victoria line and The Jubilee line and The Docklands Light Railway since WW2, the development of London Underground still has difficulty coping with the ever increasing demand for mass transportation within the city.

We are today seeing the massive construction work of the largest construction project in Europe at this time, the new 'Cross Rail' development project planned to bring standard railway trains under London to connect with a few major junctions in the system.

This can only be for the good of the greater London commuter but the overriding fact is that our system was the

world's first and a vast amount of it is virtually unchanged for 175 years; apart from regular essential maintenance. If we were starting today I am sure we would have done many things differently and all other countries who have copied our wonderful railway have the advantage of being able to learn from our mistakes.

What a wonderful asset hindsight is.

John Mason

THE SHAZAM SHOW!

Robert Hemming - 3rd October 2014

The Story of the Regal Cinema, Evesham and how a Local Cinema affected the social life of a small town.

No report received yet—hopefully one will appear by the next edition!

THE HISTORY OF DEFFORD AND PERSHORE AIRFIELDS

Dennis Williams - 14 November 2014

No report received yet—hopefully one will appear by the next edition!

THE LAST DAYS OF METAL BOX COMPANY: FILM EVENING

Peter Wheatley - 12 December 2014

Roger Tapping, via the services of a former Metal Box employee, Cyrus Baria, was able to arrange a visit to the Metal Box factory when he heard that it was to cease production at Worcester. We were allowed to take both moving and still pictures so Peter Wheatley and Mike Hayzelden were called upon for their expertise. A full day was spent filming during production and Peter was able to return after production ceased to film the plant being stripped out. Peter then spent many hours editing the film, adding sub-titles and sound to produce the finished product. This combined film was to form the backbone of the evening but Roger was able to find the early black & white film that our was produced by Dennis Walker and obtain, from Metal Box, a training film they had professional produced showing in close up detail and graphics, the production process.

The show ran for about 50 minutes and started with the black & white film which included the opening of the Perry Wood factory, followed by the Metal Box film and finally by the new production.

Christine Silvester was host, providing seasonal treats of mulled wine and mince pies.

Roger Tapping

GEORGE'S YARD

Anna Frankel - 9 January 2015

No report received yet—hopefully one will appear by the next edition!

I have been associated with Avoncroft Museum of Buildings for many years and recently some of the volunteers that run the National Telephone Collection have formed a new organisation called the "The Communications Museums Trust". The aims of this trust are to further preserve and enhance the existing collections of telephone and other communication equipment around the country which are part of the British Telecom "Connected Earth" web site.

They have kindly given us permission to reproduce their latest newsletter, extracts of which are given below. If you want further information follow the links below. RT

THE CMT TIMES: NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MUSEUM TRUST

www.comms.org.uk (Email enquiries@comms.org.uk)

Private Enterprise to Government Monopoly (and back again) - The birth of the phone network in the UK

Alexander Graham Bell was granted UK patent rights for his invention, described in an earlier article, on 9th December 1876 and embarked on a PR campaign in the UK giving demonstrations to various interested parties. On 14th January 1878 Professor Bell demonstrated the phone to Queen Victoria, a call being setup to Sir Thomas Biddulph. Her Majesty was impressed and within a few days ordered her first set of telephones. At this point in time, telephone exchanges were non-existent, so you had to have a separate telephone for each person you wished to speak to, permanently wired from your home to theirs.

All long distance communication at that time was either by letter, entrusted to the General Post Office (GPO), who used the new and rapidly expanding rail network to deliver letters across the country or by telegraph, the GPO having built a network of telegraph wires linking various towns to carry messages by Morse code.

Bell's associate, Colonel Reynolds had been for some time trying to persuade the General Post Office to adopt Bell's telephone but the GPO were sceptical, famously stating in 1877 that the GPO "was in full possession of the knowledge of the invention and that the possible practical use of the telephone was limited".

Competition Private entrepreneurs were more open minded and the UK's first telephone company 'The Telephone Company Ltd' (partly owned by Bell as use of his patent was required) was formed on 14th June 1878 head quartered at 36 Coleman Street London - later to be the site of the country's first telephone exchange. It was also the first telephone company in Europe. Initially there were no telephone exchanges, as previously mentioned, so The Telephone Company's first customers rented a phone and a direct permanently wired link to the called party.

Before long this arrangement started to become untenable and exchanges were required as will be described in a later article.

Before long a competitor appeared on the scene in August

1879 - The Edison Company. The Edison Company's annual charge for telephone service was £12 compared The Telephone Company's £20.

The government, who of course owned the General Post Office started to realise the threat these new telephone companies posed a threat to their telegraph and postal services.

Legal advisers to the government were of the view that telephone calls were telegrams as defined in the Telegraph Acts 1863 & 1869 and sued the Edison Company.

To provide a stronger fighting force against the GPO, the Edison Company and The Telephone Company Ltd merged in May 1880 to become the United Telephone Company. UTC were confident of success - after all they owned the patents on the technology - but judgement came down in favour of the government - the High Court ruling that a telephone call was a message and therefore a telegram. Furthermore as UTC was in business for profit it was deemed an infringement of the Postmaster Generals' monopoly.

The ramifications of this judgement are still evident today with the GPO's network, which was privatised to form BT in the 1980's still forming the dominant communications network with nationwide coverage.

The initial solution, which again is still evident today, was to regulate the telephone industry so that no company could set up a telephone network unless it held a license from the government. From December 1880, all telephone network operators had to purchase a license from the GPO. When PO Telephones was privatised in the 1980's this responsibility was handed to the newly formed regulator OfTel (now Ofcom).

Despite the GPO's hand on the tiller, competition flourished for a number of years yet. Various regional companies obtained licenses from the government to operate phone networks in particular towns or cities. One such company was the National Telephone Company, formed in 1883 to cover Scotland and the Midlands. NTC tried, and failed to take over Taskers Sons & Co who were the sole network in Sheffield. Undeterred, they set up their own network in Sheffield and fought a ruthless battle for business for several years. On one occasion both firms had obtained wayleaves rights to install a pole in the only suitable place it could go. Wayleaves rights are still necessary for private utility companies to install their equipment such as poles, and cabinets on public property - highways and footpaths.

Engineers from one of the firms spent a day digging out a hole for the pole, intending to come back and erect the pole the following day. When they arrived the next day, the other firm had erected their pole in the hole! Eventually NTC prevailed and took over its smaller rival.

Although competition was rife it was not without its problems, in particular it was often the case that competing networks were not interconnected, requiring customers to have a phone on each network if they wanted to call someone on that network.

The early days of telephony (Contd.)

In 1889 UTC and the Lancashire & Cheshire Company merged with NTC, making NTC the dominant player nationally. In 1896, further threatened by the growth of long distance phone calls, the GPO took over the 'trunk network' - the trunk network is a network of lines linking towns and cities across the country. The private companies were thus left with their regional networks, and any long distance 'trunk' calls had to be passed over to the GPO.

In 1899 an updated Telegraph Act was passed which allowed the GPO, as well local councils, to set up local telephone networks in competition with the private companies. One advantage of this was that the GPO started to roll out phone service in rural areas which had been largely ignored by the private companies. However, the roll out of networks by local councils did not see wide take up, only a handful were ever created and they soon were taken over by either the NTC or GPO, with the exception of Hull which still retains its own network to this day.

1891 saw the laying of the first international undersea cable between the UK and France permitting international calls for the first time. The cable was 3 inches diameter and could carry a maximum of two calls. It ran from St. Margaret's Bay in Kent to Sangatte in France.

Monopoly In 1912 the GPO finally took over the assets of the NTC and for the first time, with the exception of Hull, there was a unified national phone network.

The GPO went on to become very successful and respected at running its telephone network introducing automatic exchanges and establishing a world leading research centre at Dollis Hill, North London, where, over the next 60 years, many world firsts were invented including the first electronic computer (Colossus), the first solid state electronic telephone exchange, the first digital exchange and along with it many of the underlying principles and techniques which underpin today's telecommunications. For more information see our website.

Competition – again The Post Office continued to run the country's telephone network until 1981, when the organisation was split in two - Post Office Telephones became British Telecom (still government owned) whilst the Postal Division became Royal Mail. At the same time the plug & socket system for phones was introduced. Prior to this all phones were permanently wired to the line, and the phone itself was the property of the GPO. In preparation for privatisation and competition, in 1981 it became possible for customers to buy their own phone from a range of suppliers and plug it in to the line socket. In the days when phones were hard-wired to the line it was not possible to easily connect modems, thus modems from the 1970's incorporated an acoustic coupler into which the telephone handset could be placed, the rubber cups ensuring the best possible sound transmission.

In 1984 the government sold off the majority of its ownership in British Telecom (BT) as a public limited company on the London Stock Exchange and for the first time since the start of the century other companies were once again allowed to ob-

tain a license from the newly established government regulator Ofstel (now Ofcom) and set up competing networks.

Despite the opening up of the market, new networks were slow to appear. Particularly the so called 'access networks' - the tree of wires linking individual houses and offices to the phone companies exchanges.

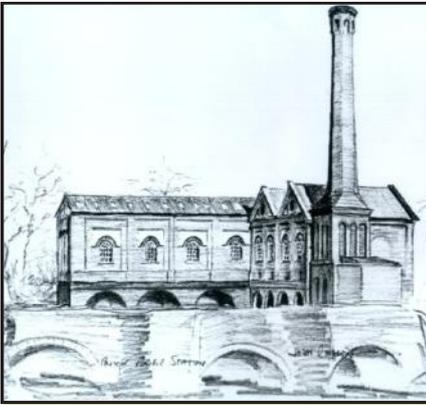
The civil engineering costs of digging the road up and laying cables covering every inch of the country is prohibitive. In some areas, mainly cities and larger towns, cable TV networks were built which were also capable of providing phone service. After many mergers and acquisitions these now operate under the single brand Virgin Media but their coverage is limited to the big towns. In other areas BT's access network remains the only option.

In order to spur competition further, in 2001, Ofstel imposed on BT the mandatory requirement to provide Local Loop Unbundling (LLU). The local loop being the pair of copper wires between customer and exchange. This means that use of BT's access network is no longer confined to just BT's own retail customers. Other telecoms firms can rent a pair of wires from BT, which are disconnected from BT's exchange equipment and instead connected to the other firms exchange equipment. Typically these 'other licensed operators' or OLOs as they are known, rent floor space in BT's exchange buildings for their equipment. As part of the agreement with Ofcom, BT were required to market the access network part of its business under a separate brand and company to make it clear that you didn't have to be a BT phone/broadband customer to benefit from their access networks overall reach and to ensure OLOs could have fair access to the network and on the same terms as BT's retail business. Thus Openreach was born, which operates as a wholly owned subsidiary company within the BT Group.

The other ubiquitous network One way to reduce the civil engineering cost of building an access network is of course to make it wireless. The UK's first mobile phone network was launched covering the town of Newbury in 1985 by telecoms equipment maker Racal who marketed it under the name Vodafone and it gradually grew to encompass most of the UK, along with quite a good list of competitors. The UK actually has very good competition in mobile networks in contrast to many other countries, but there's a price to pay for mobility - the reliability obviously can't match that of fixed wires, and at present wireless technology (Wi-Fi) cannot achieve data speeds competitive with fixed wiring, unless it's over a very short distance such as the Wi-Fi network in your home.

Partner Museums - Please check the museum's own web site for full details of events.

- Avoncroft: www.avoncroft.org.uk
- Museum of Power: www.museumofpower.org.uk



WIA&LHS Roles 2014-15

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New Book - Nelly Copson, a Tribute

By Paul Jones, LRPS

The idea for this book was formed after Nelly's passing in 2011, when I began to feel that there was a real danger of Nelly becoming largely forgotten within perhaps a generation or so. Other local historians had published their research and photographic collections – but sadly, Nelly had not.

I then digitized two audio recordings of Nelly – one being my own tape recording from the early 1990s consisting of Nelly's High Street tour, and the other being Val Booler's interview with Nelly, which took place in 1997. Claire and I then worked together, transcribing both of the recordings, with Droitwich Library's recording by Val Booler becoming the main source of information up to the year 1945 – the point at which the interview ended.

Claire and I are most grateful to all of those listed who shared their treasured memories and photographs with us. Tom Lymer was a constant help to us, and is selling copies of the book in his Butcher's shop in Droitwich High Street. Members of the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service were also most

helpful, with Bob Sproat providing an excellent account of Nelly's rescue from the High Street flood of 2007.

Society patron, Henry Sandon, friends with Nelly for many years, kindly wrote the foreword for the book.

Copies may be purchased for £8, from Droitwich Library, the Heritage Centre, Grace Cards, or Tom Lymer's on the High Street. Alternatively they can contact me directly on 01905 770088.

