

# Newsletter

## Newsletter of the Broseley Local History Society

*Incorporating the Wilkinson Society*



August 2005

<i>Chairman</i>	John Freeman
<i>Secretary</i>	Dot Cox
<i>Treasurer</i>	Steve Dewhirst
<i>Curator</i>	David Lake
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Janet Robinson 26 Coalport Road Broseley TF12 5AZ 01952 882495
<i>Programme Secretary and Journal Editor</i>	Neil Clarke
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Jan Lancaster
<i>Publicity</i>	Michael Pope
<i>CD archiving</i>	Vin Callcut
<i>Website</i>	<a href="http://www.broseley.org.uk">www.broseley.org.uk</a>
<i>Email</i>	<a href="mailto:steve@broseley.org.uk">steve@broseley.org.uk</a>

### 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.

### Programme

- 7 Sep Memories Evening – Schools
  - 5 Oct AGM, followed by talk *Nelson and Trafalgar* by ex-naval man Lance Wise
  - 21 Oct Trafalgar 200 Dinner
  - 22 Oct Tree Planting Ceremony
  - 2 Nov *Broseley's 'Tylting Rails' (1605)* – the first railway in Shropshire, by Neil Clarke
  - 7 Dec Annual Christmas dinner
  - 4 Jan *The Society's Outings* – an illustrated presentation by John Freeman
  - 1 Feb *Coalport, New Town of the 1790s?*, by Marilyn Higson
  - 1 Mar *Lord Dundonald*, annual Wilkinson Lecture, by Paul Luter
- Further information from Neil Clarke 01952 504135.

### New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

- Tony Dolman, Coalport
- Stephen Cox, Washington, Tyne & Wear
- Robert Love, Fakenham, Norfolk

### Annual General Meeting

The Society will be holding its Annual General Meeting on 2 October. At this meeting, John Freeman will be resigning as chairman, a position he has held for the past four years, as he feels that pressure of work and increasing family commitments are making it impossible for him to give this position as much attention as he would like. The committee, therefore, is looking for nominations for the post of chairman (of either sex!) as well as for other people willing to join the committee. If you know of anyone who would be interested, please contact secretary Dot Cox on 01952 883568.

The meeting will be followed by a talk, *Nelson and Trafalgar*, given by Lt Cdr Lance Wise.

### Forthcoming Events

#### Trafalgar 200 Celebrations

Without the support of towns such as Broseley there is no doubt that the Battle of Trafalgar could not have been won. The country desperately needed ships, men, munitions and, above all, provisions to keep the fleet viable. To commemorate the part Broseley would have played in providing these, the Society is organising a number of events in October which will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.



### **Exhibition**

One of these is the exhibition which will be staged in the Library from 16-22 October. This exhibition will highlight the local products, food, metalware and other provisions that would have been on board. It will also promote personal links, and the Society is appealing for information on Broseley people with connections to Lord Nelson and the Navy at that time as well as for suitable memorabilia dating back to around 1805.

Do you think you had a relative in the Navy at that time? If so, a list of the names of the crew of HMS Victory is available for inspection, contact Vin at vin@oldcopper.org or phone 01952 882508 or Michael Pope on 01952 883960. Shropshire Archives also have a list of all the Shropshire men involved in the battle fleet.

The children of Broseley Church of England Primary School have been invited to help prepare the display.

### **Trafalgar 200 Dinner**

Another event will be the Trafalgar 200 dinner to be held at the Lion Hotel, High Street, Broseley on Friday, 21 October at 7.30 for 8.00 pm. The guest speaker will be Lt Cdr Lance Wise and the entertainment, which will have a nautical theme, will be provided by "Take Six" – a talented group of local singers.

The dinner is open to the public as well as to members and anyone wishing to attend should complete and return the form on page 13. The cost is £17.95 per person and cheques should be made payable to the Broseley Local History Society.

### **Tree Planting**

The culmination of the week will be the tree planting ceremony which will take place at the Hay Cop in Dark Lane on the morning of Saturday, 22 October. At this event a number of Scots pines will be planted to replace some of the trees which, according to Randall in his *Broseley and its Surroundings*, were originally planted there 200 years ago. The trees have been a Broseley landmark for the past two centuries but only two of them now remain. The intention is to supplement the original trees so that they may continue to feature on the Broseley skyline for the foreseeable future.

The Society would like as many members and their guests as possible to take part in this ceremony which will be attended by a number of local dignitaries including the Mayor and Mayoress of Broseley, Cllr and Mrs Eric Cox. Participants should meet at the Dark Lane primary school by 10.30 am before going on to the Hay Cop for the 11.00 am ceremony. Light refreshments will be served in the School Hall after the ceremony.

There is no charge for this event, but to assist in catering anyone wishing to attend is asked to complete and return the form on page 13. Further information is available from Vin Callcut 01952 882508 or Michael Pope 01952 883960.

### **Betty Lake**

It is with great sadness that the *Newsletter* learned of the death of Betty Lake who, with her husband David, had been a member of the Society for many years. Betty will be very much missed in so many ways, and members will certainly wish to join us in saying that our thoughts are with David and Rosemary, their daughter, in this sad time.



Born in Llandudno, Betty left school during the war and joined the public service as a library assistant. However, feeling there was more she could do to help the war effort than stamp library books, she applied to join the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Her first attempt was foiled when it was discovered she was only 16 and it took another 18 months of perseverance before she was accepted. Betty spent her war years as a plotter in the Operations Room, a vital job monitoring the movements of both British and enemy aircraft during operations.

Betty and David moved to Nordley in 1965, and she became librarian at Bridgnorth College, meanwhile devoting much of her time to fundraising for St Calixtus Church in Astley Abbots where she was a churchwarden. She was also a keen gardener and regularly entered exhibits in shows.

Here two of her many friends, Heather Freeman and Kate Campbell, share some memories of her.

We first met Betty when she and David invited us to lunch at their house at Stocking Lane. There she regaled us with stories from her life and her time in the WAAF, and it became obvious that she had had many extraordinary experiences.

Some months later our elder daughter Jessica was set a particularly interesting homework task – to interview someone who had lived through the war. Rather than interview someone who had just ‘lived through’ the war, Jessica thought it would be far more interesting to talk to someone who had actually taken part in the war effort. Betty was her obvious choice, and her lively engaging manner made a great impression on Jessica, and resulted in an excellent piece of work.

Apparently when asked if she ever thought Britain would lose the war Betty was characteristically positive – "No, never!" – and wrote reassuring her mother "Don't worry, we shall win the war, we have radar. Nothing can cross our path without us knowing it."

To her many nephews and nieces she was Auntie Betty, a role which she took seriously. They all recall spending their summer holidays with David, Betty and their daughter Rosemary, the great times they had, and the events she planned for them. This enabled their mothers to work without the childcare worries with which we working women are all too familiar. They all say how supportive she was as they grew up, housing one niece while she went to college, encouraging her to be a governor of her child's school, assuring them that they had a useful contribution to make – and to get on and do it!

Perhaps the word ‘engaged’ best sums her up. She was someone who engaged with life, with its problems and opportunities, determined to make a difference at every point. To be able to engage with all sorts of people and with them make a contribution, to inspire others to do the same – these are rare qualities indeed. But Betty was a rare person and will be greatly missed by very many people.

*Heather Freeman*

I first met Betty Lake about four years ago when we moved to Nordley and attended St Calixtus Church at Astley Abbots. Betty saw to it that we were

made welcome and became involved in the life of the church. She invited us to her home where David told us of his work on the Wilkinson documents, and suggested we come to the History Society in Broseley. When we came to leave that address we felt well and truly members of the family of St Calixtus.

Later, when we were looking for a house in Bridgnorth, we met Betty by chance who said we should look in Broseley. We said we thought it was "a bit of a dump", perhaps because we had seen it on a wet day. Her reply was characteristically spirited. "Oh no! You've got it **all** wrong! Broseley is full of history and indeed I would aspire to live in Broseley. It is a truly delightful town and the High Street is quite unique and a most friendly place."

We felt quite chastened and took Betty's advice. We have now lived here for three years and find she spoke the truth. Indeed, being based on good evidence, her opinions were valued by those who knew her.

We were privileged to know Betty and to come within her sphere of interest and care. Her genuine interest in people and desire to help and care marked her out as one of the most delightful and attractive of personalities. Of all the places we could have chosen to settle we owe a genuine debt of gratitude to Betty and David Lake as the subtle magnet to this part of the world.

*Kate Campbell*

*Readers might like to refer to the February 2004 issue of Newsletter which contains an article on Betty's war experiences, as well as Jessica Freeman's account of how she came to meet Betty and how she influenced her impressions of the war.*

*Editor*

## **Previous Meetings**

### **Survey of the Gorge**

*In April Neal Rushton, an engineer with the Borough of Telford and Wrekin, spoke on the recent geological survey which had been carried out in the Ironbridge Gorge. Included in his talk was data and photographs supplied by Alan Robinson, a director of M and J Drilling Ltd.*

Neal began his talk by saying that it was unusual for the Society to consider history beyond, say, 1,000 years and even more infrequent to consider events



*Ground investigation at Jackfield included drilling a number of deep boreholes with instrumentation to measure ground movement and changes in water level*

occurring in excess of 2,000 years. For this reason it was significant that with the Gorge history commenced some 400 million years ago with the formation of the limestone measures of the Silurian period, rocks formed in a warm shallow marine environment. These soft rocks were overlain by younger rocks comprising coals, ironstones, mudstones and sandstones which were approximately 300 million years old. This soft rock structure was then folded and faulted to form an escarpment known as Wenlock Edge and the Coalbrookdale coalfield.

The Gorge itself was formed just 13,000 years ago at the end of the last ice age and is, in geological terms, still new and forming by natural processes.



The issue of land stability is not therefore new and whilst our understanding increases there are still many unanswered questions. Investigation is ongoing to assess and monitor the effects of ground movement in the Gorge and, in certain instances, to stabilise specific sites in order to manage the effects of ground movement as distinct from curing the problem.



*These pictures clearly show evidence of ground movement in Jackfield*

Investigation has taken place at Jackfield, Lloyds Coppice, Lloyds Head and Jiggers Bank whilst mapping has been completed over a substantial part of the developed area of the Gorge and monitoring is ongoing in areas where ground movement is known to occur.

Investigations to date have looked to identify the causes of the movement. These are clearly complex but include the following:

- River erosion
- Flooding events and fluctuations in rainfall
- Undermining for five different minerals
- Tipped waste adding load at the surface
- Development and infrastructure adding load at the surface
- Soft rock geology
- Topography



*The fast flowing waters of the Severn Gorge can cause erosion*



*Part of the former Salt House Road in Jackfield*

*Loose tipped tile waste at Lloyds Head added to the surface load*



## Living and Working in Medieval Shropshire

At this meeting Di Bryan gave a slide show and talk on Living and Working in Medieval Shropshire. Here is her synopsis of that talk.

The talk began with reference to the 7th century when the founding of the monastery at Wenlock led to land being given to it for the support of the monks. This in turn enabled the monastery to found churches in the various parishes, entitling them to appoint the priest and collect the tithes and taxes due to owners of medieval churches.

By the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, Broseley church belonged to Wenlock Priory with, soon afterwards, one third of the Manor of Broseley also being in the hands of the Prior. The business of the Manor was administered from The Marsh along with other small Wenlock manors such as Callaughton and Caughley.

To prove the point that the medieval landscape can still be seen today I, together with two members of the Society, Cicely Taylor and Paul Walshe, walked round Broseley parish identifying remnants of the medieval past. In addition to a well defined holloway leading to the church from today's Ironbridge Road, a present day public right of way,

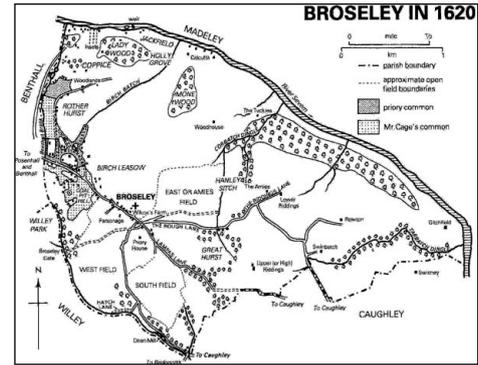


*This well defined holloway leads from Ironbridge Road up to the church*



*This old drovers' road runs from the present day Coalport Road behind Folly Farm*

*The 1620 map shows the track leading through open fields.*



*This lane is now the road through Barrow to Much Wenlock*

clearly linking open grazing areas, was identified as an old drovers' road. A 1620 map<sup>1</sup> of the open fields of Broseley, separated by a track, was shown followed by a photograph of the same 'track' today. This is now the road through Barrow into Much Wenlock which passes The Marsh. Similarly, the photograph of the market place in 1945<sup>2</sup>, seen with the 1901 Ordnance Survey map<sup>3</sup>, revealed the 'cigar-shaped' enclosure of a typical medieval cattle market.

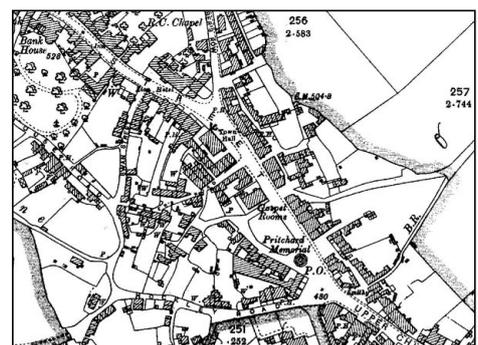
<sup>1</sup> Taken from Victoria County History Vol X

<sup>2</sup> This photograph is on the Society's website

<sup>3</sup> A Godfrey reprint



*Broseley market place in 1945, alongside the 1901 Ordnance Survey map, shows the cigar shape of a typical medieval cattle market*



## A Visit to Bradley

by David Lake



*Visitors to Bradley gather round the stone marking the spot where John Wilkinson erected his first Black Country blast furnace in 1767*

In June several members of the Society travelled to Bradley where Ron Davies had offered to show us around the site of John Wilkinson's furnace and other places of interest in the area.

Our first stop was the Wesleyan Chapel in Hall Green Street, which Ron had arranged to be open so that we could examine the monumental cast iron pulpit which John had donated to the Methodist congregation of his day. Somewhat disconcertingly, the front of the pulpit has been repainted as wood-grain, but the reverse side still has a more traditional brown lacquer. We had a most informative discussion of Bradley social history from those times.

Down Bradley Lane to Lower Bradley we came to the site of John's first furnace, the Mother Furnace of what was to become known as the Black Country. The old name of the area was Fiery Holes, an indication of the mineral wealth that had attracted him. The site, at the junction of Bradley Lane and Great Bridge Road, is now a playing field, but we found furnace slag and ash there, and the civic monument to John that stands in Great Bridge Road itself.

John's Middle Ironworks in Bradley had been by Tups Bridge over the Birmingham Canal, which still reaches this point by a tortuous route, the result of John's insistence that it should serve his works. These later became the Thornycroft Ironworks.

At the John Wilkinson Primary School in Wilkinson Avenue, hillocks of furnace waste, now grassed over, serve as an adventure area for the pupils, whose modern school is on the site of John's Top Ironworks. It is well remembered that John helped the school of his day to balance its budget by providing sand trays as an economical alternative to paper and pencil.

As the light failed we repaired to The Ironmaster in Brierley Lane, where the name, the sign and the décor commemorate John's spectacular successes in the Bradley of two centuries ago.

To show our appreciation of all that Ron and his wife Joan have done for our Society – writing the biography of John Wilkinson which we sell for Society funds, writing other fascinating accounts of his life and times, lecturing, acting as guide on visits – we presented them with a Wedgwood Jasper Ware trinket box. Since John Wilkinson and Josiah Wedgwood not only shared the same initials but were contemporaries and kindred spirits, this seemed appropriate. Eric and Dot Cox, old friends of Ron and Joan, and now in their new roles as Mayor and Mayoress of Broseley, made the presentation.



*Broseley mayor Eric Cox presents Ron Davies with a token of thanks for all he has done for the Society*

## A Visit to Castlehead

The highlight of this summer's events was certainly the trip to Castlehead, the house which John Wilkinson built overlooking Morecambe Bay in Cumbria, and where he was once buried before being re-interred in nearby Lindale Church.

The party was met at the house by Frank Dawson who is already known to members for the talk on John Wilkinson which he gave to the Society last year, and he and his wife Fev began the day by giving the group a guided tour of the house and its



*Frank Dawson with part of the group who visited Castlehead*



*Castlehead, which is now a Field and Study Centre, seen from the back*

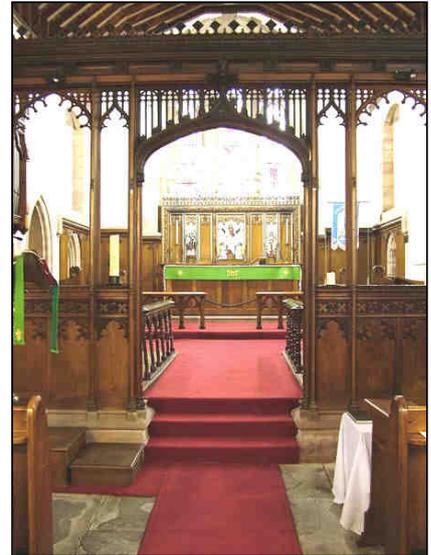
grounds. After this the group split, one party led by Frank going up to the village of Lindale and the other visiting John's early home and the Backbarrow ironworks.

Frank's enthusiasm for his subject dictated that the Lindale group climb Hampsfield Hill to admire the view and put Castlehead in perspective – the stunning views at the top were well worth the climb.

With buzzards wheeling overhead, the group looked out across Morecambe Bay to the right, to the mountains by Kendal to the left, and to the front the mound on which Castlehead stands, surrounded by the flat lands which John Wilkinson reclaimed from the sea.



*This reclaimed area runs from the grounds of Castlehead through to the sea*



*John Wilkinson is reputed to be buried here below the chancel steps*

Down the hill Lindale Church had many interesting memorials, in particular one to John's wife Mary which looks down on the flagstones under which John is reputed to be buried. Indeed metal detectors recently produced evidence of a large amount of iron in the centre of the church just below the chancel steps.

From the church it was back down through the village to the place where the John Wilkinson memorial has been re-erected, having been moved from its original site in the grounds of Castlehead.

A vast, 40 feet high iron obelisk, painted black and bereft of any ornamentation, it portrayed the strength and influence of the ironmaster. The inscription on this awe inspiring monument was reputedly written by John Wilkinson himself.



JOHN WILKINSON  
 IRON MASTER  
 WHO DIED XIV JULY MDCCCVIII  
 AGED LXXX YEARS  
 HIS DIFFERENT WORKS  
 IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE  
 KINGDOM  
 ARE LASTING TESTIMONIES  
 OF HIS UNCEASING  
 LABOURS;  
 HIS LIFE WAS SPENT IN  
 ACTION  
 FOR THE BENEFIT  
 OF MAN; AND AS HE PRESUMED  
 HIMSELF TO HOPE,  
 TO THE  
 GLORY OF GOD.  
**LABORE ET HONORE**



*Bare Syke, the house which Isaac Wilkinson bought in 1735 and where John spent his early years*

Meanwhile the other party, going on to Backbarrow, was shown round the grounds of Bare Syke, John Wilkinson's early home, before walking down to the Backbarrow Ironworks. It was to the Backbarrow Company that John's father Isaac had come to work in 1735, constructing his first iron bellows there in 1738.

The first blast furnace had, in fact, been established there as early as 1711 and the site was to continue to produce iron and steel products until 1963. Now abandoned and increasingly derelict, it has been bought by a property company, with planning permission for redevelopment being dependent on conservation of significant industrial archaeology.



*The Backbarrow site is now derelict and scheduled for property development*



*All that is now left of Backbarrow furnace*

In reply to a letter of thanks from John Freeman Frank Dawson wrote:

*It was good of you to write so enthusiastically and much appreciated by Fev and me. Thank you.*

*As I said to someone recently, your group always generates a perceptible excitement over matters Wilkinson and always brings informed ideas to any discussion. It is a privilege to be part of it.*

### **A Visit to Benthall Hall**

In July the Society was privileged to be invited to visit Benthall Hall, and on a perfect summer evening members were given a guided tour of the gardens by head gardener Nick Swankie. After this, they were free to wander through the house itself, where volunteer guides were on hand to answer any questions, or to visit the lovely church which sits in the grounds of the Hall.

While there, curator Eve Madeley, a member of the Society, spoke about the various enterprises undertaken by the wider Benthall family and mentioned that the last remaining car built by them will be on display at the Museum of Power in Langford, Essex, from 3-18 September.

The evening ended with wine and snacks on the patio – a perfect finish to a perfect evening. Thank you to Edward and Sally Benthall, the owners of Benthall Hall, for extending this invitation.

*Against the backdrop of this lovely old church, members spent a perfect evening exploring Benthall Hall and its gardens*



*In among the roses, members listen to Nick Swankie's talk on the history of Benthall gardens*



### **Extracts from the *Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News***

Steve Dewhirst has been working on extracting items of interest from early copies of the *Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News*. Two years and much scanning and proof reading later, they are now in a more user friendly format. Some are already available at Broseley Library with more to come. In the meantime, all cuttings from the years 1894-1912, as well as some other odd years, may be viewed on the Society's website [www.broseley.org.uk](http://www.broseley.org.uk). They certainly make fascinating reading, and are well worth a visit to the Library or a quiet afternoon browsing the website.

According to Steve these extracts give a glimpse of life in the area during the early 20th century, and very much reflect the social structure and attitudes of the time.

For instance, this period saw the opening, in 1909, of the Haynes Memorial Bridge, the first free crossing of the Severn in the Ironbridge Gorge. Although a great boon to the working man it was not universally liked by local councillors who objected to spending ratepayers' money on the venture.

Motor cars had come to the area with the opening by the local entrepreneur, James Davies, of what must have been one of the earliest car showrooms. This showroom, at the junction of King Street and Duke Street in Broseley, is now used for light industrial purposes. So to reports of various accidents involving carts and bicycles was now added ones of the car.

A general depression in the brick and tile trade affected local manufacturers, although ceramic tile manufacturers seem to have been less troubled. This is reflected in the District Council minutes where the councillors seemed determined to keep the costs under control and had a constant battle to get the rates in. The minutes clearly reflect the parochial nature of the council and its obsession with the minutiae of local problems rather than the wider issues of improvement to the district.

Much of the local entertainment revolved around the churches and chapels with various lectures and events being held. The Friendly Societies were also present with the lodges of the Oddfellows, for instance, being active in the town, contributions helping towards sickness and funeral expenses.

The Petty Sessions were the local police court at which, as well as drunkenness and petty larceny, the main preoccupation seems to have been with locals poaching rabbits from the estates of the well-to-do.

### **Broseley in Bloom**

Monday, 25 July saw the Britain in Bloom judges in Broseley for the first time. To enter had been the idea of Broseley's mayor, Eric Cox who, with his wife Dot, are long-standing members of the Society.



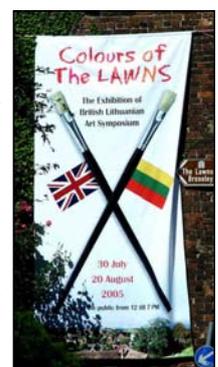
*These flower tubs, which were donated by the Society, certainly brighten up the Health Centre*

Many of the hanging baskets and flower tubs which have so brightened up the town this summer were sponsored by local businesses, societies and youth groups, a community effort in which the Society played its part by providing the plants and tubs in front of the Health Centre.

Eric sees the Broseley in Bloom project as being ongoing, and hopes that it will complement Broseley's Christmas Lights which have become such a well known attraction. Anyone who would like to get involved is asked to contact Eric on 01952 883568.

### **Colours of the Lawns**

John Wilkinson's house was put to an unusual use recently when owner Mel Mars hosted a week long symposium of Lithuanian artists. The subject of the symposium was *Colours of the Lawns* and the art exhibition which was held at the end of the week certainly reflected this, when some 100 paintings were on display.



### **Severn Gorge Countryside Trust Workhouse Coppice**

The Severn Gorge Countryside Trust is to take over responsibility, for the next 50 years, for all aspects of the management of Workhouse Coppice, which was previously in the hands of the Woodland Trust.

Workhouse Coppice is a superb area of very old woodland and provides an important link to Benthall Edge Wood, being the main entrance to the wood for many people. It also means that the Trust will be able to link its management with the work planned for Benthall Edge Wood.

To celebrate this event an exhibition of planned work is to be held on Saturday 10 September at 2.00 pm at the Spout Lane entrance to Workhouse Coppice. This will be followed by a guided walk through the Coppice into Benthall Edge Wood. Refreshments will be available.

Because of limited parking transport will be available from Broseley Library Car Park and the Station Car Park. Please meet at these locations by 1.45 pm.

It is hoped that as many people as possible will take part, not only so they can find out more about the plans for these woodlands, but to give the Trust the benefit of their valuable knowledge. Or just come along and have a good walk.

### **Coalbrookdale Watercourses**

Work on the Upper Furnace Pool in Coalbrookdale is now almost complete and members of the public can take either a short stroll around the pool itself or an extended walk along the boardwalk up Loamhole Dingle and back along the Ropewalk.

The final phase of the project, due to commence soon, involves the restoration of Boring Mill Pool and Upper Forge Sluice Gates further down the Dale, where the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT) has recently been undertaking extensive archaeological investigations.

*Archaeological excavations at Boring Mill Pool*



*Upper Forge Sluice Gates prior to restoration*

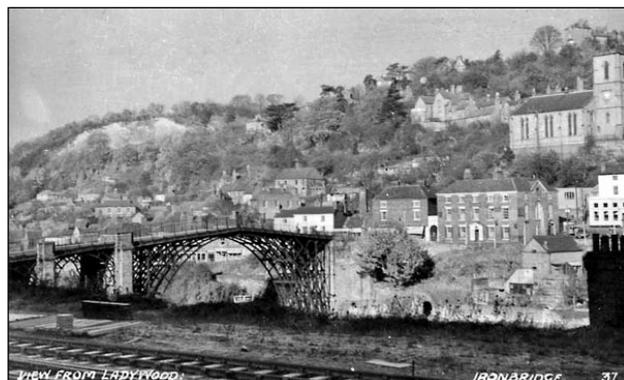
The Boring Mill Pool site is to be transformed into an amenity and picnic area. Archaeological structures discovered by IGMT will be marked by stones illustrating the varied uses of the site since the 17th century and its historical significance in the industrial heritage of the area. The site will also be promoted as a local nature reserve once the remains of the original pool have been desilted.

The Upper Forge Sluice Gates will also be restored and stabilised and public access will be provided through viewing platforms. Recent excavations at the sluices have revealed the original dam wall to Upper Forge Pool. This would have extended across the Dale and acted as a weir.

With the restoration works almost complete, it is hoped the watercourses will become an integral part of the visitor experience to the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site.

### **The American Dream?**

Steve Dewhirst recently came across this old postcard of Ironbridge from the 1960s. While the picture itself is interesting, what is even more so is



the reverse, where 'Dorothy and Cyril' are writing to friends in Leighton Buzzard. Dated 16 October, 1963, it says: "Terribly busy winding up affairs. Sailing on 24 Oct, 3.15 pm on Queen Mary (cabin) from Southampton to New York on 29th. Staying 2 days and train to Chicago where Anne and Clive meet us by car. Will write on board ship. Hope to come back some day!" Just another of the many families who left England in the 1960s looking for the American dream?

## What's on

### Saturday 24 September

Dawley History Day

Dawley House, Burton Street, Dawley

10.00 am – 4.30 pm

A day of lectures by well known local historians, together with exhibitions and photographs of the area. Organised by Friends of Shropshire Archives and Wrekin Local Studies Forum.

Details and bookings Neil Clarke 01952 504135.

### Tuesday 20 & 27 September

What future for historic Shrewsbury?

Walk and sightseeing tour.

Details and bookings 01743 242424.

### Thursday 29 September

Visit to Oakley Park and Shipton Manor

An all day event to take a closer look at these lesser known but distinctive houses.

Meet at Secret Hills Visitor Centre, Craven Arms.

Bookings only 01743 242424.

## Ironbridge Gorge Museums

Special events at the various museums include:

### Coalport China Museum

Throughout September and October

Caughley in Colour: an exhibition of Caughley polychrome porcelain

### Blists Hill

9-10 Sep	Ironworks Special
15-16 Oct	Steam Festival
29 Oct	Ghostly Gaslight
5 Nov	Bonfire Night
17-18 Dec	Christmas Weekend

### Enginuity

8-9 Oct	Contemporary Crafts Fair
15 Oct-11 Nov	Fabrication Exhibition

Please note events are subject to change and may carry additional charges. Call 01952 884391 to check.

## Mailbox

Your readers may like to see a copy of this late Elizabethan portrait. Its earlier history seems to be associated with Wolverhampton, where it hung in Meridale Hall, a Tudor house which still in part survives. There seems a strong likelihood that the painting has a Staffordshire origin, as the motto which is inscribed is uniquely that of the Langley family of Broseley in that county (*sic*).



*This splendid Elizabethan portrait, which used to hang in a Midlands house, depicts an Unknown Lady. The motto on the painting is "Fidens non Confidens" which, according to the College of Arms, seems only to have been used by the Langley family of Broseley*

Certainly, members of that family were of the appropriate age; for instance, Johanna Langley, daughter of William and Joanne Langley, was baptised in the village church on 24 May 1570, and would have thus been in her mid 20s when this picture was painted in about 1595.

However, the sitter's true identity has so far proved elusive. The identity of the painter is likewise not known, as is true of so many portraits of this era. I wonder if any of your members can shed any further light on this possible Broseley connection?

Christopher Foley

cf@lanefineart.co.uk

*A present day member of the Langley family, Charlotte, suggests that the sitter could be Alice, daughter of John and Elizabeth Langley, but she does not have positive proof of this.*  
Editor

*In response to Andrea Francis' letter in the May Newsletter regarding her relationship to **Thomas Turner**, Dr Mike Fraser writes:*

As far as I know, of the children of Richard and Sarah Turner, Thomas' line died out after a couple of generations; Dr Richard the younger had no children and the only substantial lines were through Elizabeth and Sarah. Sarah's marriage to William Roberts produced a large tree, most of whom lived in Worcester and the Cheltenham area. I am descended from Elizabeth. Up to 1871, there is much more detail in Hubert Smith's (a direct descendant of Thomas) "Pedigree of the Turner Family and its Representatives in 1871". You might be able to pick up a copy on the internet, try <http://dogbert.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?An=hubert+smith&y=0&tn=turner&x=0>

Dr Mike Fraser  
fraser@compsci.bristol.ac.uk

My maiden name is **Preen** and I have traced my ancestors back to 1619. I read on your website about a bridge previously named "Preen's Eddy" and a place name Preenshead. I know that the name Preen originated from Church Preen back when people took the name of the place where they lived. I should like to find out more about Preen's Eddy near Broseley. I know that the Preens used to transport goods along the river Severn and believe one had a boat named The Mary. I wonder if there is a connection to the bridge and the place. Preen is such an unusual name that I feel there must be a connection somewhere to the cargo that used to go down the river.

Angela Clarke  
Angjim\_Clarke@hotmail.com

My husband and I recently made our first visit to Broseley looking for streets and houses in which I believe members of the **Davis** family lived. The shop had just had a delivery of postcards showing the church and I looked unsuccessfully for one of Willey Hall where my great-grandparents met.

A postcard of the church – as at 1892 – clearly shows all the gravestones in the churchyard. I have an extract from a book about the Davis's which says "George .... is also credited with building the large

family vault in the churchyard. This covered two plots and was sited near the entrance gates, being lined with white glazed bricks and topped with two large ridge shaped blocks....". You can imagine how disappointed I was to find the ground cleared of most stones. Does anyone know what happened to them and whether a record was made of any inscriptions before they were removed? If so, does your Society have a copy or know anyone who has? I should be grateful for any help.

Kathryn Bennett  
KnPBennett@aol.com

*Broseley Library has a 29 page booklet, To Feed the Multitude by Trevor Instone, which may have some information on the Davis family.  
Editor*

Mr Sutherland is looking for information on **Thomas Williamson**, a gunsmith with premises in Bridgnorth during the 18th century, first in East Castle Street, then Waterloo Terrace and finally in the High Street. He would also like to know if there is any record of a William Williamson who was christened in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Broseley in 1835.

He may be contacted on tel: 0121 246 1797

The May Newsletter has people requesting information about **Jackfield families**. I do have information on some of the ones mentioned and a photograph of the Barnetts Leasow blacksmith's shop. Should anyone wish to telephone me in the evening I should be happy to help.

Ron Miles  
01952 882683

I am looking into the history of the **Lane** family in Broseley. My ancestor William Lane was born in Broseley in 1781 and the family lived there since at least the early 1600s. I should be interested in any information about them.

Pat McMullen  
smokeybanyantree@btinternet.com

Sheila Chadwick writes again (see May 2005 Newsletter) to say that her maiden name was **Childs**. She is looking for old school photographs from about 1944. Anyone who can help may contact her at swchadwick@aol.com.