

Newsletter

Newsletter of the Broseley Local History Society

Incorporating the Wilkinson Society



February 2013

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

- 6 Mar Annual Wilkinson Lecture, *Edward Blakeway, Entrepreneur* by Paul Luter
3 Apr *Local Industrial Archaeology* by Shane Kelleher
1 May *Leighton Model Farm* by Peter Platt
5 Jun Summer Evening, see page 1
6 Jul July Outing, see page 1

Further details from Neil Clarke 01952 504135.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Robin Coates, Madeley
Trevor and Sue Hodgetts, Broseley
Sally Lane, Woodside, Telford

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Included in the Society's programme for this year will be two outdoor events. As in the past, these will take the form of a Summer Evening in June and a coach trip to an area of interest in July.

Summer Evening, Wednesday, 5 June

Society and committee member Janet Doody has kindly offered to hold a barbeque for members in her garden in Wrockwardine Wood on 5 June. This occasion will include a guided walk for active members up to the Cockshutt Piece at Wrockwardine Wood and then down the remains of one of the inclined planes built on the Shropshire Canal from 1788-92. Further details will be available later but tickets, costing £5.00 per person, will be available at the April and May meetings. Please book this date so as not miss out on this event with a difference.

July Outing, Saturday, 6 July

This year's July trip will be to the Potteries and, while details have not yet been finalised, will probably include visits to the Wedgwood Museum,

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The Foxfield Light Railway and the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery at Hanley. Further details will be available later, but do book this date as the Society's July trips are not to be missed.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Christmas Dinner

In December Society members rounded off another successful year with a festive dinner at the Lion Hotel after which Jim Cooper kept everyone entertained with some excerpts from the weekly *Salopian Telegraph and Border Review*, published in Shrewsbury in the early 1840s. This newspaper, which could more aptly be described as a scandal sheet, had as its motto "Truth against the World" and obviously regarded itself as the upholder of the district's morals, albeit very much with tongue in cheek. While not always naming miscreants directly, many of those whose antics were reported would easily have been recognised by their neighbours.

Not only did it report on the dissolute behaviour of various members of the community, it was always willing to give advice, such as suggesting Miss B "be more careful in closing the window shutter, to prevent Mr C and her being seen playing the don't-mention-it on the sofa". Or asking the seemingly innocent question that "if John Ellis did kiss Mrs P in the new mown hay, what was that to anyone else except Mr P?" Nor was it averse to mentioning members of the cloth when wishing that the "Rev C T, alias the Willey gander, grub catcher and soul saver, would take Morris's bees back, or make him some recompense for them".

On one occasion, it seems the paper was undecided whether to be pleased or apologetic when it reported that "Obadiah Waghorn, the exciseman, is at present confined in a lunatic asylum. The fit, it is hoped, is only temporary, and caused by seeing his name in the *Telegraph*." One wonders what errant behaviour had warranted an earlier mention.

Meanwhile, a gentleman who came from Shifnal, one Mr J Culwick, was enjoined "not to invite his relations to dinner again until he can afford to give them one, as it is a mean action for a gentleman of independent fortune to ask his relations to dinner and then charge them for it afterwards". A sort of

variation on the 'bring and barbecue' theme one assumes. One also has to feel sorry for butcher Ben who was making a fool of himself over a young woman in Trench, and who was heard to say that "he would drown himself, only he could not find a warm place in the water".

The paper also ran a regular column, Sketches from the Pave, where it reported on the activities of certain members of the community. Referred to as the nymphs of the pave, these 'ladies' were often given nicknames such as the Great Western, the Greyhound and Miss Reece. Not that these nymphs got all the censure. At one point Dick, the Urchin, was urged, that the next time he intended "sailing on board the Great Western, to have his oar in better repair and not attempt to start till the steam is up." One wonders, though, whether the renowned Miss Reece was really deserving of the comment that, although she was approaching the wrong side of forty, "her beauty was as fadeless as when in her teens, for the best of all reasons – that she never had any at all!"

It certainly seems that the reports in this paper often hit a raw spot and it is highly probable that Tommy Jones, a tailor from Wellington, was not the only one to rejoice when he went into the *Telegraph* office one morning to find it all broken up – printing press and all. The editor, however, thought he had the last word when he told him to mind his wife and his own business and that the *Telegraph* would last longer than he would.

Sadly, his forecast proved wrong and it is thought that the paper closed soon after this.

Copies of the *Salopian Telegraph* are available on microfilm at Shropshire Archives. They are well worth looking at, not only for their social comment, but for their delightfully biting wit and telling innuendo.

Broseley Brick and Tile

When Steve Dewhirst was researching the subject of Broseley Brick and Tile for his January talk to the Society, it occurred to him that, rather than give a potted history of these works in Broseley, it would be more interesting to follow the family fortunes of the owners of just one of them, that of

Milburgh Tileries. This particular tileries, situated off Calcutts Road in Jackfield, was in existence from 1870 to 1938 and was owned and run by the Prestage family for all that time.

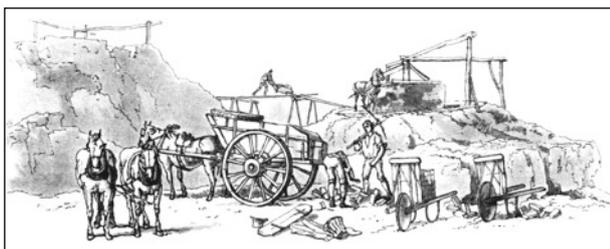
To give a bit of background to the industry, Steve said that the first reference he could find to brick making in England had been in Ely in 1335, while the earliest mention in this area was a 'tyle house' or kiln adjoining a coal pit on Priory land in 1545 and 1550.

As industry developed in the early 17th century, so did the demand for material for the building of shafts and furnaces. Broseley had the good fortune to have access to local clays and a brick and tile industry soon developed in this area. With industry came the need for housing for the industrialists themselves and Broseley bricks and tiles soon became well known for their outstanding quality. Indeed, the earliest house built of brick in Broseley still stands – Raddle Hall in Church Street was built in 1663, and is noted for its narrow bricks, a feature of early Broseley bricks.

It was not only the industrialists, however, who needing housing. As industry in the area grew, so did the population, with the number of inhabitants doubling in the 18th century to a peak of around 5,000 in 1801 – all of whom had to be housed somewhere. The brick making industry in Broseley boomed and by 1840 there were around 10 large brick making concerns in the area. By 1851 there were some 130 people employed in the brickyards; 20 years later that number had trebled, although many of the brickyards only worked in the summer months; until at least the 1860s, child labour was extensively used.

Going back to Milburgh Tileries, Steve said that the founder had been John Thomas Prestage, who was born in Shoreditch, Hackney, in 1802.

A drawing of an early brick kiln



Married in 1826, he and his wife Augusta had seven children in the ensuing years. Not a lot is known of John Thomas' early life but it seems that in 1861 he was living at Dean Corner as a boarder, perhaps moving to the Broseley area because his son Ward was by that time working as an engineer on the Coalport Branch railway. Ward is also famous for building the 21 gun battery on the Isle of Wight; he later worked in Hong Kong where he died in 1880.



John Thomas Prestage set up the Milburgh Tileries with his son Franklin in 1870

In 1870 John Prestage leased land off Calcutts Road from Colonel Harries, the owner of the Broseley Estate, and with his eldest son Franklin set up Milburgh Tileries. Three years later this partnership was dissolved and Franklin took over sole ownership, though it is likely that John's son-in-law, John Hopkins, managed the works for some years.

Some time later John Thomas moved into Broseley Hall which had been taken over by Franklin. He later moved to Wales, dying at Holywell in Flintshire in 1889.

Franklin was born in London in 1830. He became an engineer and in 1860 was to be found in India, married to Eliza Hawes; their first son Franklin Cary was born in Calcutta in 1861, with a second son, Donald, being born in Barrackpore two years later. In 1863 he became sub engineer and later general manager for the East Bengal Railway. It soon became apparent that not only was he a first class civil engineer, but had



Franklin Prestage in Calcutta with his two sons, Donald, left and Franklin Cary, right

many other interests, some of which led to him inventing a new process for making salt, as well as registering a patent for railway goods wagons in 1869.

Business interests in both India and England meant that Franklin and his family frequently travelled back and forth. In the years before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 this could mean a long sea voyage around the Cape of Good Hope. But Franklin, who disliked sea travel, devised a route of his own, travelling by rail to Folkestone, steam packet to Boulogne and train to Marseilles. There he would catch the P&O steamer to Alexandria, boarding the train again to Suez. From Suez it was, with a couple of stops for coaling at Aden and Point de Galle, modern day Sri Lanka, straight to Calcutta.

While still in India, in 1870 Franklin went into partnership with his father in setting up Milburgh Tileries but in 1873 he returned to England and took over sole ownership. Two years later he negotiated a new 21 year lease and moved into Broseley Hall along with his father, meanwhile taking out two patents for brick and tile machines.

Back in India in 1878 he became involved in the construction of the Darjeeling Railway in northeast India. The building of this railway was quite some engineering feat, as the line rose over 7,000 ft in the short distance of 55 miles, and included loops and zig-zag reverses.

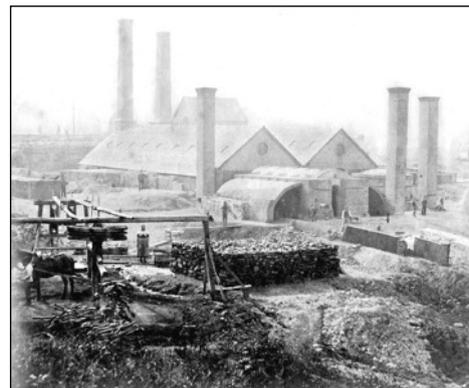


The Darjeeling railway today

The SS Nubia was one of the ships on which Franklin Prestage and his family would travel to and from India



In 1872 Milburgh Tileries produced 1 million tiles, 15,000 hips and gutters and 120,000 bricks



In 1889, however, Franklin resigned his position with the Darjeeling railway and returned to Europe. Later that year he dissolved the partnership he had set up with his son Donald in Milburgh Tileries and assigned the lease over to him. England did not hold him for long, however, and in 1893 he returned to Simla in India once again to work on the railways.

Although baptised into the Anglican faith, Franklin converted to Roman Catholicism shortly before his death in 1897. Perhaps this is not so surprising as members of his family, not least his son Donald, were educated at Stonyhurst Jesuit College in Lancashire.

In 1888 Donald, already a partner with his father, returned to Broseley to run the family's Milburgh tile works, which by this time had expanded considerably. In 1872 it had produced 1 million tiles, 15,000 hips and gutters and 120,000 bricks. At the time Donald



A young Donald Prestage

joined, it was producing double the number of tiles and three times the number of hips and gutters, as well as 66,000 quarry tiles – but no bricks. A year after his arrival, Donald dissolved this partnership and bought out his father.

Donald quickly realised the importance of producing high quality goods and protecting the prestigious Broseley brand name and set up the Broseley Tile Association which had 12 members. He also set up the Wallace Tileworks nearby which, by 1901, was employing some 25 people.

However, good things do not last forever, and although by 1894 Broseley was producing some

750,000 tiles a week, by 1900 this market had collapsed due to competition from cheaper sources and by 1914 the tile works were working at half capacity.

So when war with Germany broke out Donald, who had already served five years in the Calcutta Mounted infantry and as a Shropshire volunteer in the KLSI, joined the army where he quickly rose through the ranks. He was awarded the Military Cross, but in early 1919 was discharged on medical grounds suffering from gout.

On returning to civilian life, Donald took over Broseley Tileries and merged it with Milburgh Tileries to form Prestage and Broseley Tile Works. This concern, however, closed in 1938. Its machinery was later moved to Blists Hill, with the site being demolished in 1983.

During his time in Broseley, Donald took a keen interest in the local community. Not only was he a Wenlock town councillor, he also became an alderman and was mayor in 1905. It was he who bequeathed the Birch Meadow in Broseley to the town as a playing field in perpetuity, together with the Cockshutt Mound.

Donald died suddenly in 1930 while at a Broseley Lawn Tennis Club dance in the old Town Hall. The report of his death described him as “a public man of great ability His efforts and work in connection with local and public affairs generally have been of inestimable value.”

Prestage and Broseley Tile Works closed in 1938. Its machinery was later moved to Blists Hill, with the site itself being demolished in 1983



BLHS RESEARCH FUND

The Society is to set up a Research Fund to encourage members to explore topics in line with the aims of the Society – that is the research, preservation and promotion of Broseley’s unique heritage. Grants would cover costs such as reasonable travel, postage, photocopying and photography. On completion of the research the recipient would be required either to give a talk to the Society or write an article for the *Journal*.

Funds would be sourced from an initial grant from Society reserves, donations at meetings and from businesses and individuals.

Any member keen to take advantage of this exciting new project is asked to email steve@broseley.org.uk or contact Gillian Pope, 01952 883960.

SOCIETY BROCHURES

The Society is looking into the possibility of publishing a series of brochures about people and places of historical interest in the Broseley area. Several topics have already been suggested including Shirlett Sanatorium, Broseley Bricks and Tiles, George Pritchard, Churches and religion and houses of historical interest in Broseley. Further suggestions would be welcome, as would offers to research these areas.

It is possible that funds for such research could be made available from the newly formed Research Fund, details of which appear above. Anyone interested in this enterprise should contact steve@broseley.org.uk or phone Gillian Pope, 01952 883960.

PAINTINGS OF BROSELEY

Many members will already know of Joan Griffiths who has written two fascinating books about Broseley. Her first one, *Broseley, the People and the Past*, features ‘anecdotes, memories, facts and an amazing number of photographs taken over the years.’ Her latest, *Broseley Boys School, 1863-1889*, documents early education in Broseley and ‘reads like a ship’s log, charting fearful disciplines, pastoral worries, curriculum, tragedies and poverty, all forming the lives of young pupils.’

Now Joan has surprised local residents by producing a series of water colours of the town,



Known at one time as The Croft this water colour of the old Workhouse in Spout Lane was painted by Joan Griffiths in 1996

which are now on display in Harwoods Estate Agents in Broseley Square.

When asked how she first began to draw, Joan said that it was when she and her family lived at the Mines, off Bridge Road. The house they lived in had a splendid view and one day she simply sat down and sketched it. At first she just drew scenes of the area. It was only when she was at a neighbour's house and met a guest there who had a box of paints that she realised she would like to try her hand at water colours. So the guest sat her down and showed her how, whereupon Joan became so absorbed that she had to be reminded that her family were waiting for their supper! Since then Joan has painted many local scenes and says that one day she intends to draw from memory pictures of old cottages in the town which have now been demolished.

Her books are available from E Davis Ironmongers in the High Street or from Joan Griffiths, email: joan@griffiths883074.freemove.co.uk or tel: 01952 883074.

HANGING TREE PLAQUE

As reported in earlier *Newsletters*, the stone plaque in Duke Street depicting a hanging tree has now been resited facing the street on the wall of the house next to the Pipe Museum. A metal plaque, financed by the Broseley Partnership, explaining the story behind this has been



made by Roger Fewtrell at Blists Hill. To highlight this piece of Broseley history the Partnership is arranging an unveiling ceremony on Sunday 24 March. Members of the public are invited to join in this event which will take place at 2.30 pm and Society members in particular are urged to go along.

IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST Culture 24's Connect10 Competition

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT) is delighted to announce that it has reached the short list of the Culture 24's Connect10 Competition.

If successful they will be welcoming the artist Julian Wild to the Museums at Night event in May at Enigunity, when Julian will work on a large scale sculpture constructed from glow-in-the-dark plastic pipes in which members of the public can assist.



One of the unusual sculptures made by Julian Wild

Museums at Night, which is being held from 16 - 18 May, is a national initiative by Culture 24 encouraging museums to remain open after hours for one night a year.

The IGMT now needs its supporters to give them their vote in this competition. The museum with the most public votes by 5.00 pm on 5 March will win the competition. So please help them with this exciting event by visiting www.culture24.org.uk/places_to_go/museums_at_night/art420747 now and **voting for Ironbridge.**

Association of Independent Museums Grant

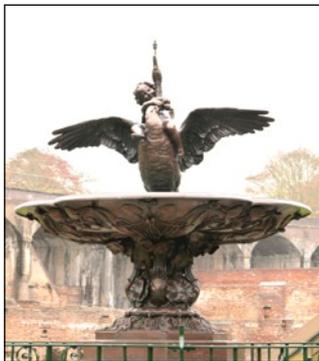
The IGMT has been awarded a grant of almost £115,000 for the stabilisation, repair and interpretation of the Bedlam Furnace and the creation of a series of monument trails in the World Heritage Site.

The grant has come from the Association of Independent Museums (AIM), and the IGMT is one of five organisations to benefit from its National Heritage Landmarks Partnership Scheme. Annual awards are allocated to projects that help transform derelict buildings and sites into

inspirational resources telling the stories of people, processes, industrial development and change.

Renovation of Swan and Boy fountain

The IGMT is also celebrating the news that His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales has agreed to renew his Patronage of the Museum for a further period. His Royal Highness became Patron of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust in 1979 following a visit to the Gorge. Since then, he has visited many times, most recently in September 2012 when he unveiled the Museum's newly conserved Boy and Swan Fountain. His patronage will extend from 2012 to 2017, the year that the Museum will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee.



The Boy and Swan Fountain was cast by the Coalbrookdale Company in 1851 for the Great Exhibition. Situated in the grounds of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum of Iron, it has recently been renovated.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST Courses and Guided Walks

The Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, which manages much of the landscape within the Ironbridge World Heritage site, has obtained funding from Big Lottery and Natural England to run a series of courses this year which will include an introduction to industrial archaeology in the area of the Severn Gorge as well as walks, creative workshops and identification of such things as flora and birds and their habitats.

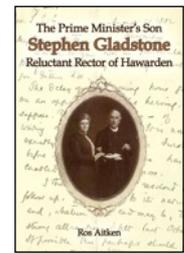
Perhaps of most interest to members of the Society will be their proposed Iron Trail, to be held on 4 September, which introduces the past while taking in the magnificent natural wonders of the woodlands.

Their programme is too extensive to detail here, but anyone interested may obtain a brochure from Cadi Price, email: cadiprice@severngorge.org.uk or tel: 01952 433880 or visit their website www.severngorge.org.uk.

BOOKSHOP

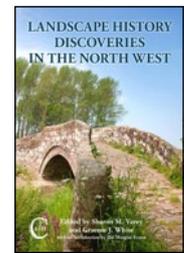
The Prime Minister's Son. Stephen Gladstone, Rector of Hawarden.

This newly researched biography by Ros Aitken casts an interesting light on the life and career of the least well-known of William Gladstone's children, and will appeal both to the general and the specialist reader. It offers a glimpse behind the scenes of the Gladstone family and an insight into life lived in the shadow of the Grand Old Man of Victorian politics, who sought to control his children with the same inflexibility with which he managed affairs of state. Price £14.99.



Landscape Discoveries in the North West, a collection of

research papers edited by Sharon M Varey and Graeme J White and offering new insights into the region's history between the 12th and the 20th centuries, including residential buildings, settlement patterns, the names and boundaries of fields, and the legacy of developments in transport and industrialisation. Price £12.99.



Both books are published by the University of Chester Press and may be ordered through all main distributors and booksellers or online from http://storefront.chester.ac.uk/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=12_14&zenid=bsq936mi76f2qqrabiv9tc2qd3.

WHAT'S ON?

Ironbridge Gorge Museums

Blists Hill Victorian Town

Monday 1 April

Special tours and exhibition celebrating their 40th anniversary. Free admission for those born on 1 April.

Monday 1 April

Traditional Easter Celebrations including the unusual pastime of blindfold egg dancing

22 and 23 April

St George's Day celebrations

Two open air performances of St George and the Dragon each day performed by travelling actors from the Prince Albert Players.

Coalport China Museum

1 - 5 and 8 - 12 April

Ceramic Drop-in Workshops

Activities vary from day to day including mug painting and sculpting from clay.

Enginuity

Monday 1 – Sunday 14 April

Nature's Engineers Workshops

Varying holiday activities include making your own 'sticky critters' inspired by the suction capabilities of an octopus.

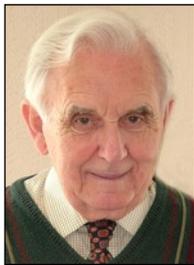
Saturday 20th April

Ken Jones Day

10.00 am - 4.15 pm

Glassfronted Meeting Room

A series of local industrial history talks in memory of Ken Jones, past President of the Society. Advanced booking necessary, contact Judy Mondon, tel: 01952 435931 or email: judy.mondon@ironbridge.org.uk



Ongoing to 31 August

An exhibition by artist Jon Mills of whimsical sculptures showing the adventures of Mr Watt, Grumpy Man of Metal, who features in a series of illustrated books and makes unusual metal objects such as a crab's bicycle, flying machine and a new kind of trumpet.

Coalbrookdale Gallery

Next to Enginuity

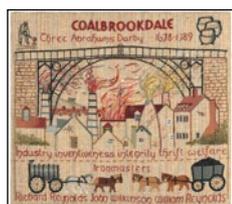
Ongoing to 30 April

An exhibition of Falcon Hildred's industrial art. These paintings and drawings of artist Falcon Hildred focus on the industrial landscapes of 19th and 20th century England and Wales.

22 May - 5 June

Exhibition of Quaker Tapestry

An exhibition of colourful panels of embroidery from the Quaker Tapestry Centre in Kendal, Cumbria. The modern bright textile panels give a fascinating insight into key events of the last 350 years from a Quaker perspective. They have been



A Quaker Tapestry panel on show at the Coalbrookdale Gallery

created by some 4,000 men, women and children aged between 4 and 90 years, from 15 different countries and were embroidered over a 15 year period between 1981 and 1996. Free entry.

Jackfield Tile Museum

2 - 5 and 8 - 12 April

Tile Decorating Workshops

Join a drop-in, flower-themed tile decorating workshop and try the tube lining technique to produce a 6 x 6 inch tile featuring your own design and choice of colours.

26 April - 31 May

Stream – Luce Choules

An exhibition of work exploring the monuments and landscapes of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. Admission free.

For more information on these and other activities, contact the Ironbridge Gorge information centre, tel: 01952 433424 or visit www.visitironbridge.co.uk.

Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival

4 - 12 May

Now in its eighth year this Festival will mark the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation with a new circular walk around the Ironbridge Gorge Museums showing some of the locations of Royal visits since 1900. It will also feature some 40 guided walks in and around the Gorge covering a range of interests. The walks are graded as to abilities and include one that is pushchair and wheelchair friendly. For the more energetic there will be a 14 mile walk taking in a section of the aptly named Monarch's Way, a long distance path following the escape route taken by Charles II after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester.

New on the agenda are the Sabbath Walks established by the Darby family to give their workers somewhere pleasant to go on Sundays with their families.

All walks are free, but places are limited and booking is essential. To reserve a place or request a copy of the programme contact the Ironbridge Visitor Information Centre by email at tic@ironbridge.org.uk or call 01952 433424; details on this festival can also be found on www.visitironbridge.co.uk/walkingfestival.

MAILBOX

Shirley Runte, who has written to the Newsletter before for help in her family research, writes again to thank Mr Ravenscroft for help with her burial site search. She goes on:

I am now assuming that my 3 and 4 times great grandparents Richard and Hannah Jones and William and Martha Jones were buried in the Birchmeadow Chapel graveyard. I have seen the report about the 2010 archaeological dig which raises the question as to what happened to the remains of all who were buried there when the site was cleared in the 1920s. If any readers know anything about it that far back or what happened to the markers and headstones from inside and outside in the graveyard, I should like to hear from them.

Shirley Runte

c/o steve@broseley.org.uk

I think all the bodies were left undisturbed when the site was cleared in the 1920s. I assume they just cleared away the headstones and levelled the ground. The archaeological dig of 2010 came about when some bones were discovered whilst they were carrying out work in the car park.

Steve Dewhirst

My recollection of the re-birth of what is now called the Broseley Local History Society varies somewhat from that reported elsewhere (see the *November 2012 Newsletter*).

I was lucky enough to attend the old Wilkinson Society meetings in the days when they were held in the Church Hall and was asked to help move their collection of artefacts from the cellars of the Lawns to those at Broseley Hall. I was then invited to become a committee member, and fondly remember committee meetings in the Orangery at the Lawns when Mike and Molly Berthoud were the owners. But with the untimely loss of two stalwarts, Maurice Hawes and Chris Whall, the Society ground to a halt.

At the time I was Chairman of the Broseley Civic Society, with Dave Shinton as secretary and Steve Dewhirst as treasurer. As a team we had achieved a lot including getting conservation area status for



These photographs of Ralph Pee, the founder of the Society, have been lent by Rex Key. The one on the right shows Ralph in Quaker dress during the 1979 Iron Bridge Bicentenary celebrations. The one on the left is from a report in the Shropshire Star on the re-opening of the Society's museum for the 1980 summer season. From left to right, Maurice Hawes, Freda Spickernell, Ralph Pee and Sir John Dugdale. Maurice Hawes is holding a picture of an original James Watt engine built at Broseley

Broseley – probably the only town in Britain to have been given conservation area status twice.

We three decided to restore the Society and put a piece in the Bridgnorth Journal. The evening it appeared I received a phone call from Mrs Perfect, who gave me a severe telling off and questioned why we wanted to revive a Society which she was running. Notwithstanding, an inaugural meeting was held in the Pipe Works which resulted in restored interest in the Society, the election of a new committee and the change of name to the Broseley Local History Society.

Soon after we held various very enjoyable events including a vintage coach trip to Bersham, a trip to Soho House in Birmingham, a talk about Parklands in Shropshire by Dr Paul Stamper and an event when we invited people to bring photographs of old Broseley so that some of our older members could put names to the people in the shots.

It is without doubt an over generous statement of the facts to say that there was a period when the Society bounced along the bottom. However the reward for our hard work in its rejuvenation is the healthy state in which we find it today.

Eric Cox

Past Chairman

Although born in Coalbrookdale I currently live in Malvern in Worcestershire. I was fascinated to see in a recent *Newsletter* the picture of a lion's head hydrant taken in the 1930s. In my

youth, between the wars, there were many of these in Madeley, Broseley, Ironbridge and Dawley. My guess is that many of them were melted down and dropped on Germany during WWII. It would be nice if these hydrants were represented in one of the numerous local museums.

Geoff Bagley

I believe these were installed in Broseley when the scheme to bring water from a pumping station at Harrington, which is between Sutton Maddock and Beckbury, was completed in 1902. The water was not connected to houses but to the conduits from which the inhabitants would fill buckets. I assume most of them went when water was plumbed into the houses. However one still existed in 2005 near the pumping station at Harrington complete with its drinking cup. You will find some details of the scheme and the conduits in the newspaper cuttings on our website.

Steve Dewhirst

My father was Charles Bagley who kept the Severn Garage opposite the Merrythought toy factory at Dale End. One of his jobs was to help with the engineering problems at Harrington water works and he used to tell a story about a gigantic gas-engine there. He once got called out because “it wouldn’t start”. It used to stop after a few revolutions with a violent seismic tremor. It appears that someone had “mended” the engine with a piece of asbestos which caused the engine to fire on the compression-stroke when the edges became incandescent!



This lion's head hydrant is still standing and can be seen alongside the entrance to Harrington Hall Farm, which is between Sutton Maddock and Beckbury

A friend of mine remembers these hydrants in Dawley, while my sister-in-law remembers the one at the bottom of the “Pan-shop Bank” at the end of Paradise in Coalbrookdale. It had a trough where dogs might drink, so there would appear to have been variants.

Geoff Bagley

The lion's head hydrant is still standing, alongside the entrance to Harrington Hall Farm, on the road from Sutton Maddock to Beckbury.

Editor

I have been researching members of the Nickless family as far back at Thomas Nickless who was born on 3 March 1716 in the parish of Wellington, Shropshire. He married Mary Hughes.

I should be interested to hear if there is anyone else researching this family name as it seems to have a high concentration in the Midlands and I wondered if there was a specific reason for that.

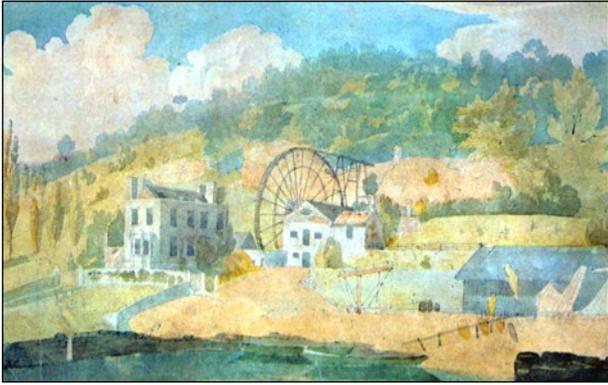
Gordon Nicholas

I should like to find out more about the history of Sweyney Cliff House in Coalport. The house belonged to my grandfather and I lived there for part of WWII. However, the house was sold some time in the 1950s. It has recently burnt down.

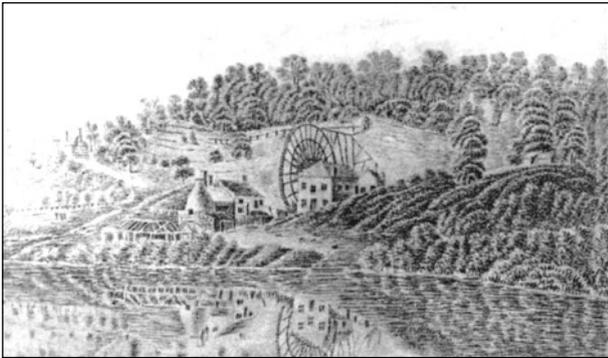
My interest is in the time before the house was enlarged – probably in the early 1800s – and a water wheel existed on the site. According to my father, this was the biggest water wheel ever built on mainland UK. The technicalities of why the wheel was built and how it worked interest me as an engineer, but so do other aspects of the site.

A substantial stone build wharf can still be seen just below the house. I assume this was to deliver materials for milling and then taking away the product. There was also some ‘engineering’ work done to enhance the pool in front of the house by controlling the width of flow over the rapids.

The land that belonged to the house in my grandfather’s day has largely been detached, and the water source that fed the water wheel no longer feeds the waterfall, which was all that remained of the old wheel arrangement.



According to the description of this drawing the house was once known as Rock House. This illustration of it and the waterwheel is dated 1825



A similar view of the waterwheel and kiln at Swinney Cliff. Unfortunately the artist is not known, but the drawing probably dates from about 1815

In the 1930s, my father built a small hydro electric system that provided power for the house. It used the same water source as the original wheel, which was a spring issuing from a rock face in the woods above the house. The excess water was allowed to flow along the original leat and fall roughly where the wheel would have been.

I should appreciate hearing from anyone who may have information about the history of this house in the 19th century.

Vincent Allen

According to Barrie Trinder in his book Industrial Revolution in Shropshire it was a William Horton who became involved with a water mill at Swinney about 600 yards downstream from Coalport Bridge on the north bank of the river.

One Thomas Thomas was paid three guineas in 1805 for making a drawing of the proposed mill which was finally built by 1810; it had a 76 feet diameter wheel fed by a long, elevated trough built out from the hill side. Although designed as a corn

mill, it was being used by the Hortons in 1824 for crushing linseed and was subsequently employed for the grinding of materials for the Coalport china works.

William Horton was once clerk to the Coalbrookdale Company and became the principal partner with William Reynolds in the development of Coalport china works.

Steve Dewhurst

In researching my family tree I have found that my great grandfather came from Broseley and according to his birth certificate was born on 3 March 1878 at the back of the Prince of Wales in the District of Broseley. Can anyone tell me if births were commonly performed there and where it was located?

I also found that my great great grandparents had been married in 1876 at the Congregationalist Church in the District of Madeley. I understand this church was demolished in the 1960s and is now a car park for the Pipeworks Museum.

The family apparently lived in Broseley Wood; can anyone tell me a little about this area?

Ann Beal

Ontario, Canadaa

The following is taken from the book Inns and Alehouses of Broseley by B D Shinton:

The Prince of Wales occupied 45 Cape Street and is currently known as the Gables. The earliest licence is said to have been granted in 1851. Randall describes it as a beer house. Thomas Smitheman, who like many others had another job (builder) held the licence in 1863, Joseph Hill by 1868 and Eyra Millward by 1888. When in 1901 Margaret Ann Bevan was licensee it was owned by



Once the Prince of Wales pub, the building is now a private house called The Gables

E F Groves of Iron Bridge. He also owned the Napoleon and the Talbot.

At that time it had 5 rooms up and 5 down. The buildings were described in less than favourable terms as “fair”. The next pub was 100 yards away.

The Prince of Wales may have been something of a landmark, for even today reference is occasionally made to “...such and such being behind the Prince...”

As you say, the Congregational Church was on the site which is now the car park for the Pipeworks but the foundations of the church are still visible. You might be interested in this extract from the Victoria County History of Broseley:

Congregationalists came to Broseley in 1837 thinking it to be a more open settlement than others in the area. The disused Friends’ meeting house and some adjacent land was bought, and about 1841 a new chapel with 100 free and 210 rented seats was built; the meeting house became a

The foundations of the church can still be seen in the Pipe Museum car park



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schoolroom. The minister from 1842 to 1845 was Samuel Newth (1821–98), later professor of mathematics and ecclesiastical history and principal of New College, St John’s Wood. On Census Sunday attendance at chapel was below average: 92 adults in the morning and 120 in the evening. The chapel closed in 1965 and had been demolished by 1978.

As to Broseley wood this was generally the poorer end of town and part of it had been a squatter community. If you look at the Town Trail <http://www.broseley.org.uk/townguide/town%20trail.htm> this should give you some idea of the area. Steve Dewhurst

CHEQUES AND THE BANKS

Would members please note that, when making out a cheque to the Society for any reason, they should take particular care and not use abbreviations such as BLHS and History Society as the bank is cautious about accepting these. Consequently, Jim Cooper the Society treasurer, has asked that in future all cheques be made out in full to Broseley Local History Society.

DISTRIBUTION OF NEWSLETTERS

In view of the increased cost of postage and printing, it has been suggested that some people might be happy to receive notification that the latest *Newsletter* has been put up on our website, rather than receiving a copy through the post. Although this suggestion may not appeal to everyone, if there are any members who would prefer to receive it this way, would they please contact the membership secretary, Janet Robinson, email: pandjrobinson@hotmail.com.

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.