

# Newsletter

## Newsletter of the Broseley Local History Society

*Incorporating the Wilkinson Society*



May 2009

### 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

- 3 Jun Summer Evening and Haycop walk, see this page for details
- 4 Jul Coach trip to the Black Country, see page 2 for details
- 2 Sep *The Building of the New Free Bridge* by John Freeman
- 7 Oct AGM followed by talk *Wrekin Brewery and its Pubs* by Allan Frost
- 4 Nov *Fords and Ferries of the Severn Gorge* by Neil Clarke. A joint meeting with the FIGM at the Glass Fronted Meeting Room, Coalbrookdale
- 2 Dec Christmas Dinner

Further details from Neil Clarke 01952 504135.

### NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Jonathan Howes, Broseley  
Anthony Ward, Reading

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

#### SUMMER EVENING

**Wednesday, 3 June**

**Meet at 2 Dark Lane at 7.30 pm**

The summer evening this year will be a walk to the Down Well and the Haycop led by Adrian Miles. Starting from 2 Dark Lane, the home of Michael and Gillian Pope, members will be able to see for themselves the improvements made by the Haycop Conservation Group over the last two years. Upon return light refreshments will be available.

Those people who do not wish to do the walk will be welcome to sit in the garden and await the return of the main party.

To help with catering, please complete the form on page 13 and return with your payment to Gillian Pope by **not later than Saturday 30 May**.

## VISIT TO THE BLACK COUNTRY

**Saturday, 4 July**

**Coach: £12.00 per person**

**Lunch (optional): £3.00 per person**

**Dep: 9.00 am Broseley Square**

**9.10 am School Road, Coalbrookdale**

**Ret: 5.30 - 6.00 pm**

A few places still remain for this year's visit to the Black Country where Ned Williams, a well known Black Country historian, author and president of the Black Country Society, will lead a tour of the area.

Stops will include Sedgley Beacon, Bennett's Hill, Parkhead Locks, Windmill End, Mushroom Green and the Red House Glass Cone at Wordsley.

If you have not already booked, and would like to join this tour, please complete the form on page 13 and return it with your cheque to Michael Pope by **not later than Saturday 6 June.**

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

### BROSELEY'S WATER SUPPLY

In March Michael Pope gave a talk on the history of Broseley's water supply in which he said that in the early 19th century Broseley, with its population of some 4,500, had been an almost self-sufficient town. Its economy relied on the collieries, furnaces, brick, tile and pipe works on the edges of the town and both managers and workers lived nearby, the managers in large houses such as The Lawns and Broseley Hall and the workers in rows of tiny cottages. Along the main street were all the shops needed to supply these households – not forgetting the numerous alehouses which were an essential part of any worker's life. But the one thing they did not have was a constant supply of clean water, and a present of a butt of fresh water was regarded as a very acceptable gift.

Unlike many of the surrounding villages Broseley had not grown up alongside a spring or stream, but had developed because of the coal, clay and ironstone deposits to be found there. The exploitation of these resources, however, required a reliable supply of water, both for the growing industries and for household use. Of course, there was always the river Severn, but that was a steep haul by horse and cart. Then there was Linley

Brook to the south, the reason John Wilkinson had built his works at Willey, and even that was not reliable in a dry spell. Up at Benthall the Spout was a good source and was tapped further down the hill to power the water mill at the bottom of Bridge Bank.

There were also a few springs. Boss Well was just off a jitty leading from King Street to Speeds Lane, while Cob Well was higher up the hill in Broseley Wood, in the road which still bears its name.

In a dry summer, however, these wells were often inadequate and the story goes that one young resident, sent off very early to fill his bucket before the supply ran out, was pipped at the post by the local termagant. He was no doubt far from happy when ordered to watch the trickle fill her bucket while she nipped home for another one.

There was also a source known as the Lily Pump opposite Legges Hill School, on ground later developed for Council housing. In times of drought the owner, Matt Davis, would deliver water around the town in a horse and cart for ½d a bucket. In 1898 a report on the quality of this water found that it contained 'a large quantity of organic matter' but was nonetheless considered to be the best water in Broseley. No wonder the alehouses thrived!

Because of the industrial pollution of Coalbrookdale and the Gorge, people such as bankers, solicitors, ironmasters and factory owners found Broseley to be a better place to live and began to build themselves large houses like The Lawns and Whitehall. These people could supply their own water by installing catchment tanks on their roofs. For the hoi polloi, however, it was not so easy. Their small, cramped houses had no sanitation and no water and their nearest source of water was the Down Well along Dark Lane.

*Often water had to be carried some distance and the use of frames and yokes made this much easier*





*The old Down Well, now restored, was once Broseley's main source of water*

However, this frequently dried up in summer and in 1842 a reservoir, to be used in times of drought, was built adjacent to the spring at a cost of £300. Doom-mongers, however, were convinced that, with such extensive mining works in the area, the reservoir could never be made leakproof. How right they were! In August of 1864 the water in the reservoir ran out and households were restricted to five gallons a day from the Down Well itself, a watchman being paid £9 12s 0d to enforce this.

A less salubrious source was that available at the Delph, a pool in the middle of the town fed by rain water run off from the street and sewage from the surrounding houses. In a dry spell the smell was terrible and in 1861 it was filled in, eventually becoming a bowling green and then a Memorial Garden. Today it forms an attractive centre to the town.

Fortunately for the people of Broseley there lived in the town a gentleman called George Pritchard. George Pritchard was a noted philanthropist with a great concern for the welfare of the local people. Another prominent person was Frederick Hartshorne, who lived in Alison House in Church Street. Some time before his death in 1861 Pritchard had agreed to pay Hartshorne £10 a year in support of his proposal to tap into a stream which ran beneath his house and make water available to the public through a pump in the street.

*Once a virtual sewage pit, the Memorial Garden now forms an attractive centre to the town*



*This water fountain was built to commemorate George Pritchard, a well loved Broseley philanthropist. It was closed in 1887 after a small child fell in and drowned. The structure was demolished in the late 1930s.*

*The Lion's Head standpipe on the right was one of several around the town*

This was so successful that in that year, according to Hartshorne, the Down Well never ran dry.

Had the problem finally be solved? Sadly, no. Soon after this Pritchard died and it was decided to build a fountain to honour his memory. However, the committee responsible for this chose to sideline Hartshorne and his pump, instead sinking a borehole on the junction of the High Street and Bridgnorth Road and building a monument to Pritchard over it. The problem was that the water from this borehole was contaminated with ironstone and was soon declared unfit for drinking.

Recriminations flew thick and fast. Hartshorne said "I told you so" and cut off the supply from his stream, while a tradesman remarked that "the gentlemen of Broseley, themselves having water, cared not for the poor, their only object was to have the monument." A member of the Broseley Committee then decided to employ two workmen to repair the reservoir at the Down Well, whereupon Hartshorne declared it to be a waste of money and said that the two men were not even capable of building a pigsty. Accusations continued to fly until even Frederick Hartshorne's integrity was brought into question.

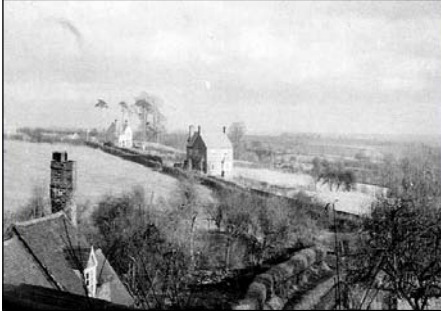
Meanwhile the people of Broseley were once again without a reliable supply of drinking water and although the Pritchard Memorial well continued to operate for some years, its death knell was sounded in 1887 when a three year old child fell in and was drowned. Soon after that the well was boarded up and in the late 1930s the monument itself was declared unsafe and was demolished.

In 1875 it was decided to build another reservoir near the centre of town, this time on the left of Dark Lane to be fed by a stream in the adjacent





*The plinth from the old Pritchard Memorial now forms a centrepiece for the Broseley in Bloom display*



*Looking down over the site of the new reservoir in Dark Lane. The Down Well is just beyond the house in the middle of the picture*

meadow. This, however, proved inadequate and an unsuccessful attempt was made to pump water up from the Down Well. Nonetheless, the project went ahead and a celebration supper and dance was held inside the reservoir before it was finally sealed up. Twenty years on and disaster struck again when subsidence caused cracking. Repairs were to no avail and residents were forced to go back to fetching their drinking water from the Down Well.

This, however, was not the end of the reservoir. Some bright spark on the Local Authority suggested they use it for sewage disposal, there being no other facility in the town. So sewer pipes were laid down the High Street and across to the reservoir and Broseley had its first central sewage disposal system. But not for long. The sewage sealed up the cracks in the floor, filled up the reservoir and spilled over into Dark Lane. So that was the end of that good idea! It was not until the 1970s, when Dark Lane was eventually widened, that the entrance to the reservoir was capped. Today, the only evidence of its existence is an air vent in the garden of 2 Dark Lane.



*Dark Lane before it was widened in the 1960s*

Despite all the problems and the sorry saga of the various attempts to supply Broseley with clean drinking water, it was not until early in the 20th century that mains water was eventually brought to the town from across the river Severn. At first standpipes were erected in the centre of the town. Later on mains water and sewerage were connected to most of the properties. So at long last Broseley had an adequate and safe supply of water without the need to get to the well at sunrise before someone else took the last few dribbles.

The Down Well, however, is once again in the news. In 2007 the Haycop Conservation Group under Adrian Miles began clearing and restoring the original well, while divers found the three chambers inside it to be in good condition and the water plentiful and still fit for drinking. Who knows but that, in the event of global warming, and amid threats of severe drought, the Down Well may once again be put to good use – and a butt of water again be regarded as an acceptable gift!

*Photographs courtesy Michael and Gillian Pope*

### **WENLOCK EDGE, ITS GEOLOGY AND MINERAL EXPLOITATION**

At the April meeting Chris Rayner gave a talk on the geology and quarries of Wenlock Edge. Wenlock Edge, she said, is not only one of the best known geological sites in Shropshire but one of the most famous in the world. Of course, it did not always look like it does today. Some 420 million years ago the area was part of a tropical sea sloping down from present day Leicestershire to mid Wales, and was 30 degrees south of the equator. This warm, clear sea, rich in nutrients, was ideal for promoting the growth of such things as corals, crinoids and trilobites which, in turn, eventually formed reefs on the sea floor.

*Corals, crinoids and trilobites would have been among the sealife in the Wenlockian Sea*



*Copyright J Norton, Geology of the Wenlock Edge District*



A typical example of a ballstone. They can still be seen today in situ

These reefs, which occur as separate ‘patches’ on the sea bed, are known colloquially as ballstones. Lenticular in shape, they can vary in size from a maximum of 50 metres across to 20 metres thick and are made up of a variety of organisms. These can still be seen today in situ within a surrounding mass of bedded limestone.

Over time a cycle of first muddy and then clear seas resulted in layers of shale and limestone forming on the sea floor. Some 40 million years ago, however, as the area gradually took on its present day shape, these discrete layers were pushed up and then slowly eroded to their present form. The limestone, being harder than the shale, eroded more slowly until a distinctive ridge evolved, running some 16 miles from Benthall Edge southwest to Craven Arms. Known as Wenlock Edge, it has a steeply wooded scarp to the northwest, with a gentler slope to the southeast.

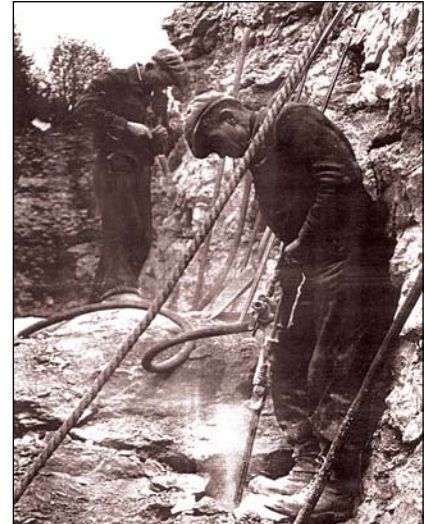


A simplified geological map of the area.

Note that Murchison’s original divisions based on rock type have been retained rather than the revised classification based on fossils, as the former better reflect the landscape.

- Upper Ludlow shale
- Aymestry limestone
- Lower Ludlow shale
- Wenlock limestone
- Wenlock shale

Reproduced by kind permission of the Shropshire Geological Society



Blasting was done by packing drilling holes with black powder which was ignited either by a naked fuse or by a straw filled with more powder

Limestone has many uses, one of its earliest being for building material, both as stone blocks and for use as mortar. Over the centuries various small quarries had been worked to supply this demand, but it was not until early in the 18th century, when it became commonly used as a flux in the iron industry, that these became commercially viable. By 1851 there were over 100 small quarries along the Edge with burnt lime as the main product, although building stone was also produced, selling for two shillings a ton.

These quarries were mainly worked by two man teams using rammer bars and heavy hammers. Blasting was done by packing drilling holes with black powder which was ignited either by a naked fuse or by a straw filled with more powder. Inevitably accidents occurred, such as the one in 1832 when a Joe Hill was a little too previous with his lighted touch paper. Or in 1911 when a man named James was packing powder into a hole when it started to rain. Seeking shelter until the rain stopped, he later returned to the scene, idly putting his cigarette out on some spilt powder on the way.

Because of their situation at the top of a steep incline, transport from the quarries was always going to be a problem. This was at first done by packhorse, donkey and horse and cart. Later narrow gauge tramways were built, while Thomas Telford was responsible for the construction of an inclined plane from Edgefield Quarry down Harley Bank to the lime kilns at New Town. Originally square trucks on four wheels were used, but later on use was made of hopper trucks.



*Thomas  
Telford's  
inclined plane  
ran from  
Edgefield  
Quarry down  
Harley Bank to  
New Town*

As the demand for lime for the iron industry increased, many of the quarries between the River Severn and Much Wenlock were bought up by the ironmasters who increased production considerably. Transport was still a problem, however, particularly along the Buildwas road to the river, from where it would be shipped downstream to the various ironworks. By the mid 1800s it was clear that a railway was needed and in 1862 a single track line was opened between Much Wenlock and the Severn Valley Railway. This was later extended south to Presthoke and Craven Arms and north to Coalbrookdale.

As well as being used for building and in the iron industry, lime was also in demand for agriculture. To service this demand kilns were built along the length of the Edge until at one time there were 183 of them between Lincoln Hill and Easthope. Usually built backed up against the rock face to facilitate loading, these early pot kilns were loaded with alternate layers of 4:1 limestone to fuel. Not very efficient, they produced only some 20 tons of lime, both temperature, yield and quality being erratic, while it took between eight and 14 days for calcination.

Later continuous firing kilns were developed which were loaded from the top, with off take from the bottom. These kilns gave off an eerie white light which became known as limelight. From this comes the expression 'to be in the limelight' when stage lighting was generated by burning lime in an oxy-hydrogen flame. Later still, these kilns were

replaced by crushers with the last of the kilns ceasing to be fired in the mid 1960s.

From the early 19th century limestone also became increasingly used in road making until road stone and hard core were the most important products of the industry. Initially local stone was transported to the roadside and broken up either by hand or by mobile stone breakers. Later, with improvements in machinery, it was crushed on site and delivered ready for use.

Today, the quarries of Wenlock Edge are no longer viable and even Lea Quarry, which up to 2008 was still producing aggregates, has now closed. However, these quarries have been of huge importance commercially to the area and still remain geologically so, with each quarry having its own particular history.

*A glossy pamphlet, Wenlock Edge Geotrail, published by the Shropshire Geological Society, shows details of walks in the various quarries. It is available at a cost of £1.50 from Wenlock Museum or from Scenesetters, tel: 01938 820777; email: [andrew@scenesetters.co.uk](mailto:andrew@scenesetters.co.uk).*

Except where stated otherwise, illustrations are courtesy of Chris Rayner

## **BOULTON, WATT AND WILKINSON** **The birth of the improved steam engine**

In this year's Annual Wilkinson Lecture, Dr Jim Andrew, a former keeper and now part time adviser with Birmingham Museum Service, gave an illuminating account of the development of the improved steam engine in the late 18th century. Looking first at the Newcomen engine, he went on to describe how Matthew Boulton, James Watt and John Wilkinson contributed to the production of a machine that was three times more efficient in terms of fuel use – Boulton providing a Birmingham base and business acumen, Watt making the vital breakthrough with his invention of the separate condenser and Wilkinson manufacturing accurately bored cylinders.

The number and wide range of questions and comments at the end of the talk attested to the interest it generated. An edited version will appear in the Society's 2009 Journal.

## COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES



*Mike Starkey  
Club Steward,  
left, with Michael  
Pope and Society  
Chairman Gillian  
Pope with the  
commemorative  
plaque to George  
Pritchard  
recently installed  
at the Social Club*



A plaque to commemorate George Pritchard has recently been installed on the front of Broseley Social Club, the house in the High Street where Pritchard once lived before it became a bank. This is the third plaque the Society has installed in the town and a fourth, that commemorating John Onions the ironmaster, is currently in production and will be placed at Whitehall in Church Street.

George Pritchard was born in Broseley in 1793 and initially trained as a lawyer. In 1846, however, he gave up law to concentrate on running the family owned Broseley and Bridgnorth Bank. A well known philanthropist, he held many offices, among them chairman of the Madeley Poor Law Union and High Sheriff of the County of Shropshire.

### GEORGE PRITCHARD - A TRIBUTE

A framed tribute to George Pritchard on the occasion of his death in 1861 has been donated to the Society by Reg and Pearl Taylor. It was found fastened against a fireplace with its back to the room when they moved into their house in the High Street many years ago. Its origin is unknown.



Giving a brief history of his life, it mainly comprises tributes to his philanthropic works in the area, and the respect

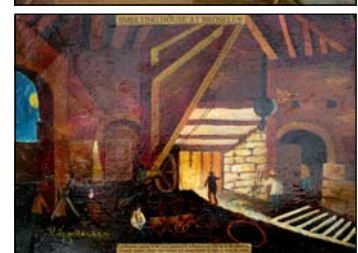
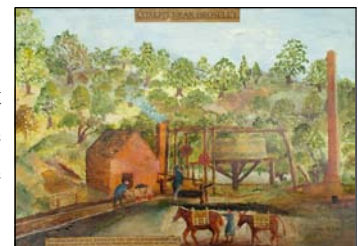
*This framed tribute to George Pritchard was found fastened against a fireplace with its back to the room in a house in the High Street*

in which he was held by the local community. After his death in 1861, the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* noted that he was “a supporter of almost every charity or undertaking in the district” and that “a perceptible cloud” had hung over the town of Broseley on the news of his death; while the *Wellington Journal* commented that “his truly kind-hearted disposition and unbounded and unostentatious liberality was well and thoroughly known”.

The picture forms part of an exhibition staged by the Society which is on display at Broseley Library until 30 May and is well worth studying in full.

## HISTORICAL PAINTINGS

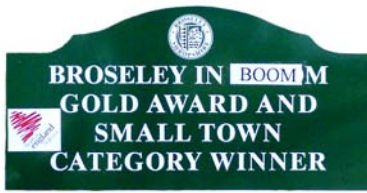
Some of the copies of historical paintings done by Society joint president Ray Johnston. Other titles are: Lightmoor Ironworks; Building the Iron Bridge; Coalbrookdale by Night; Bedlam Furnaces Madeley Dale; Madeley Wood Furnaces; Blists Hill Furnaces as rebuilt; View of a Cannon Foundry; Winding Engine at Lightmoor; Brymbo Old Number One; Willey New Furnace; The Great Wheel at Ironbridge; The Round House at Horsehay; Squatter’s Cottage at Blists Hill; The Lawns at Broseley and Lodge Furnaces of the Lilleshall Co.



These are available at a cost of £4.00 each unframed or £8.00 framed from David Lake, tel: 01746 762813.

*Just some of Ray Johnston’s copies of historical paintings.  
From the top:  
Blists Hill Furnaces as built; Coalpit near Broseley; The New Iron Bridge; Smelting House at Broseley*

## BROSELEY IN 'BOOM'



Photograph courtesy McHale Morris



*Broseley Chippy in flames after an explosion in February wrecked the building*

Residents of Broseley were woken up with a bang in February when Broseley Chippy, the fish and chip shop in the High Street, suffered a major explosion and burst into flames. Fortunately no one was injured despite reports of broken windows flying across the Square. Some wag, however, was quick to commemorate the event by changing the signs at the

entrances to the town. Instead of proudly proclaiming the town as a 'Broseley in Bloom' award winner, it was rechristened 'Broseley in Boom'!

## IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST

### DARBY'S HISTORIC GARDENS

The historic gardens at the Darby family home in Coalbrookdale are to receive an expert makeover. As part of their 300th anniversary celebrations of the start of the industrial revolution the Trust will be restoring the gardens of Abraham Darby and his family to their former splendour.

The gardens overlook the site of the Old Furnace at Coalbrookdale which is within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. It was there that, in 1709, Abraham Darby began using coke for smelting iron, an innovation which gave birth to the industrial revolution.

The Trust will be assisted in this project by a team from the Norton Priory Museum Trust in Cheshire which was responsible for the recreation of the world's oldest herb garden as part of the BBC series *Hidden Gardens*.

## BLISTS HILL VICTORIAN TOWN



*The new Canal Street is now lined with a parade of shops including a post office and a fried fish dealer*



*A clogmaker entertaining the crowd, just one of the many attractions along Canal Street*

Blists Hill Victorian Town is undergoing a major transformation thanks to a £12 million grant from Advantage West Midlands and the European Regional Development Fund. Already open is the new Canal Street, which is lined both sides with a parade of shops including a post office and fried fish dealer, while the artisans' corner has plumbers, tinsmiths and decorative plasterers.

## FILM ARCHIVES

The Media Archive for Central England (MACE) are hoping to obtain support from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help groups such as local history societies to find and preserve film in their community.

If the bid is successful MACE will create relationships with 60 community groups across the Midlands and help them to understand the importance of the moving image as a historical document. They will also support the group in a search for film in their community.

Anyone who may be interested in such a project can obtain full details on their website <http://www.macearchive.org>.



## WHAT'S ON?

### Coalbrookdale Gallery, next door to Enginuity Coalbrookdale 300 Exhibition

2 April – January 2010

10.00 am – 5.00 pm Monday to Friday, check before travelling

Admission free



An artists's impression of the Iron Bridge, painted in 1780

This exhibition is being staged to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of the industrial revolution and includes works from the Sir Arthur Elton Collection, held by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

The highlight of the exhibition will be three key landscapes painted by artist William Williams, *Morning View of Coalbrookdale*, *Afternoon View of Coalbrookdale* and a picture of the Iron Bridge itself. This latter was commissioned by Abraham Darby III in 1780 and is an artist's impression as the Bridge was not completed until 1781.

### Family History for All

Fri 29 May, 9.15 – 10.30 am

Broseley Library

Cost £3.00, preferably book in advance at Broseley Library, tel: 01952 884119

Alison Healey, archivist and researcher at Shropshire Archives, will be giving a talk on how to set about researching family history, as well as how and where to access relevant records.

### The Mortimers – a Medieval Family

Sat 30 May, 10.00 am

Memorial Hall

Much Marcle, near Ledbury

Cost £5.00

A seminar on the history of the medieval Mortimer family. There will be a talk on the Marcher Lord family of Wigmore and Ludlow Castles, followed by a survey of Mortimer castles, tombs and churches. There will also be an opportunity to visit the tomb of Blanche Mortimer in St Bartholomew's Church. Further information from John Grove email: [johnusk@supanet.com](mailto:johnusk@supanet.com) or tel: 01531 631575.

## Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

### Fe09: Footprints of Industry Conference

3 – 7 June

Coalbrookdale

Booking essential

A conference commemorating the 300th anniversary of the first successful commercial use of coke to smelt iron. It will consider the impact of the industrial revolution on the modern world and the social transformation, technological progress and environmental changes which have taken place. Covering a wide range of topics, the conference will provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary debate, discussion and analysis.

Society member Vin Callcut will be speaking on the *Industrial and Social Impact of John Wilkinson* when he will examine the way in which the impact of one ironmaster can be assessed and the perceived benefits to the British economy and to society evaluated.

Further details from [www.ironbridge.org.uk](http://www.ironbridge.org.uk).

### Birmingham Museum Collections Centre

25 Dollman Street, Nechells

Family Open Day

Sun 23 Aug, 11.00 am – 6.00 pm

Entry free

Find out about history and design and look out for special handling displays, children's trails, vintage vehicles and an historic bus service.

Further information from tel: 0121 303 2834 or visit [www.bmag.org.uk](http://www.bmag.org.uk).

## MAILBOX

**My great grandfather, William Close, was recorded in the 1881 census as living in Broseley. His address is given as 1 New Road (with the words National Schools in brackets). Does anyone know if the house he lived in was owned by the National Schools then and is the house still there? I have found references to him in *Wenlock and Ludlow Express* extracts for 1880 and 1881 on your website and he seems to have been quite well received in the village.**

However, he became a bit of a black sheep later on in his life and went to jail for indecent assault



*The rear of the old School House, now a private dwelling*

*The old primary school in Broseley closed in the 1960s and is now a Library and Medical Centre. The School House is out of the picture on the right*



on six schoolgirls when he was a school teacher in Wigan.

In the 1891 census he is still in Wigan but working as a colliery agent, not a school teacher. I am obviously curious to know if he did something bad in Broseley too!

Steve Close

[sclose@uti400.com](mailto:sclose@uti400.com)

*The address was the school master's house which adjoins the school. He would effectively have been the head teacher. The school is now the library and doctor's surgery and the house is a private dwelling.*

*The only information I have on him is the extracts from the papers. I am not aware of any wrongdoings in Broseley but perhaps his short stay was linked to what happened later.*

Steve Dewhirst

**I have been looking into the Prestage family** who, amongst other things, ran Prestage and Broseley Tileries Ltd, and should be interested in knowing more about them.

My main interest is in Paul Prestage who married Honorine Randell and went to America. Paul was the son of John Thomas Prestage who in the 1871 and 1881 census was living in Broseley, listed as a tile manufacturer. He and his wife had seven children, among them Franklin who built the Darjeeling Railway\*; Paul who opened a vineyard

in America; Ward who, after school, does not appear in any further census; and Peter who became a Jesuit missionary in Rhodesia and, alongside Cecil Rhodes, helped in the overthrow of the Ndebele kingdom.

Martin Davidson

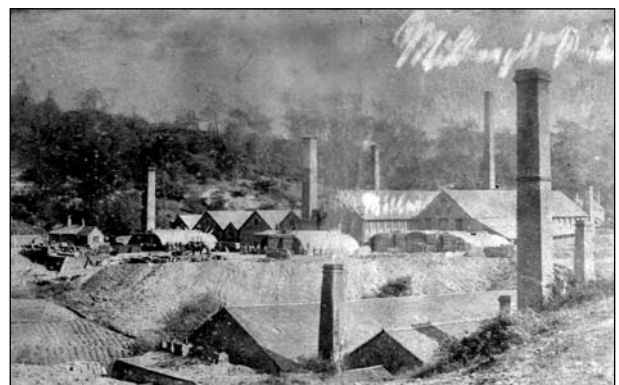
[martisan@iinet.net.au](mailto:martisan@iinet.net.au)

*This edited extract from a paper by N M Dawes, published in 1979 and entitled Milburgh and Wallace Tileries, may be of interest.*

“The purpose built works represented an enterprising venture by the Prestage family, reflecting the demand for decorative products and high quality roofing tiles at the time that Milburgh Tileries were built in 1870. The works were founded by Franklin Prestage and his father. Prestage was a wealthy man, having spent much of his life as a civil engineer, constructing and managing the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in India. In 1888 his son Colonel D L Prestage took over the works. He realised the importance of producing high quality goods and protecting the prestigious Broseley brand name and the firm's Sovereign Broseley tiles were probably the first in the district to receive a distinct brand name. He expanded the buildings and plant at Milburgh and in 1899 built an entirely new separate works, the Wallace Tileries.

“By the early twentieth century, Prestage and Co had become one of the largest manufactories of roofing tiles on the coalfield, with an annual output of upwards of six million tiles. Shortly after WWI, Prestage and Co took over the works of the Broseley Tileries Co to become Prestage and Broseley Tileries Co.”

*Milburgh Tileries were situated in Calcutts Road*





*Broseley Tileries were on the site of the present day housing development along Coalport Road, known locally as The Tileries*

*I can also throw some light on Ward Prestage. On 9th October 1880 a death notice in the local paper reported that he had been engaged in the building of the railway from Coalport to Wellington. From there he went on to supervise the erection of a 21 gun battery in the Isle of Wight. He was apparently so well thought of that he was appointed to the Office of Works in Hong Kong where he died on 23 August in his 42nd year.*  
*Steve Dewhirst*

\*The Darjeeling railway in northeast India was completed in 1882. The line was about 51 miles long and rose from 398 feet at Siliguri on the plain to 7,407 feet at the highest point at Ghum up in the Himalayas. To overcome the sections where the gradient was too steep, loops and zig-zag reverses were used to gain height, the most famous of which is Agony Point where the train has to negotiate a circle with a minimum radius of 59 feet right on the edge of a steep drop. The small 15 ton B class 0-4-0 locomotives had to climb an almost continuous gradient averaging about 1:22. The oldest locomotive still in use was built in 1900.

*Agony Point on the Darjeeling railway has a minimum radius of 59 feet*



**Can anyone give me any information on my ancestors the Evans, who lived in Hockley Road in Broseley? There was also a Sidonah Evans living with George, Fanny, John, Sarah and William Evans in King Street in 1841.**

Cameron Evans

[cam\\_a\\_evans@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cam_a_evans@hotmail.co.uk)

**I have been researching the history of Handbell Ringing Contests at Belle Vue, Manchester which were held annually between 1855 and 1926. In the period between 1869 and 1875 there were regular appearances by a handbell band from Broseley. Whilst the band never achieved significant placings in the competition, they nevertheless were considered sufficiently proficient to enter. It is also quite unusual for bands outside what is now the M62 corridor to appear in this contest.**

Does anyone have any information about the origins of this handbell band or the possible whereabouts of the handbells that were used by them? There would be around 150 bells and some from that era are still in use in the UK. I believe there is currently a registered handbell team in Broseley Wood.

Alan Hartley

Chairman, Handbell Ringers of Great Britain

[alan@hrgb.org.uk](mailto:alan@hrgb.org.uk)

*I do not know anything of the history of the ringers but there are some references from the local papers which show that the society was active over a long period.*

*Steve Dewhirst*

**I was very interested to read on your website about the old cast iron tanks at The Lawns in Broseley and I wonder if they might have any similarities to two cast iron water tanks here in Simon's Town, the former British Naval Port on the Cape Peninsula in South Africa.**

These two octagonal water tanks lie on former Royal Naval properties where there is a history of Royal Engineers' construction works. They are made from cast iron panels held together by square headed bolts and nuts, with what appear to be hand cut threads, so I suspect that these tanks are quite old. It is believed that they are British in origin,



*The cast iron water tank at The Lawns in Broseley*

probably made to a standard design and shipped out in sections for assembly on site. There are only four of these tanks in existence in South Africa.

Despite careful inspection, there is no trace of the manufacturer – all of the panels are completely plain with no foundry marks or other identification.

David Erickson  
[erickson@ilive.co.za](mailto:erickson@ilive.co.za)

*Richard Barker, an expert on the tanks at The Lawns, thinks it unlikely that the Simon's Town tanks bear any relationship to the tanks at The Lawns. He says that, although intriguing, they look a bit too polished and mass produced to have been made as early as 1815. His guess would be not earlier than 1850. He goes on:*

*Are you sure the square headed bolts are not cast iron? They look to have survived as well as the plate material with no electrolytic action. Also literally hand cut threads seem a trifle primitive for even 1815. The Lawns' bolts are cast iron. Is there any clue in materials of any associated pipework or valves? Wrought iron pipes on that scale might be unlikely and the use of steel would make it the 1880s at the earliest.*

*I do have quite a bit more information on water tanks, including a later RE's specification for stores indents for all water supply equipment, including sectional tanks. Though they would certainly be later than the Simon's Town tanks they would be pertinent for other water supply aspects in South Africa – turned and bored water pipes, for example, were sent all over the world.*

*Richard Barker*  
[rabarker@clara.co.uk](mailto:rabarker@clara.co.uk)

**I am trying to find out if any photographs of the Rev'd Robert Henry Cobbold (1816 -1893) still exist. He was Rector at Broseley from about 1858, having the position throughout the 1860s and 1870s before leaving for Ross.**

I am undertaking research on descriptions of the view from the Wrekin and it seems that Cobbold's description is one of the most accurate.

David Squires  
[david.squires7@btinternet.com](mailto:david.squires7@btinternet.com)

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*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](mailto:steve@broseley.org.uk). Any respondent without access to email may pass on information to any member of the committee.*

**To see the Newsletter in full colour visit**  
[www.broseley.org.uk](http://www.broseley.org.uk)  
**For information and advice email**  
[steve@broseley.org.uk](mailto:steve@broseley.org.uk)

**BOOKING FORM**  
**TRIP TO THE BLACK COUNTRY**  
**SATURDAY 4 JULY 2009**

Cost: Coach fare £12.00 per head

Ploughman's lunch (optional): £3.00 per head

Name/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Post code: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

No of persons @ £12.00 per head: \_\_\_\_\_

No of lunches @ £3.00 per head \_\_\_\_\_

Total payment: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of pick up:

9.00 am Broseley Square \_\_\_\_\_ 9.10 am School Road, Coalbrookdale \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to Broseley Local History Society and return this form  
**by not later than Saturday 6 June** to:

Michael Pope, Rivendell, 2 Dark Lane, Broseley, TF12 5LH. Tel: 01952 883960.

**BOOKING FORM**  
**SUMMER WALK TO THE HAYCOP**  
**WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE**

I/we will be joining the Summer Walk

I/we enclose payment of £2.50 per person

Name/s .....

Address .....

.....

Post code ..... Tel no .....

Payment enclosed: £ .....

Please return **by not later than Saturday 30 May** to:

Gillian Pope, Rivendell, 2 Dark Lane, Broseley, TF12 5LH. Tel: 01952 883960.

Cheques should be made payable to the Broseley Local History Society.