

Newsletter

Newsletter of the Broseley Local History Society

Incorporating the Wilkinson Society



February 2010

MEETINGS

Meetings of the Broseley Local History Society are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm at the Broseley Social Club, High Street, unless otherwise announced. Car parking is available at the back of the Club.

Members are requested to be seated by 7.30 pm to allow speakers a prompt start.

Visitors are welcome but are asked to give a donation towards Society funds.

CONTENTS

Programme	page 1
New Members	page 1
Forthcoming Events	
Annual Wilkinson Lecture	page 1
June Walk	page 2
July Outing	page 2
Obituary	
Ray Johnston	page 2
Previous Meetings	
Fords and Ferries of the Severn Gorge	page 3
Christmas Dinner	page 4
Memories of Broseley	page 4
Legacy of the Royal Oak	page 8
Commemorative Plaques	page 10
The View from Brymbo	page 11
Quiz Night	page 11
Steaming down Coalbrookdale	page 12
Broseley Cemetery Chapel	page 12
What's On?	page 12
Mailbox	page 13

PROGRAMME

- 3 Mar *Watermills in the West Midlands* by Tim Booth
- 7 Apr Annual Wilkinson Lecture, *William Withering*, by George Evans
- 5 May *The Life and Times of George Pritchard* by Michael Pope
- 2 June A walk around Broseley Jitties
- 3 July Trip to the Derwent Valley, Derbys
- 1 Sept *Shropshire Writers*, by Gordon Dickins
- 6 Oct AGM and talk by John Challen *Blist's Hill Ironworks*
- 3 Nov *Memories of the Coalport Branch* by Neil Clarke – joint meeting with the FIGM in Coalbrookdale
- 1 Dec Christmas Dinner

Further details from Neil Clarke 01952 504135.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

- Michael Berthoud, Bridgnorth
Ray Hardman, Muxton, Telford
Margaret Hazeldine, Broseley
Joy Lello, Ludlow
T Mear, Posenhall
Don Preston, Stafford
R Torrens, Posenhall

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Annual Wilkinson Lecture

Wednesday 7 April

This year's lecture will be given by George Evans, President of Wellington Civic Society and the author of several books on the Wellington area. His subject is William Withering, physician and botanist, who first prescribed digitalis for the treatment of oedema (dropsy) caused by heart disease. Withering was a contemporary of John Wilkinson and a member of the Lunar Society. He was born in Wellington.

June Walk

Wednesday 2 June

The Society will be holding the summer walk on the evening of 2 June around the Broseley Wood Jitties. These jitties were originally a maze of narrow lanes lined with squatter cottages built by immigrant miners in the 1590s. Nowadays, most of the cottages have been restored and the area has become a much sought after place in which to live.

A Jitties Trail was officially launched last September with swing posts sited along the way outlining their history. An illustrated leaflet is also available, while a free audio tour can be downloaded from the Society's website. The walk will start from the Pipe Museum in Duke Street and refreshments will be available at the end.

July Outing

Saturday 3 July

This year the Society is arranging an outing to the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site in Derbyshire. Details have yet to be finalised but do diarise this date now as these trips are always well worth experiencing.

OBITUARY

Ray Johnston, BEM



It is with great sadness that *Newsletter* learnt of the recent death of Ray Johnston, one of the current presidents of the Society. Although not born in Broseley, Ray came to the town as a small baby and spent his boyhood there. After the war he moved to Madeley where he was still living at the time of his death. Ray had been a member of the Society for some years and had on several occasions given talks on various subjects. David Lake remembers him as 'a man of many parts':

It was at the time of Jack Owen's hands-on presidency that Ray became active in the Society's affairs. Jack had taken a tumble while delivering *Newsletters*, so Ray began accompanying him. It soon became apparent that Ray was a man of many parts.

His war service had gone beyond the basic call of duty, as he recounted in one of his talks to the

Society. Surviving the landing on Juno beach early on D-day he fought in the advance across France and Germany, with the especial horror of liberating concentration camp victims, to finish his war on Luneberg Heath.

Back in Madeley he became a well-known and respected carpenter and builder, with an interlude when with his wife he ran a shop in Anstice Road. Ray's building skills made him an early volunteer at Blist's Hill, highly regarded especially by David de Haan and John Challen, and remembered with affection his rebuilding of the Squatter's Cottage. All this gained him his valued BEM.

In common with beekeeper and Lavender Lady Natalie Hodgson of Astley Abbots House, Ray took a great interest in insects. I well remember the day when he and I took Natalie to fulfil an ambition to walk across Pontcysyllte Aqueduct; they were kindred spirits.

He also put his skill at oil painting to benefit Society funds by producing a series of conjectural views of now vanished local scenes.

Only a few days before his death Ray and I went to Brymbo to see the Brymbo Heritage Group's problem with the roof of the Heritage Site joinery shop, and Ray's comments were very relevant.

We sincerely commiserate with his daughter Rachel in her irreplaceable loss.
David Lake

Gillian Pope, Chairman of the Society, has this to add:

Ray Johnson was one of our most loyal and enthusiastic members and this was acknowledged by the Committee in asking him to be President of the Society in 2008.

We shall miss his valued contribution to the Society, especially his artistic talents and knowledge of the locality.

Readers may like to refer to the August 2006 Newsletter in which a biographical sketch of Ray appears, as well as to reports of his talks to the Society in the November 2004, November 2007 and November 2008 issues.

Editor

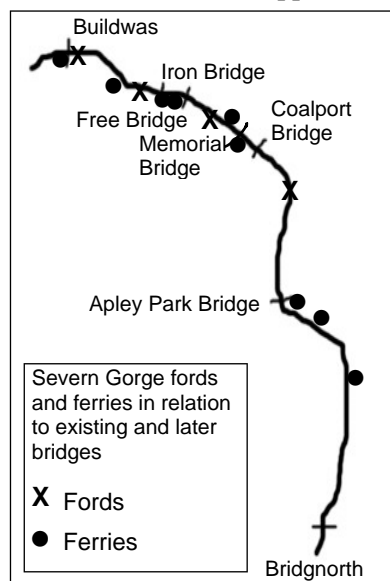
PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Fords and Ferries of the Severn Gorge

The November meeting was held at Coalbrookdale in conjunction with the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, when Neil Clarke presented the results of his research into the Fords and Ferries of the Severn Gorge. Here is his synopsis of that talk.

The earliest crossings of the river in the Severn Gorge area were at the entrance to the gorge at Buildwas and 12 miles downstream where the gorge opens out at Bridgnorth. At each of these two points an early ford was replaced by a ferry and, in time, by a bridge. In the gorge proper, while there was mining activity on both sides of the river in the Middle Ages, there is little evidence of settlement on the steep wooded slopes until the rapid growth of the coal trade in the late 16th and early 17th centuries; and so the need to cross the river only really developed from that time onwards. Between Buildwas and the southern end of Apley Terrace there are at least five known sites of fords and nine of ferries. Buildwas Bridge was the only bridge on this part of the Severn until the building of the Wooden Bridge at Preens Eddy and the Iron Bridge in the late 18th century; by the early 20th century six bridges provided crossings of the river.

Like other rivers, the Severn consists of a succession of pools where the water is deep and flows slowly, and riffles where it runs rapidly across pebbly shallows. Riffles were commonly called ‘fords’ on the Upper Severn, but this did not



imply that the river was regularly crossed at such places. However, there were clearly ancient crossings of the river at places such as Montford, west of Shrewsbury,

Fords and ferries in relation to existing and later bridges

A temporary ferry operated while Buildwas Bridge was being repaired c 1790



and Quatford, south of Bridgnorth. The known fords in the Severn Gorge were at Buildwas where there were two, Dale End, Coalford and Gitchfield. In spite of the efforts of the Coalbrookdale Company to clear the river of obstructions, we know of the use of the ford at Dale End from a report of a wagon toppling over into the river in 1762.

On the 25 inch OS maps of the county published in the late 1870s and early 1880s, there are 18 ferries shown on the River Severn, but it is likely that there had been more at an earlier date. The nine ferries (at various times) in the Severn Gorge were at Buildwas, The Meadow (Benthall Edge), Benthall (the site of the later Iron Bridge), Jackfield, The Lloyds (horse ferry), The Tuckies (Coalport), Apley Forge, Apley and Newton.

The earliest recorded ferry was Adam’s Ferry at Jackfield, dating from the mid 17th century and used by Abraham Darby I when he travelled between Madeley Court and the Quaker meeting house in Broseley. Regulations governing ferries laid down that they could only operate between sunrise and sunset and not on Sundays. The types of vessels used as ferry boats seem to have ranged from the rowing boats of earlier years, through punt-like craft to the more substantial boats that were being employed at Jackfield and Coalport at the end of the 19th century.

Crossing the river by ferry in the Severn Gorge could be dangerous, particularly in times of flood, and the worst disaster that occurred was the overturning of the Tuckies ferry boat in October 1799, resulting in the drowning of 28 employees returning home from the Coalport China Works. The deteriorating condition of the two most regularly used ferries, at Jackfield and Coalport, led to their closure and replacement by bridges in the early years of the 20th century, although the Meadow ferry continued in use until the 1950s.

Christmas Dinner

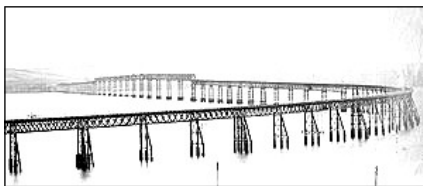
Once again the Society held its Christmas dinner at the Lion Hotel in Broseley where this year there was entertainment with a difference when Neil Clarke, Dot Cox and Janet Robinson recited some of the poems of William McGonagall. McGonagall is said to be the writer of the worst poetry in the English language and, according to some, is Dundee's best remembered nobody, a man without talent who thought he was a great poet. He was, however, frequently engaged to entertain audiences just so they could make fun of him and take the chance to spike his teetotal drink with alcohol.



William McGonagall was said to be the writer of the worst poetry in the English language

Neil began the entertainment with a recital of *The Tay Bridge Disaster*, which recounts the events of the evening of 28 December 1879, when a severe gale caused the Tay Rail Bridge near Dundee to collapse with the loss of 90 lives as a train was passing over it. McGonagall's moral is, over some eight appalling verses, that had this "Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay" been built properly in the first instance it would not have collapsed, concluding that "The stronger we our houses do build/The less chance we have of being killed."

Dot then launched into *The Albion Battleship Calamity* beginning "Twas in the year of 1898, and on the 21st of June./The launching of the Battleship Albion caused a great gloom", the reason being that the bow wave caused by the ship at her launch swamped a bridge on which spectators, despite warning signs, had crowded to watch the event. Hundreds were thrown into the water and more would have drowned but for rescue



The Tay Bridge before and after the disaster



The guests certainly enjoyed the entertainment

efforts by onlookers. One brave soul, though, who had jumped in to save five people, later found that his waistcoat, containing his watch and chain, had disappeared. In all 38 lives were lost. Here again McGonagall moralises that "The stronger we our houses do build/The less chance we have of being killed," never mind that the bridge had been cordoned off from spectators.

Janet then ended on a lighter note extolling the virtues of the River Leith where the "innocent trouts sing an aquatic song" and lovers "can spend an hour . . . at their ease/And make love to each other if they please", meanwhile being assured by McGonagall that should you go to see the River Leith "you will get a great treat./Because the River of Leith scenery cannot be beat."

Memories of Broseley

In January Joan Griffiths took members back through time when she shared with the meeting some of her considerable collection of photographs both of old Broseley and of her own family. Joan was born in Swan Street, Broseley, but moved as a baby to Cape Fold. She started her higher education at Coalbrookdale School but at 15, times being hard, she left to find work to help pay the rent when the family was offered one of the new houses in Bridgnorth Road. She is, however, fascinated by the social history of Broseley and has published two books *Broseley, The People and the Past* and *Poaching in the Gorge*.

To set the scene Joan showed a picture of Broseley High Street taken some time before 1963. The old Town Hall with its bell turret, which can be seen on the left of the picture, was built in 1777 on land bought with money donated for charitable purposes.



Broseley High Street and Town Hall prior to 1963

Rents from this and adjacent properties were distributed among the poor in Broseley. It was used for public meetings and by the courts, having a small prison attached to it as well as a market. To many it was a sad loss when it was demolished in 1963 to make way for a modern supermarket. Fortunately the buildings on the right have remained although their uses may have changed.

Lower down the High Street, seen from where the Pritchard Memorial once stood, the shops are also largely unchanged, although the petrol pumps have gone from outside E Davis & Son ironmongers.

Broseley Square in the 1950/60s



Looking the other way down Church Street, Broseley Square in the 1950/60s



Looking the other way down Church Street, Joan recalls Aston's Café which had a jukebox, one of the few entertainments in the town, though on one occasion the children made their own amusement when some of them let loose four white mice in the café!

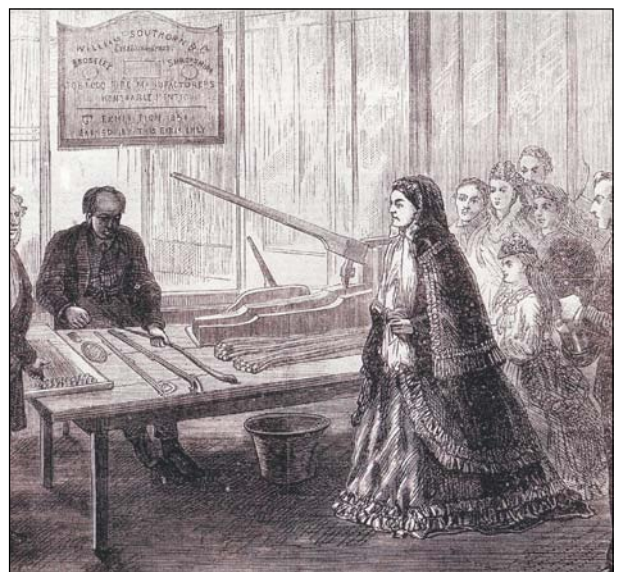
Another evocative picture was that of Broseley Memorial Gardens as they were before the railings were removed during WWII to help with the war effort. Some of the houses in the background have now been replaced with shops.

Broseley is, of course, famous for its clay tobacco pipe manufacturers, one of whom was William Southorn who had a factory in Broseley Wood. His company won an Honourable Mention for their products at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and in the drawing below William Southorn is seen here with Queen Victoria.

Broseley Memorial Gardens before WWII



William Southorn, seen here with Queen Victoria, got an Honourable Mention at the Great Exhibition of 1851 for his clay tobacco pipes manufactured in Broseley Wood





After a chequered career, the old rival Baptist Chapel now belongs to Broseley Town Council. Renamed the Birchmeadow Centre it is used for Town Council meetings and community events

Broseley had churches and chapels to cover almost all sects. However, not all of them were of like mind, even among themselves, and in 1903 some of the worshippers at the Baptist Chapel in Chapel Lane split from the main group and, with the help of John Guest, of Guest's Iron Foundry, built a rival Chapel on the Birchmeadow. It ceased to be used as a chapel shortly before WWII, since when the building has had many uses, being among other things a cinema and a night club.

In 1995 it was bought by the then Broseley Parish Council for use as a community centre and renamed the Birchmeadow Centre. Both John Guest and John Onions, another ironmaster, were buried in its graveyard. Sadly this area is now paved and serves as a car park.

Another church in the town was the Methodist Church in Duke Street which was built in 1796. It was demolished in about 1965 and a new one now stands in its grounds.

This beautiful building was demolished in 1965 and replaced with a new church



The pony and trap owned by Joan Griffiths' great grandfather Oakley

The early 1900s picture above is of the pony and trap owned by Joan's great grandfather Oakley. Taken from Barratt's Hill, the old Cape of Good Hope pub can be seen on the right. The cottages adjoining were demolished in the early 1900s and were replaced by the present day Cape Fold where Joan lived as a young girl. Farther down the street can be seen the Burnt House, the only four storey building in Broseley and so named because of the fire in June 1883 which partly destroyed it.

An intriguing photograph showed a long line of women and children, all in their Sunday best and looking happy and cheerful, coming out of the courtyard behind the old Instone's building (now Harwoods Estate Agents) and going towards the Square. Probably taken in the 1930s, *Newsletter* would be delighted to hear if any reader has any idea of the occasion.

An intriguing picture taken some time in the 1930s shows a long line of women and children leaving the courtyard behind the old Instone's building





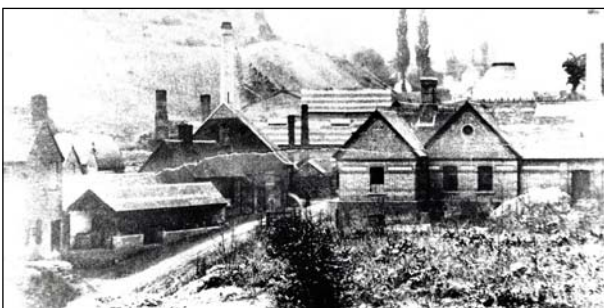
Broseley's 'fire engine' in the early 1900s was stored at the rear of the Town Hall

Another interesting photograph was that of Broseley's fire engine in the early 1900s. Little seems to be known about it except that it was stored at the rear of the old Town Hall.

Joan also had what is believed to be a picture of Benthall Ironworks in Bridge Road. The Hill family who owned it were her ancestors who had lived in the area since 1550. They cast their own iron gravestones, some of which can still be seen in Benthall churchyard.

Two of their descendants were Francis Aston nee Hill, Joan Griffiths' great great great grandmother, whose portrait has a metal frame which could have been made at the ironworks, and her grandmother Alice Beddow nee Corfield who was born in 1887.

Benthall Ironworks in Bridge Road was owned by the Hill family



L to R, Hiram Hill's iron gravestone in Benthall churchyard, Joan Griffiths' grandmother Alice Beddow and her great great grandmother Francis Aston



Top to bottom

Schoolchildren were encouraged to grow fruit and vegetables at the Broseley Primary School in Bridgnorth Road in the 1940s and '50s

A British Legion parade in the 1950s

A delightful postcard from around 1920 showing Lovers' Walk, Benthall Edge



Among the last photographs to be shown were pictures of children at the old Broseley Primary School in Bridgnorth Road working in the gardens; what appears to be a British Legion parade in the 1950s watched by local dignitaries as well as the people leaning out of the top windows of the old Town Hall; and last but not least a delightful postcard from around 1920 showing Lovers' Walk, Benthall Edge.

In all, a fascinating trip down memory lane. Members will certainly look forward to more of the same next year.

Photographs courtesy of Joan Griffiths, Yvonne Miles, Steve Dewhirst, Gerald Instone, Rex Key and various others in the town.

Legacy of the Royal Oak



Charles II as a young man

In February Alan Lewis gave a talk on Charles II and the Legacy of the Royal Oak. An ex policeman, Alan became a guide at Boscobel House on his retirement but left there in 2008.

Charles II was the eldest son of King Charles I of England and Scotland. By the time he was in his teens, however, Civil War had engulfed the country and Charles I thought it wise to send his son and heir to France for his safety. But when King Charles, having lost his fight against Cromwell, was beheaded in 1649, Charles returned to claim the throne, only to find that England had become a commonwealth under Cromwell.

Scotland, however, did welcome him back and, within days of his father's death, proclaimed him King Charles II of Scotland. There he raised an army to back up his claim to the English throne, prompting Cromwell's forces to march north, meeting and beating Charles at the battle of Dunbar.

Nothing daunted, Charles raised another army and marched south, a move which the English regarded as an act of invasion by the Scots. The two armies met at Worcester in 1651, where Charles' army was out numbered, out manoeuvred and out classed. Charles narrowly escaped and, together with an escort, travelled north. Among that escort was Lord Derby who urged the king to seek shelter at Boscobel House in Shropshire, the inhabitants of which were known to be sympathetic to the Royalists. But Charles Giffard, who owned the Boscobel estate, thought it safer to take him to the nearby Whiteladies Priory. At the time there were five Penderel brothers working on the Boscobel estate and on reaching Whiteladies, Giffard sent for two of them, Richard and William, and placed the king in their care.

The name Boscobel gets its name from the Italian 'bosco', a wood, and 'bello' meaning beautiful, so the natural place to hide the king overnight was in the woods before taking him through Shropshire down to south Wales where he could make his escape to France.

Evelith Mill, where Charles and Richard Penderel narrowly escaped detection



Although Charles was a tall man, finding him woodcutter's clothing as disguise was no problem, it was his large feet which proved difficult. Nonetheless, Richard and Charles set off, the king unused to walking and with ill-fitting shoes, to Evelith Mill where, according to legend, they roused the miller by shutting a gate too noisily. Hurrying on they finally reached the house of the royalist Wolfe family at Madeley where they hoped to cross the River Severn en route to Wales. However, all the crossings were so heavily guarded that they had little choice but to sleep overnight in a barn and next morning return to Boscobel.

There they were met by Colonel William Carlis who was also on the run, so it was back to the woods where he and Charles found a hiding place in what later became known as the Royal Oak. There they hid for some 14 hours while Cromwell's men searched the woods for them. At one time, it is said, the troops were so close that Charles could hear them discussing what they would do to him when they did find him. A most uncomfortable situation in more ways than one!

Once it was considered safe, the two came down out of their tree and went back to Boscobel House where Charles was hidden overnight in the priest's hole in the cheese loft. Accompanied by all five Penderel brothers the king then set out for Moseley Old Hall. While resting there, some of Cromwell's

Prince Charles inspecting the priest's hole in the cheese loft at Boscobel House where his ancestor was hidden overnight



troops arrived but, being persuaded that the owner Thomas Whitgreave was not a Royalist, did not search the house. Another narrow escape!

From there he and Lord Wilmot went to Bentley Hall, the home of Colonel John Lane, an officer in the Royalist army. During the Civil War Catholics were not allowed to travel more than five miles from home without a permit, but Colonel Lane's sister Jane had obtained permission to visit a friend near Bristol. Wilmot saw an opportunity for the king to escape through Bristol in the guise of a servant so, dressed as a tenant farmer's son and known as William Jackson, the king set out with Jane Lane and an escort party. At the time there was a price of £1,000 on the king's head and anyone found helping him would almost certainly have been hanged. Lord Wilmot himself refused to travel in disguise, openly riding a short distance ahead as if out hunting. Arriving at Bristol they could find no ship to take them to France so they continued east along the coast to Weymouth. There they found the villagers celebrating what they believed to be the death of Charles at Worcester. Yet another narrow escape!

Reaching Charmouth, Charles and a Juliana Coningsby posed as an eloping couple while Wilmot found a captain willing to take them to France. Captain Limbry, however, was at the last minute prevented from sailing when his wife, fearing for his safety, locked him in his bedroom! Next day Charles once again had a narrow escape by hiding in a lane in Dorchester.

By this time, Charles' flight was beginning to look like a Tom and Jerry cartoon when, having found a bed for the night at an inn in the village, 40 soldiers suddenly arrived to be billeted there. Luckily for him, one of the camp followers went into labour and the locals, fearing the parish would have to pay for the child's upbringing, unwittingly caused such a diversion that the king was able to make his escape yet again.

It was not until mid October that Wilmot finally managed to find a boat in Shoreham, near Brighton, willing to take the king to France. The agreed price was to be £80, but when the inn keeper recognised Charles, falling on his knees in homage, the captain demanded an additional £200.

Only hours after they sailed, a troop of cavalry arrived to arrest him. The final narrow escape!

In 1658 Cromwell died, to be succeeded by his son Richard. Richard, however, was an indecisive character and Cromwell's death was followed by two years of political confusion, culminating in the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

Upon his return to England, King Charles fulfilled his promise to the Penderels 'not to forget them' and granted them pensions and annuities in perpetuity. Richard Penderel's descendants still receive an annuity of £100 a year. Nor did the king forget others who had helped him. Wilmot became the first colonel of the Grenadier Guards, while General George Monck, a Cromwell supporter turned Royalist and the founder of the Coldstream Guards, was given a pension of £700 a year.

While Charles was generous to those who had helped him he could not forgive others, in particular those people who had signed his father's death warrant. Ten of these were tried and hanged while others served prison terms. Cromwell's body was exhumed and hanged in chains at Tyburn, and his severed head impaled on a pole outside Westminster Hall. From there it changed hands several times before eventually being buried in the grounds of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

Charles' adventures while escaping to France had given him a unique insight into 'how the other half lived', something no other king had ever experienced, and he took an intense interest in many aspects of life in Britain, meanwhile taking the opportunity to promote the fact that the country was once again ruled by a monarchy. He was patron of the Royal Hospital Chelsea and introduced army pensions for what are now known as the Chelsea Pensioners. He instituted the Royal

Patron of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, Charles II introduced pensions for what are now known as the Chelsea Pensioners



Greenwich Observatory to research the science of astro-navigation. He also gave his patronage to the Royal Society whose remit was for “the improvement of natural knowledge”, since when every monarch has been the patron of the Society. He also took the opportunity to rename the English Navy the Royal Navy while the Duke of York and Albany’s Maritime Regiment of Foot became the Royal Marines.

In addition to promoting the sciences, Charles also took an interest in various other aspects of life. To help prevent a second disaster, he persuaded Sir Christopher Wren to design wider streets when rebuilding London after the Great Fire of 1666, while theatre licences granted by him were the first in England to permit women to play female roles. Nor should one forget the King Charles Spaniel, a breed popular during the Restoration.

Another of Charles’ many legacies is the name The Royal Oak. Never one to miss a marketing trick, Charles publicised the story of the tree in which he and Carlis had hidden and encouraged the public to go and visit it. Eventually, however, this tree succumbed to old age and the tourist industry and was replaced by the one presently on the Boscobel estate, which was grown from an acorn harvested from the original oak. Now itself in a state of decay, it will shortly be replaced by a sapling grown from one of its own acorns, a sapling planted by today’s Prince Charles when he visited Boscobel in 2001. Even today 29 May, King Charles’ birthday, is known as Oak Apple Day, while up until the mid 19th century people wore sprigs of oak leaves in celebration of the king’s birthday and of the Restoration.

While this tradition is no longer observed, the name The Royal Oak has survived in a number of other areas. Well over 600 pubs throughout the country bear this name. There have also been seven ships, the first one being launched in 1664, while in the modern era both steam and diesel trains, as well as an underground station have been given this royal name.

The one lasting legacy the king could not produce, however, was a legitimate son and heir, his wife Catherine of Braganza failing to give him children.

He did, however, have six mistresses besides Nell Gwyn, who bore him at least a dozen children. Many of these received dukedoms, in particular the Duke of Grafton and the Duke of Richmond from whom Diana, Princess of Wales, was descended. Could he have foreseen it, Charles might have been gratified to know that her son, the present Prince William and second in line to the British Throne, could be the first monarch to be directly descended from him.

Photographs courtesy of Alan Lewis

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES

The Society has recently erected two more commemorative plaques in Broseley, one at Whitehall in Church Street and one at the Victoria Hall in the High Street.

The plaque at Whitehall, the present home of Simon and Annie Rees, honours the memory of John Onions, who once resided there. Onions, who lived from 1745-1819, was an ironmaster with interests both in this area and for many miles around. Subsequent to John Wilkinson famously building the first iron boat, Randall, in his *Broseley and its Surroundings*, reports that “in 1810 John Onions and Son, of Broseley, built a lighter, of about 50 tons, called the *Victory*, which was designed for the Severn trade; and also one at their works at Brierley, which was sent to London, in parts, and which was, we believe, the first iron vessel on the Thames. In 1811 they built several which traded extensively between Brierley and London, and between Broseley and Stourport.”. John Onions was buried in the Birchmeadow Chapel graveyard, now car parking space for the Birchmeadow Centre.



Simon Rees, owner of Whitehall, holding the plaque, with Michael and Gillian Pope on his left

The plaque now on the Victoria Hall



Victoria Hall was built in 1867 by the Plymouth Brethren and was partly financed by the Maw family who owned the tile works in Jackfield. It was used as their Gospel Rooms until around 1905 when they moved to Broseley Wood where they continued to meet until 1927. The hall has had a number of other uses, being at one time a billiard hall and the local library. It is currently used as a venue for community events.

*Newsletter has been unable to establish exactly where in Broseley Wood the new Gospel Rooms were situated. Any information on this would be appreciated.
Editor*

THE VIEW FROM BRYMBO

Society members may recall that as part of the 2008 John Wilkinson celebrations a trip was arranged to Brymbo, the site near Bersham where John Wilkinson founded his ironworks in 1794. His blast furnaces and foundry eventually became Brymbo Steelworks, which closed only in 1990. The major part of the site has now been cleared for building development, but the Brymbo Heritage Group is anxious to retain what industrial heritage still remains. Now concern has been raised by members of this Group regarding the slow progress being made and the deteriorating state of some of the historic buildings. David Lake and Ray Johnston went out to have a look. Here David reports on what they found.

Despite choosing a cold day on which to visit Brymbo, Ray and I were given a very warm welcome by Colin Davies, chairman of the Brymbo Heritage Group, more than making up for the snow which fell steadily during our visit.

John Wilkinson's Old Number One furnace stands as majestically as when we saw it on the occasion of the Society's visit in 2008, and the walls of the adjacent foundry, pattern shop and joinery shop, with their beautiful stonework, also stand well. However, the roofs are of slate carried on long timber beams, and these are giving cause for concern; indeed the roof of the joinery shop is collapsing due to failure of its supporting timbers.

If Brymbo aims to build up its number of paying visitors, the Group has to be very aware not only of conservation but also of health and safety

concerns. In looking for help and advice on this aspect, the Group has been in touch with various authorities including the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Last year they had a visit from the Heritage Minister who stressed the importance of conserving the heritage area. They have also been in contact with a Welsh conservation authority which, it is hoped, will eventually take responsibility for the maintenance of these scheduled buildings. Meanwhile the small volunteer group faces a considerable task.

A ray of hope is that the Wrexham Science Festival is being held this year from 1-10 July. The Brymbo Heritage Site, with its ironmaking history and its richness in fossil discoveries, has the potential to be a considerable contributor, a situation which could be mutually beneficial.

QUIZ NIGHT

In early December Society members Neil Clarke, Janet Robinson, Vin Callcut and Hilary Callcut teamed up to compete in a Quiz Night held by the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum (FIGM) at Coalbrookdale. The event was compered by Marilyn Higson, a member of staff at the Telford & Wrekin Library, and attracted some 14 teams from around the area. The Society's team acquitted themselves with considerable distinction, being in the lead for some time before being only narrowly beaten into second place by the Ironbridge Rotary team.

FIGM, which was founded 40 years ago to support the Ironbridge Gorge Museums both financially and practically, recently held a combined meeting at Coalbrookdale with Broseley Local History Society when member Neil Clarke gave a talk on *Fords and Ferries of the Severn Gorge*. This meeting was so well attended by members of the Society that a further meeting has been arranged for next November when Neil will once again be the speaker – this time on *Memories of the Coalport Branch*, the railway that ran from Wellington to Coalport.

The FIGM runs a full programme of events throughout the year and new members are always welcome. Contact Sophie Miles on 01952 435900 or email sophie.miles@ironbridge.org.uk

STEAMING DOWN COALBROOKDALE



Once again a good crowd turned out in November to see this special excursion steam train travel down to Coalbrookdale power station. Tickets for the trip were so popular that an extra coach had to be added, with at least five Society members among the passengers.

The trip was organised by Vintage Trains at Tyseley Locomotive Works to be double headed by two fully restored GWR pannier tank engines. Its route took it from Tyseley down to the power station, via Wolverhampton, then back up the bank and round to the Severn Valley Railway at Kidderminster. The sight and sound of the two locomotives powering the train up the steep gradient out of the Severn Gorge was something to be remembered!

BROSELEY CEMETERY CHAPEL

Work on refurbishing the disused Chapel at Broseley Cemetery is now under way. Woodwork on the exterior is being painted and the guttering renewed, while overhanging branches have been cut back.

Plans for the restoration of the bell turret have been temporarily held up as the structure appears to be unstable and the extent of the damage needs to be assessed before work on it can be started.

The next stage is to renovate the interior and once alternative storage space for the Council equipment, which is currently being stored there, has been provided plans for this can go ahead.

It is ultimately hoped to turn the chapel into a Cultural and Visitors' Centre as well as provide a quiet environment for people visiting the cemetery.

WHAT'S ON?

Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival

Saturday 1 - Sunday 9 May

Over 20 themed guided walks in and around the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage site. The walks will include a Wild Garlic Ramble and a Dawn Chorus Walk along Benthall Edge.

All walks are free but booking is recommended, email: events@greenwoodcentre.org.uk or tel: 01952 435857

Local History Day

Shirehall, Shrewsbury

Saturday 8 May, 10.30 am – 4.00 pm

The event will include two main speakers, Richard K Morriss of the Time Team on *The History of Hopton Castle* and Peter Duckers of the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry Museum on *The Castles of Shropshire*. There will also be displays mounted by local history groups.

Attendance is free to both participants and visitors and further information is available from Sue Cleaves, Friends of Shropshire Archives, email: suecleaves49@googlemail.com or tel: 01952 812060.

English Gothic Masterpieces

St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury

Saturday 24 July, 2.00 pm

Tickets £5.00, must be booked in advance Prof Michelle P Brown FSA will give an illustrated lecture on *Three English Gothic Masterpieces and their Makers*, the Holkham Picture Bible, Luttrell Psalter and Sherborne Missal.

For further information or to book, phone Shropshire Scribes, tel: 01743 355384 after 6.00 pm.

John Randall Day School

John Randall Primary School, Queen Street, Madeley

Saturday 4 September, 10.00 am – 4.30 pm

Cost: £5.00 includes buffet lunch

A conference to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth and the 100th anniversary of the death of John Randall who was born in Broseley in 1810. Well known for his *History of Broseley and its Surroundings*, he worked for much of his life as a china painter at both the Coalport and Rockingham China Works. He was also an accomplished geologist and a consultant in mining geology.

Although born in Broseley, he lived much of his life in Madeley where he died in 1910.

A number of speakers will cover Randall's early life in Broseley, his achievements as ceramicist, geologist and historian and his work as postmaster and local councillor.

Further details and a booking form available shortly.

MAILBOX

I have read with interest Pat Wilford's query in the *November 2009 Newsletter* regarding St Leonard's Church. St Leonard's, Broseley, is the Norman Church of Linley just up the road from Broseley and it is these parish registers that you need to consult for more information.

Incidentally, I have several Rowley connections with my Watkiss family but no family tree.

Sheila Jelley

sheila@sheilajelley.co.uk

As you say, Linley church is indeed St Leonard's and much older than Broseley. However the old church at Broseley was also confusingly called St Leonard's. It became the Church of All Saints in 1845 when the old church was demolished and a new one built. As Linley is a very small parish I think it is likely that the marriage was at the old Broseley Church but I am not familiar with the actual families. I checked in the Victoria County History and the population of Linley seems to have been around 100 and in 1851 the average congregation was 40.

Steve Dewhirst

Rumour has it that when it came to deciding on a name for this new church, some wanted it to be called St Leonard's while others were keen to name it after other saints. Since no consensus could be reached they compromised and called it the Church of All Saints. Does anyone have any other ideas as to how it got its present name?

Editor

I am currently researching the provenance of a portrait once owned by a Rev W H Wayne and sold by him to Arthur Smith, Albert Gate Art Galleries, in 1898 in part exchange for a large Gainsborough.

I note there was a Rev W H Wayne in the Willey Register and wonder which church he was attached to and if it is still in existence?

Cressida Nash

poly@idx.com.au

W H Wayne was indeed at Willey and during his long incumbency (1878–1921) the church was restored and a new burial ground for Willey and Barrow consecrated at Barrow in 1881.

The church does still exist; however it has been de-commissioned and is now on the Forester Estate. Unfortunately there is no public access without permission from the estate.

Steve Dewhirst

In reply Cressida Nash writes:

With regard to the Rev Wayne does anyone know where he went after 1921 or was he there until his death? Am I right in thinking the church was Anglican? I am trying to find any records of him having purchased or owned the painting I am researching, perhaps in church records.

I spoke to a local vicar and he could not provide any information about the Rev Wayne. He is not mentioned in the local papers and seems to have kept a low profile. The church is Anglican and dedicated to St John the Baptist.

Steve Dewhirst

I have been researching our family tree and have found that my great grandmother lived at Linley Farm, Broseley, in 1913, as that is stated as her address on her marriage certificate. I believe she was in service there working for a Mr Norgrove.

I also have a card in her personal belongings informing her about the death of a Samuel Cox in 1909, who lived at Sunny Bank, Nordley, and was interred at Astley Abbots church.

I am keen to visit Broseley, especially Linley, in the hope that I might be able to find some records or photographs as I have very little information about who she was and how she came to be working in Shropshire. Is there anyone who could help me?

Becky Dobson

licketysplitgifts@googlemail.com

Following Lin Webster's request in the August 2009 Newsletter for information on Baynham's Crossing, and the family story that her great grandmother had been killed there by a train, Neil Beddow refers her to a report in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* of 19 September 1947.

"The inquest was concluded at Iron-Bridge yesterday on Mrs Lizzie Beynham (sic), keeper of No 2 Crossing, Jackfield, who was knocked down and fatally injured when a train crashed into the crossing gates on Sept 8. Mrs Beynham was taken to the Lady Forester Hospital, Broseley, where she died the following morning . . . Evidence showed that Mrs Beynham had opened the gates for a train to pass when she noticed that one of the gates was swinging back. As she ran across to push it back the train came along and she was knocked down.

"Frederick Harley, GWR Signals and Telegraph Inspector, said the gates were operated by hand and when opened for traffic were held in position

by a latch, and then bolted by a lever working from the cabin. Unless the gates were properly latched it was not possible



Elizabeth Baynham was keeper of the railway crossing at Jackfield when she was knocked down and killed by a train in September 1947

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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to operate the bolting lever. . . . He had examined the mechanism of the gate after the accident and it was in good working order.

"John Thomas Beynham said that after the accident he found that there was a play of about two inches at the top of the gate, to which the locking mechanism was attached, and this might be the reason why the gate did not latch properly. Evans Roberts, driver of the train, said that he approached the crossing at about five miles an hour. When he first saw the gates they were in the correct position and he was about 20 yards away. Then the fireman shouted that the gates were coming open. The brakes were applied immediately.

"Dennis Bale, the fireman, said that when he saw Mrs Beynham going to close the gate he shouted to her to leave it alone, but the train hit the gate and as she was behind it she was knocked down."

Following a request by Raymond Hurdley Jones for information on his family, *Newsletter* put him in touch with James Hurdley who keeps the ironmongers' store in Broseley High Street. Raymond subsequently visited Broseley and met with James, a cousin whom he had not known existed. James apparently was able to update a few entries in his family tree as well as swap the odd family anecdote.

Raymond then sent this information on to another cousin, Graham Jones, who lives in Canada saying how helpful James had been and how much he had enjoyed meeting him in his 'Aladdin's Cave' store with its huge variety of treasures.

Nice to know that *Newsletter* can sometimes be of help.

Newsletter is sympathetic to the concerns of certain of its correspondents who are reluctant to see their email address appear in the public domain. If there is anyone who does not wish their contact details to be published, they are welcome to make use of the Society's email address steve@broseley.org.uk. Any respondent without access to email may pass on information to any member of the committee.

To see this Newsletter in full colour visit the website at www.broseley.org.uk.