

Newsletter

Newsletter of the **Broseley Local History Society**

Incorporating the Wilkinson Society



August 2012

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.

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PROGRAMME

- 5 Sept *The Railway Navvies*, by Colin Bargery
3 Oct AGM and *Our First 40 Years*, by Neil Clarke
7 Nov *John Rose's Calcut China Manufactory at Jackfield*, by Roger Edmundson (joint meeting with FIGM, Coalbrookdale)
5 Dec Annual Dinner
2 Jan *Broseley Brick & Tile* by Steve Dewhirst
6 Feb *Electrical Engineer Extraordinary (Thomas Parker)* by Janet Doody
6 Mar Annual Wilkinson Lecture, *Edward Blakeway, Entrepreneur* by Paul Luter

Further details from Neil Clarke 01952 504135.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Dianne Brown, East Dulwich, London
Brian and Denise Banks, Wellington

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM will take place on Wednesday, 3 October when the agenda will include the election of the committee. Anyone interested in putting their name forward should contact secretary Dot Cox on 01952 883568.

40th Anniversary Celebrations

At this same meeting Neil Clarke, who has been on the Society's committee for almost the whole of its existence, and who is responsible for putting together such a varied and interesting programme, as well as editing the annual *Journal*, will be giving a talk on *Our First 40 Years*. If there are any members who have any activities or anecdotes they would like him to include in this talk, please contact him on 01952 504135.



PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Coalbrookdale Literary & Scientific Institution

At the May meeting John Powell presented his talk on the Coalbrookdale Literary & Scientific Institution, which had been postponed from the previous October. Here he gives his own account of that talk.

As early as the 1840s there was a Mechanics' Institute in existence in Ironbridge; little is known about it or where it met, though a surviving document in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum collection reveals that it did have its own library and reading room. The Coalbrookdale Literary & Scientific Institution itself was established in 1853, and held its meetings in the Girls' and Infants' School in Coalbrookdale, later moving to the Boys' School. It too established its own library, with some books donated by local worthies, including members of the Darby family, and others purchased from Institution funds which came from members' subscriptions. The managing committee consisted almost entirely of members of the middle management from the nearby Coalbrookdale Company. The School of Art was a separate organisation, part of a national network set up after the Great Exhibition of 1851, with a syllabus and examinations organised from South Kensington in London.

In the late 1850s the Coalbrookdale Company donated a plot of land for a new, imposing, purpose built building to house the Institution, its library and the School of Art; this was opened with much ceremony and a prestigious exhibition in June 1859. Early photographs were shown of the building under construction, and how it appeared when first built, with a pitched roof and lettering emblazoned along the top. The blue bricks used in its construction came from the Coalbrookdale Company's Lightmoor Brickworks. There was

Photograph courtesy Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust



Coalbrookdale Literary & Scientific Institution under construction

Coalbrookdale Literary & Scientific Institution as built, with pitched roof and lettering along the top



Photograph courtesy Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

also a selection of programmes of social and other events held in the building in its heyday, copied from a collection in Shropshire Archives, and some marvellous examples of work done by students at the School of Art, drawn from the collections in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Library and Archives.

Towards the end of the 19th century membership of the Literary & Scientific Institution declined due to the popularity of outdoor activities such as competitive sport, and in 1899 it merged with Coalbrookdale Social Club. In the 20th century, the roof of the building was altered and the imposing lettering removed. It eventually passed to Shropshire County Council, which used it for a variety of educational purposes, but by the 1970s it was disused and in very poor repair. In 1980, it was opened as the new Coalbrookdale Youth Hostel, a joint venture operated by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and the Youth Hostels Association.

The second half of the talk was devoted to the story of Charles Crookes, the manager of the Coalbrookdale Company from about 1850 until 1866. He was not only the architect of the Literary & Scientific Institution's 1859 building, but also a very able and well respected member of the local community. He was in charge of the Coalbrookdale Company during what many consider to be its most successful period of the 19th century, covering both the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the 1862 Exhibition.

In the 1860s, he suffered the death of his wife and three of his children, who are buried together in Coalbrookdale churchyard. Not long afterwards, Crookes was dismissed by the Coalbrookdale Company, under circumstances shrouded in mystery. He left the area, never to return, other

than to attend the marriage of one surviving son. There was no presentation to him, nor any tributes in the local paper, the *Wellington Journal*. He eventually died in Sevenoaks in Kent, in the 1870s. His rift with Coalbrookdale must have been particularly bitter, as he was not brought back to be buried in the family grave.

It is my belief that Charles Crookes has been ‘airbrushed’ out of history unfairly, and I have spent many years trying to piece together the story and restore Crookes to his rightful place in the Coalbrookdale Company’s success story before, during and after the Great Exhibition of 1851. A portrait of Crookes and his wife is mentioned in his will, and it is hoped that it might one day come to light, so that we may know what this very accomplished man actually looked like. The Literary & Scientific Institution building in Coalbrookdale is a fitting reminder of the contribution that he made.

Stanley Hall

The Society’s June meeting this year was a visit to Stanley Hall in Astley Abbots, the home of Michael and Clare Thompson. Michael Thompson is the third generation of his family to live there, his grandfather having bought the property in the 1920s.

The Hall was originally built in 1642 but a large part of it was destroyed during the Civil War. Later alterations mean that now only about one third of the original building remains.

After touring the house, members were taken across the gardens to the newly restored cup and dome Ice House. This was built in 1818 at a cost

Society members crossing the lawns of Stanley Hall on the way to see the newly restored Ice House



Chairman Gillian Pope negotiates the steep steps down to the Ice House at Stanley Hall, the only such one in the country with a glass bridge giving a view into its depths



of £150 and is the only ice house in the country with a glass bridge giving a view into its depths. Several brave members clambered down the steep steps to have a look inside, while others were content to admire it from the outside.

The visit was arranged by the late David Lake, who was an enthusiastic member of the group on that evening. It was the last Society function in which he took part before his untimely death the following week whilst on holiday in France. His obituary may be found on page 5.

Liverpool Waterfront

This year’s July outing was a trip to Liverpool Waterfront, now a World Heritage site which contains some of Liverpool’s most famous landmarks. Attractions included the Albert Dock, Tate Liverpool, the Maritime Museum, the Beatles’ Museum and the new Museum of Liverpool – all of which were within walking distance of one another.

Unlike past trips, where group arrangements had been made, everyone was free to do as they pleased and it was interesting afterwards to hear what opportunities people had explored. Dot and Eric Cox, for example, took a trip on the ‘ferry across

The famous Liver birds atop the Royal Liver Building are a well known Liverpool landmark



the Mersey', accompanied by the eponymous Beatles' song, where they had a fascinating journey down the estuary to Birkenhead, and were charmed by the wonderful views of the Liverpool Waterfront on the way back.

As they disembarked they found that Dave and Diane Shinton had also been on this trip and because Dave had worked in Liverpool, he offered to show them around the town. One of the places they visited was the site of The Cavern of Beatles fame, where they watched foreign tourists stocking up with Beatles T-shirts. Then it was on to St George's Hall, a neoclassical building containing concert halls and law courts. According to Dot, this was a 'real gem' which had been restored in the 1990s with help from the patronage of Prince Charles and is now a Grade I listed building. It has a spectacular interior and access to the balcony is free. One could also visit the courthouse and go down to the cells where there was information about previous inmates as well as the building itself.

Earlier Dave and Diane had taken a walk around the Albert Dock before joining the same ferry as Dot and Eric. According to Dave the ferry was definitely the best vantage point from which to see both the Anglican Cathedral designed by Gilbert Scott in 1904 and the modernistic Metropolitan Roman Catholic Cathedral designed by Gibberd in 1960.

Back on land, they took a walk past the beautiful Town Hall, built in 1749, and the Bank of England building of 1844. Rounding a corner they found the intriguing Oriel Chambers, the world's first metal framed glass curtain walled building. Designed by Ellis in 1864 it is also a Grade I listed building.



Inside St George's Hall, which had been restored in the 1990s with help from the patronage of Prince Charles

Across the road in Mathew Street, home of The Cavern, statues of the Fab Four smiled down on them while music played, Eleanor Rigby sat quietly, Jung peered at them and Father McKenzie was remembered.

From Lord and Church Streets, as Dave said thanks to the Luftwaffe now one wide and busy thoroughfare but still retaining the ancient market, they walked on to Liverpool's challenge to Rome's Forum where they could not fail to be impressed by the neoclassicism of the public buildings in sharp contrast to the disappointing 21st century square boxes they saw as they reached the Pier Head and the end of their day.

Meanwhile Vin and Hilary Callcut had a quite different experience, declining to take a boat ride, saying that the chassis of the coach they had come in had rolled about more than the Mersey ferry did! So they went to see the superb steam engines and model ships in the Maritime Museum, as Vin said, a sad reminder of what Greenwich Museum used to be like.

They were also delighted to see that the Liverpool Museum had a variety of displays very much better than the publicity had led them to expect, while the Liverpool Tate had wonderful corner seats with spectacular views over the Mersey and Albert Dock. Vin drooled over the Turners and Monets in their special exhibition but was puzzled by some of the Twomblys. He was also delighted to see a crane still in operation at the docks, even if it was only hauling humans skywards for zip-lining themselves back to the promenade.

A final comment on their day – they had never before paid so much for ice cream cornets, nor had to consume them so fast before they trickled to the ground!

Not being great walkers Ian and Jan Lancaster opted for a boat trip round the docks before taking the hop-on hop-off bus tour of the town. Like the others, they were impressed by the size and splendour of the public buildings, having always thought of Liverpool as a rather drab, though undeniably important, port city. So apologies to all Liverpoolians and acclaim to their City of Culture.



The modernistic Metropolitan Cathedral is well worth a visit

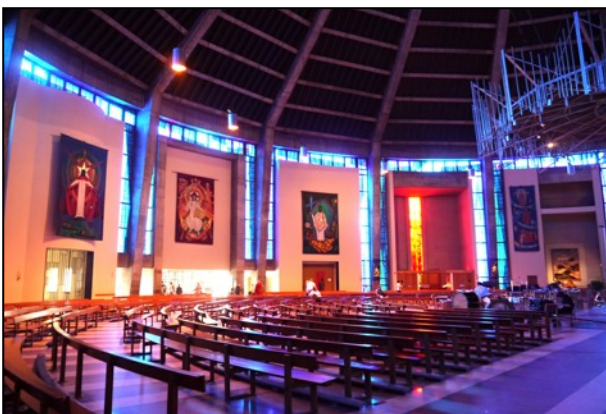
Jan wanted to see the Metropolitan Cathedral, the construction of which had had a very chequered history. The story goes back to 1930 when Sir Edwin Lutyens was commissioned to design a cathedral to rival Gilbert Scott's Anglican Cathedral being built not far away.

The central feature of Lutyens' design had been a great dome 300 feet high, with the nave and aisles consisting of a series of barrel vaults running at right angles to each other. However, the first stage, the building of the Crypt, was interrupted in 1941 and was only completed after the war, by which time the projected cost of the remaining structure had risen to an unattainable sum and further construction was halted. The Crypt, however, remains part of the present Cathedral and



The labyrinth of arched vaults with its beautiful brickwork makes visiting the Crypt a must

This modernistic building, with its stained glass windows, high vaulted roof and wide open interior, was an unexpected delight



it was possible to go down and explore its striking labyrinth of arched vaults of beautiful brickwork.

Over the following years various plans were made to complete Lutyens' dream, but cost was always a

problem and it was not until 1960 that Sir Frederick Gibberd was invited to submit a design. His modernistic building, with its stained glass alcove windows, high vaulted roof and wide open interior, was an unexpected delight.

Ian and Jan's intention of going on to the Anglican Cathedral was foiled when the hop-on hop-off buses failed to keep to schedule and time became short. So they opted for the Maritime Museum instead and, like Vin and Hilary, admired the steam engines and the model ships.

So ended a very unusual but extremely interesting Society outing, with the general opinion being that "we never knew Liverpool was like that!"

OBITUARY David Lake

It was with shock and great sadness that the Society learnt of the unexpected and untimely death of David Lake as he began a holiday in France with his daughter Rosemary. David had been part of the group which had visited Stanley Hall on the June Outing – indeed it was he who had arranged the visit – and he had been very much his loquacious self on that occasion. A member of the committee for many years, and a Society member

David Lake enjoying his 80th birthday recently at a surprise party given by John Freeman



Photograph courtesy of John Freeman



Seen from the hop-on hop-off bus this arch, a Millennium gift from China, is just off Great George Street

for long before that, he will be much missed not only for his extensive knowledge of John Wilkinson, but as curator of the Society's artefacts. His dogged persistence in finally getting Frank Dawson's book *John Wilkinson, King of the Ironmasters*, published will remain his most memorable legacy.

David had many friends, three of whom remember him here in very different ways.

Remembering David

Neil Clarke

I first got to know David almost 20 years ago when he came on a walk I had organised for the Society along the Silkin Way in Telford. He was full of questions (and answers), which continued when we all arrived at the Blue Pig pub next to Trench Pool for a well-earned drink. We realised then that we had similar interests.

I well remember how we both felt in 1997 when the Society was re-formed and changed its name. We were disappointed that we had to drop 'Wilkinson' from our title but understood why a Broseley-based organisation needed the new name and aims in order to attract more local members. But of course John Wilkinson would never be far from our thoughts.

David took on the curatorial responsibility of the Society's collection of artefacts which were originally housed at the Lawns and Broseley Hall, and managed to get the collection stored at Jackfield Tile Museum. On a number of occasions I accompanied him at meetings with representatives of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum and the County Museum Service which attempted to get the collection on display in its rightful place in Broseley. Moving some items into the Cemetery Chapel recently obviously brought him some satisfaction.

David's abiding interest in the life and achievements of John Wilkinson showed itself in a number of ways. He gave the Annual Wilkinson Lecture, *Today Broseley, Tomorrow the World*, in 2003 and wrote several articles for the Journal on the Wilkinsons and Le Creusot. On his own initiative, he twice arranged for a reprint of Ron Davies' book *John Wilkinson, Ironmaster Extraordinary*. But

his crowning achievement was getting the History Press to publish Frank Dawson's manuscript as *John Wilkinson, King of the Ironmasters*, which was launched first at Castlehead and then at Coalbrookdale earlier this year. There had been a touching moment in this. Following his failure to interest a publisher, Frank had passed the manuscript to our Society; David had willingly taken up the challenge and was able to report some progress to a desperately ill Frank when the two of us visited him at Castlehead shortly before his death two years ago.



David Lake, left, with John Freeman and Frank Dawson during the book launch at Blists Hill

David's determination was something we shall all remember. The things I shall miss are his telephone calls which always began with 'And ...' as if we were continuing a previous conversation, his all-weather cycling visits, his highly original contribution to Society meetings and, particularly, his buoyant personality and infectious sense of humour.

Peter Platt remembers him in a slightly different light when he writes:

There was something about David Lake which was forever young. True, in age he became a little cramped with artificial hips, but look at photographs of him at Society visits and there is a figure in the group, bent a little over a stick, with a wisp of the mischievous grin of a schoolboy wanting to get out and about.

Like all schoolboys he could be a little tiresome. He loved playing devil's advocate – and always with powerful voice: "David, shut up!" Betty would command as we fed on her prepared fare; but he rarely shut up and continued pushing putatively right wing views just for the fun of being disputatious. And as he chomped away he never, just like a schoolboy, really seemed to savour the food – though when Betty had gone, and he had to eat his own execrable nosh, I am sure he retrospectively appreciated her high culinary skills.

David had dropped out of Birmingham University in his first year on the grounds that what he was being taught was irrelevant. As a national service corporal he taught radar at RAF Yatesbury and it was there he met Betty who was a librarian, I think, at Swindon. Betty subsequently told me that whilst at Yatesbury he had helped run the Music Circle. "Then why doesn't he join us at the CBSO concerts?" I asked. "Oh! Some silly disapproval of the state subsidising culture, or something," said Betty disparagingly.

He and Betty had designed and built their house in Astley Abbots, living on site in a caravan in the meanwhile. Later David converted the integral garage into a granny flat for his mother. Without a home for the cars he then set about building a separate garage. But he did not go out and buy the bricks. Certainly not. He made hundreds of them himself using a traditional straw, mud and sun drying technique he had seen in France. However, the bricks were not immune to weather so he had to encase the building in wood.

What always surprised was how generous David was with his time for the young. During the school holidays he would arrange cycle trips for the boys; this would invariably include canals and derelict industrial sites and such like. And he was not too keen on interfering – he let them do more or less what they wanted. However, on one occasion he saw a lad eyeing up a very steep decline as if he wished to descend. "No Jamie," said David, "that's far too steep." Jamie moodily complied but defiantly set his bike off by itself down the slope, buckling the front wheel. David had to phone the mother to come and collect her exultant son and his bashed up bike. Later I, too, was importuned into this enthusiasm for the young. In this case it was two young girls who would be singers. I suppose they were all right – I suppose – but as they were not state subsidised I only attended one of their gigs. But David kept on going to hear them and was trying to persuade the pair to go with the Bridgnorth twinning party to Thiers. And did he succeed? Probably, but I can't remember.

And then there were the summer wine years. Ray Johnston, David and myself stumbling over boggy, depressing, industrial sites and arguing

about this and that, Ray and I invariably ganging up on poor David. Or seeking out the joys of Leighton's slurry tanks. Ray and David marooned in Llandudno, because of lost car keys, and David phoning me to rush a spare set over to him. David and I, having suffered a succession of punctures on a late autumnal cycle trip, making our own separate ways home in the chill dark with tyres completely flat. Too complicated to explain the details here now, but quite a jape – though it wasn't then.

Good memories. So many.

But I regret rejecting rather harshly David's suggestion that he should join a walking companion and myself on a trip around Rudyard Lake. "You'll slow us down," I had said crisply. But the last time I had seen David, the Wednesday before he went off to France never to return, he again repeated the request. And I was beginning to think we could do it. We could put David's bicycle into the car then as we walked he could follow us on his machine. Or perhaps we could trot after him – or try to for we, too, begin to creak.

Alas that was not to be. But Norman and I shall walk it. We shall not seek refreshment at the Rudyard Hotel, which was David's excruciating suggestion, but shall break the walk at The Knot Inn to drink David's health in good beer and eat fine fare, all in his memory. And no one shall say "David, shut up!" For we miss him.

Finally, John Freeman, past chairman of the Society and now a Trustee of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust pays tribute to his contribution both to the Society and to the wider industrial history world.

It was on becoming chairman of the Broseley Local History Society in October 2001 that I first got to know David properly. He was an active member of my marvellous committee, and was also the Society's curator and collector of John Wilkinson related artefacts. It quickly became clear to me that although some of us had become a little obsessed about John Wilkinson, to David he was the central interest.

David was a most warm and charming man, and he used these skills to good effect to achieve his

goals. In 2002 he organised a very successful trip for the society to Apedale, Stoke, to visit the mining museum. As a proud native of the area he was keen to promote its history and lend support to the museum. He invited several former colliers from Highley, Kemberton and Granville to join us on the trip, which so added to the day for us all. Their detailed explanations of first hand experience was very useful to us; and brought back many memories for them at the same time.

His tireless drive to promote greater knowledge about, and recognition for, John Wilkinson has resulted in the forging of strong links with other interested organisations such as the sites at Bradley, Bersham, Brymbo, and Backbarrow and with Frank and Fev Dawson at Castlehead. His role as editor of the late Frank Dawson's book on John Wilkinson was a massive task, as was his dogged persistence in finding a publisher and seeing the book printed by The History Press. This achievement has not only raised the profile of John Wilkinson but that of the Society as well.

It has given me the most particular pleasure to have been so involved with David's work in the last few months because it seems to me that everything ended for him on such a high note. Not many people achieve so much in their 80th year! These included successful book launches for *John Wilkinson, King of the Ironmasters* at both Castlehead and Coalbrookdale, David speaking on both occasions about the book.

He was instrumental with me in setting up the inaugural meeting with the Brymbo Heritage Group and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, resulting in the formal support of Ironbridge for the Brymbo project. His input will also be realised

in the forthcoming redevelopment of the Museum of Iron at Coalbrookdale, thus ensuring John Wilkinson's rightful place as one of the greatest Ironmasters.

We have all lost a dear friend, but what a legacy he leaves!

To commemorate the life and achievements of David Lake, his daughter Rosemary will be holding open house on Saturday 8 September at 2.00 pm at David's home, Avebury, Stocking Lane, Nordley. This invitation is open to all and those who would like to join her are asked to contact Gillian Pope on 01952 883960 before 6 September.

OLYMPIC TORCH

Congratulations to Broseley for putting on such a welcome to the Olympic torch runners when they came through the town on 30 May. The town looked fantastic, with Broseley in Bloom enhancing the High Street with troughs full of flowers and trees decorated with red, white and blue ribbons. The banner strung across the High Street was very much in the eye, particularly to those people on one of the sponsor's buses who had to duck sharply as they went beneath it! The route was lined with people waving flags and cheering and someone was heard to remark that she had never enjoyed a day so much since Broseley had held its carnivals.

Of the four runners, Ricky Fergusson must surely have been the most admired. Despite having suffered severe disabling injuries during service in Afghanistan, he opted to run the most difficult part of the day's course, the steep road up Barratt's Hill. There he handed the torch to 15 year old Jordan Clarke who, at the age of eight, had undergone a successful liver transplant. He has since raised over £12,000 for charity and says he wants to be a professional wrestler. The torch was then carried the remainder of the way through the town by Gareth Pollard from Telford and Georgios Polysoz from Athens.

Society member Ron Miles also made his name when he ran a stretch of the route through Much



A 'bad hair day' did not stop David Lake enjoying a visit to the Severn Valley Railway along with the late Ken Jones and John Challen

Photograph courtesy of John Freeman



Photograph courtesy of John Freeman

Left: 15 year old Jordan Clarke was one of the torch bearers through Broseley High Street

Right: Ron Miles keeps the Flame alive in Much Wenlock

Wenlock. He said he had been practising for weeks using a broom for a torch to make sure he was fit on the day. He also said he has no intention of selling his torch but will put his brand-new-for-the-occasion trainers up for auction for charity.

To mark this day, a plaque commemorating this occasion was unveiled on the wall of the Victoria Hall by the Mayor of Broseley, Cllr Alan Taylor, and Philip Dunne, Broseley's MP.



As part of the celebrations Broseley Town Council had challenged schools and youth groups in the town to create a replica torch and flame and run a commemorative race. At a Civic reception in the Victoria Hall in the late afternoon, the Mayor announced the winners of this competition; the results of their efforts were on display in the Hall, as were the entries in the Broseley Camera Club's Olympic Torch competition 'Sport'.

Broseley people can certainly be proud of making this day such a gala occasion, a once in a lifetime opportunity to show the world what the town can do.

Dark Lane School children running a commemorative race with their replica torches



Photograph courtesy of Dark Lane School

DIAMOND JUBILEE EXHIBITION

In June the Society celebrated Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee with an exhibition in the Cemetery Chapel. Thanks to the very generous response from those people who offered to lend items for this exhibition, the Society was able to put on an outstanding display reflecting royal memorabilia over the past century.



Some of the royal memorabilia lent by members of the Society for display at the Jubilee Exhibition in the Cemetery Chapel

Despite the Sunday being a total washout, visitors on the other three days more than made up for it and, judging by the comments overheard and seen in the visitors' book, the exhibition was a great success and the effort involved in mounting it much appreciated.

Thanks must go to Michael and Gillian Pope, whose idea it was, and who put in so much time and effort to make it the success it was.

CEMETERY CHAPEL

Visitors to the Cemetery Chapel have sometimes asked when the last service was held there, a question no one seemed able to answer. Now Joan Griffiths has come up with some information on when one of the last services was held, but it would be interesting to hear from anyone else who may have other information.

According to Joan, one of the last services actually held in the Cemetery Chapel was the funeral of Mr Joseph Jones who died aged 73 years at his home, 20 The Lloyds, Ironbridge. The service was held on 26 January 1949 and was taken by the Rev C S Jackson.

Joseph Jones was one of the oldest pigeon fanciers in the district having bred and raced pigeons for some 60 years. During that time he had gained some outstanding successes, winning hundreds of prizes, diplomas and silver cups. He was particularly noted for his long distance racing pigeons, his greatest achievements being accomplished in distances up to 500 miles. An old

member of the former Ironbridge Homing Society he had raced his birds for the last three years with the Broseley Society and had won the Baldwin-Webb cup two years in succession for the best combined averages. He had also won the Wellington Journal Cup twice in succession before the war, entering the Shropshire Continental Club of which he was also a member.

In his young days he was also a well known footballer, playing right half for such clubs as Ironbridge, Madeley, Dawley, Broseley and St George's. While assisting St George's United in 1900 his team won the Welsh Junior Cup defeating Wrexham at Flint 4 - 3 in the final.

A native of Madeley Mr Jones lived at The Lloyds for his last 50 years and was employed as an encaustic tile dipper at Craven Dunnill and Maws up until World War II when he went to Fishers and Ludlows and then to Donnington; he retired in 1946. He was the oldest member of the Madeley Lodge of Oddfellows.

IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust has recently acquired a number of historic artefacts from HM Revenue and Customs, artefacts which had previously been used in Customs Houses throughout the country.

Many of these are interesting examples of cast iron objects that have been used by the government in an official capacity over the centuries. They include official weights and measures, stamps and dies, along with two cast iron coats of arms which used to sit above the doors of official Customs Houses.

According to Dr Matt Thompson, senior curator at the Trust, most of the objects already in their collection had been used in domestic or industrial activities. These new acquisitions, however, carry strong associations of government authority, so much so that, even now, the coats of arms cannot be hung on the outside of any building that is not an official Customs House.

The artefacts will be used in the Museum's educational work with the community and in displays around their ten museums; these include

the Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron which will be undergoing a major refurbishment in the near future.

PARK AND RIDE TO THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE

2 June – 27 October

The new Ironbridge Park and Ride service will be running up to 27 October and is an easy way to get around the Ironbridge Gorge. Buses run every 12 minutes from the Jiggers Bank car park via Coalbrookdale into the centre of Ironbridge. From Ironbridge there are regular connections to all of the Ironbridge Gorge Museums via the Gorge Connect bus service.

For more information contact the Ironbridge Visitor Information Centre on 01952 433424, tic@ironbridge.org.uk or www.ironbridge.org.uk.

WHAT'S ON?

Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Festival

22 – 30 September 2012

This event will start off on Saturday 22 September with a Festival in the centre of the town, followed by a week of talks and walks, culminating the following weekend in a Heritage and Craft event at Maws Craft Centre.

Starting at 12.00 pm in central Ironbridge, the Wharfage will become a street market with a range of fun activities. Street performers and local bands will entertain the crowd, while the Merrythought Village workshops and the Micro Brewery will be open offering hands-on activities. Local historians will be available to give guided walks and talks on the history of the Gorge. Later in the evening, the Iron Bridge will be illuminated and there will be a firework display.

There will be no parking in the Gorge on Saturday 22 September and visitors should use the Park and Ride facility which runs from the top of Jiggers Bank.

For more information call tel: 01952 433424, email worldheritagefestival@telford.gov.uk or visit www.visitironbridge.co.uk.

Ironbridge Gorge Museums

23 September

Blists Hill Victorian Town
Harvest Festival

Celebrate in traditional fashion when an open air harvest festival service will take place in the Pleasure Gardens, whilst a shorter service will be held inside the Museums' Mission Church. Normal entry fees apply.

Late September 2012 – April 2013

Exhibition of artwork by Welsh artist Falcon Hildred.

Ongoing to 30 September

Enginuity

Part of the London 2012 Festival

CORE – A Digital Art Installation designed by international artist Kurt Hentschläger.

20 October – 4 November

Enginuity

Techno Terrors

Make your own Hallowe'en Techno Terrors using mouldable plastic and a battery operated electric motor. Cost £2.50 per Techno Terror for materials plus admission.

For details of events, entry fees and opening times for all Ironbridge Gorge Museums contact tel: 01952 433424 or visit www.visitironbridge.co.uk.

MAILBOX

I am trying to find out some information for my father who now lives in Much Wenlock. As children, he and his sister remember spending a period of time at Benthall Edge Cottage but cannot remember with whom. Would it be possible to trace who has lived there or put me in touch with anyone who could help me? The period of time concerned would have been around 1947.

Sophie Martins

I am writing an illustrated tribute book in memory of St Winefride's Roman Catholic Church, Broseley, which closed on 19 May this year. I do have some information on the origins of the church, going back to 1869, but wonder if anyone has a description of the opening of the church hall in, I believe, November 1979, as well as any memories or stories of the church itself.

Chris Magnerc

I have just discovered that I have Broseley ancestors, with my family names being Rowley, Wantling and Cranage, all of whom reach back to the 17th century. Then, like a lot of Broseley families, they seem to have moved off to the Black Country. I wonder if any of your members have connections with these names?

We visited Broseley last week and were struck with the attractiveness of the village and the friendliness of the inhabitants.

Dianne Brown

I am looking for information on John Hughes and his family. In the 1790s his children were christened at St Leonard's, while his daughter Mary Anne married William Childe of Kinlet. I am also interested in Benjamin Ball who was involved with iron and at one time leased Barnett's Leasow.

Barbara

Randall's History of Broseley and its Surroundings 1879 has this to say:

"The Barnett's Leasow two furnaces have so completely disappeared that scarcely a wreck remains behind, the Severn Valley Railway passes over where they stood. They were built, we believe, by Messrs. Wright and Jesson, who carried them on, more than half a century ago. Mr. Thomas Birch being then manager. Afterwards they were carried on by Mr. Phillips, who had had much experience in South Wales and other places, and who brought up the make from thirty five to a maximum of eighty tons per week for the two furnaces. The metal was principally used at the forge at the Wren's Nest, near Apley. James Foster, Esq., of Coton Hall, uncle to the present W. O. Foster, Esq., of Apley, afterwards took to these works and carried them on, with Mr. Benjamin Ball, of Broseley for manager. They were blown by a thirty-six double-power engine, of very superior construction."

Steve Dewhirst

I am trying to find mention of a Samuel Bateman who had connections with your area in

the 1700s. He may have been born or died in 1787, perhaps in the parish of Willey. Could anyone point me in a direction where I could find out something that would be helpful?

Rae Baines

My father, John Percy Weston (1912-2003) was born in Bilston but moved to Broseley in 1919. He had very fond memories of his time there, regarding it as his childhood home. He was the middle son of Albert Ernest Weston, who worked in the power house at Bilston, and Mary Barbara Matthews from Pattingham. The family lived next door to the Wesleyan Chapel, which I gather was on Duke Street. Could anyone identify the number or name of their house and whether it is still there? I believe it was regarded as 'posh' as it had an indoor toilet.

At the age of seven my father joined the church choir where Walter Davis was choir master. Does anyone have any photographs of either the choir c1919-1930, the vicar at the time, or of Mr Davis who seemed to have been quite prominent in the town?

While still at school, my father was vice captain of a junior football team which played a cup match



Walter Davis c 1950 Rev Warner, vicar in the 1920s

Photographs courtesy of James Hurdley, for left and Joan Griffiths, left

in Bridgnorth and tells of how a supporter took along a carrier pigeon to send the news of a win to Broseley so the town could prepare a welcome for the team returning with the cup.

Would there be any photographs of the school in the 1920s or of Walter Davis' grocer's shop at 82 High Street, where my father went to work delivering goods by horse and cart when he left school in 1926, and of Coalbrookdale Brass Band in which my grandfather played?

Susan Donaldson

The pub company, Brunning and Price, have recently purchased the Woodbridge Inn in Coalport. I am writing a history page for the pub's website as well as designing a pub sign for the Woodbridge Inn itself. I am trying to get hold of any illustration of the original wooden structure of the Coalport bridge which was demolished in 1795. As to the date of the pub, can one assume it was built whilst the wooden bridge was in existence between 1780 and 1795?

Duncan Lochhead

Dave Shinton refers Duncan to an entry in his book, Inns and Alehouses of Broseley, under Bridge Inn, saying that the Woodbridge Inn had had various names in its history including the Bridge House and the Coalport Bridge Inn. The original Preens Eddy Bridge was opened in 1780 and it is possible that the pub dates from this time. The owner of the property in 1802 was George Forester, subsequently raised to the peerage as Baron Forester of Willey, in whose family it remained until 1901 when it came into the ownership of W T Southam's Old Salop Brewery.

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.

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<i>Publicity</i>	Michael Pope Richard Sells Janet Doody
<i>Website</i>	www.broseley.org.uk
<i>Email</i>	steve@broseley.org.uk