

Newsletter

Newsletter of the Broseley Local History

Society



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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.

Programme

- 6 Nov *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, by David de Haan, Director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
- 4 Dec Annual Christmas dinner, see page 5
- 8 Jan More Memories of Old Broseley
- 5 Feb *Shropshire Quarter Sessions Records*, by John Shearman
- 5 Mar The Annual Wilkinson Lecture, *Today Broseley, Tomorrow the World!* by David Lake
- 2 Apr *My Valley - the Industrial History of the Taff Valley and its links with East Shropshire*, by Steve Rowson, co-author of a book on the Glamorganshire Canal

7 May *From Packhorse to Railways*, by local transport historian Dr Trevor Hill

4 Jun Summer event, details to follow

14-15 Jun William Reynolds bicentenary weekend, based at the Long Warehouse, Coalbrookdale. This event is sponsored by the Wrekin Local Studies Forum of which the Society is a member

2 Jul Summer walk, details to follow

For further information, contact Neil Clarke (01952 504135).

Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM was held on 2 October at which, there being no other nominations, the outgoing committee agreed to serve another term. John Freeman will once again be Chairman.

In his report, Freeman said that the Society had had a very successful year, with a variety of interesting talks and events. In the coming year it would be broadening its programme by inviting speakers from local organisations, in particular David de Haan of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust who would be speaking in November and Jim Waterson of the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust who would be giving a talk later that evening.

It appeared that the cost of resiting the Alexander Brodie Memorial tablet, which was reported on in the last Newsletter, would be prohibitive. The only possibility of financing this would be to raise funds especially for this project.

Freeman welcomed those people who had joined the Society during the last year and said that membership now stood at 125. Subscriptions, which were now due, would remain at £3.00.

New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following members who have joined over the past year:

Mr G Bird
Mrs R Brickley
Mr & Mrs V Callcutt
Dr B Carter
Mrs S Chambers
Mr & Mrs K Elcock
Mrs J Griffiths
Mr K Harris
Mrs Y Humphrey
Mr R Johnston BEM
Mrs N Lane
Mr A Morgan
Mrs A Sankey
who all live in the Broseley area.

Others from farther afield are:

Mr D Benton, Bloxwich, Walsall
Mr J Boden, Cannock, Staffs
Mr J Clarke, Shrewsbury
Mr D de Haan, Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Mr J Heighway, North Hykeham, Lincoln
Mrs P McMullen, Bolton, Lancs
Mr J Price, Bridgnorth
Mr M Richards, Oldham, Lancs
Mr S Rowson, Cardiff
Dr W Strawbridge, Pontypridd, Glamorgan
Mr J Waterson, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust
Dr J Wilkes, Cambridge

Previous Meetings

The Jitties in Broseley Wood were the subject of the September Memory meeting. There was some discussion as to the accuracy of the names currently in use, as well as the actual signposting, but there was general agreement that the Jitties themselves had been named after families who had lived in them. One of the exceptions was the Ding Dong Steps, so named because of the sound they made when people wearing clogs walked down them.

Copies of these and other Memory Evenings are available at a cost of 50p each.

In October, manager Jim Waterson gave an excellent talk on the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust and it was a real pleasure to listen to a speaker who is so enthusiastic about his work and so obviously on top of his job.

The Trust was set up in 1991 by Telford Development Corporation to manage and conserve some 270 hectares of wood and grass land for the benefit and enjoyment of the local community and is partly funded by rents from various properties ceded to them by Telford and Wrekin Council. The various areas of land managed by the Trust are scattered throughout Coalbrookdale and Ironbridge and include Benthall Edge and Ladywood.

In describing the activities of himself and his small staff, Waterson said that their aim was to put back as much into the community as possible, not only by employing local contractors for such tasks as log handling and hedge laying, but also by working with groups such as Ironbridge Woodland Products in supplying timber to local schools for woodcraft projects.

He also emphasised that the public had access to all the land which fell under the Trust's control, and was not just confined to footpaths. That being the case, he urged people to be empathetic with the Trust's aims of benefitting the whole community and treat the area with respect.

The Trust runs a series of guided walks throughout the summer months as well as workshops on pruning and restoring apple trees. Information on these can be obtained by phoning 01952 433880.

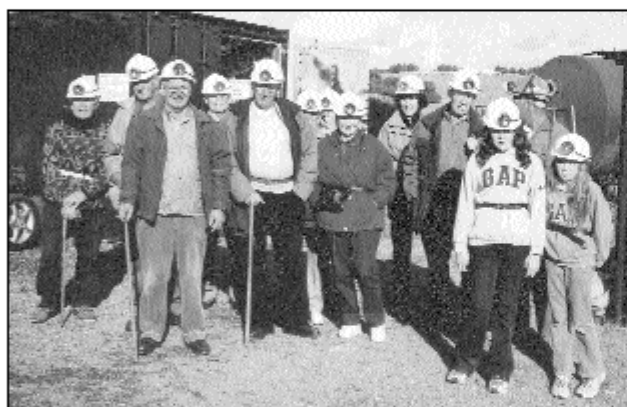
Apedale Drift Mine

The coach trip to the Apedale Drift Mine in Chesterton, Staffordshire, took place in mid October and, mainly due to the efforts of David Lake, proved to be a huge success.

According to Lake, mining had been taking place in the Apedale Valley since the 1300s,

although a big problem had always been getting the coal to its markets. However, after the construction of the Sir Nigel Gresley Canal in the late 1700s, the situation improved considerably and several new mines were opened, so that by 1876 the Apedale Collieries were flourishing.

The depression of the 1930s, however, saw the closure of the Apedale company and it was only during World War II that some small drift mines, often worked by only one or two miners, were opened in the area. After the War a larger drift mine was opened, probably by miners returning from the forces, and by the time of the Labour government's nationalisation of the coal industry it had become large enough to be included. This is the mine that was worked



All kitted out and ready for action, the group prepares to go down the mine

until recently and is now a visitor attraction.

Below are some impressions of the tour from two of the participants.

Coals to Newcastle (under Lyme)!

by Heather Freeman

Few of us can actually claim to have taken coals to Newcastle, but David Lake is one of the very few men who has not only proved it possible, but also brought it off most successfully.

The coach trip organised by David left from Highley, Bridgnorth, Broseley and Telford to visit the Apedale Heritage Centre at Chesterton, just outside Newcastle. The party consisted not only of Society members, but families, friends and - thanks to good publicity - a few ex-colliers

for authenticity!

After a few delays (the coach driver had never encountered our hairpin bend), plus a quick tour of Stafford Park, presumably to check for any remaining coal mines, we made good time and received a warm welcome at the Museum. We were quickly divided into three groups, the options being lunch, a guided tour around the comprehensive exhibition showing the history of the site from Roman times and, for the most eager, down the mine straight away! For the mine visit we were all kitted out in helmets and lamps with heavy battery packs strapped around our waists.

This mine is a drift mine, so entered like an adit at a gentle gradient. As the only light was from our helmet lamps we did get some feel of what it must have been like to work there - minus the hard labour, noise and dangers of the time! As the headroom was reasonable there was not a great feeling of claustrophobia, which was a relief to some of us. Our guide checked for black gas with his lamp, carbon dioxide apparently collects in the hollows, but the flame remained determinedly lit.

The colliers and their wives who joined us came from the last mines worked in our area, Highley, Kernberton and Granville. Luckily they were dispersed through the three groups, so we all had the benefit of their firsthand experience



From left to right: David Lake with ex-colliers Brian Martin, Alec Brakewell (ex Highley Mine Deputy), Jack Edwards and Morris Johnson (a Bewin boy).

The experiences of these people added much to the understanding of working conditions underground

riences and considerable reminiscences about what it had actually been like to work in these conditions. They all spoke about the camaraderie between the miners, not only for morale but also, more importantly, for safety and the constant vigilance which was needed for what were, even in modern times, very hazardous working conditions. The mine guides were clearly pleased to have these experienced men to visit, and they greatly increased our credibility as visitors from one mining area to another.

We were very pleased to have a piping hot bowl of lobby - an authentic meat stew - for lunch before going on to other activities. The whole site is run by very enthusiastic volunteers staffing the exhibition area, the mine itself and the good canteen and shop facilities.

Many thanks from us all to David for such an excellent day out. The only question I am sure many of us have for him now is where and when is the next one to be?

My Thoughts on Apedale Colliery

by Gareth Rushton. Gareth is 9 years old and attends Barrow School

I visited Apedale Colliery with my dad and members of the Broseley Historical Society. I think that the guides were very good at explaining how the mine worked and what happened when it closed before we went underground. When I went underground I saw a theodolite, coal seams, conveyor belts, explosive wagon and explosives in a roadway being driven. I also saw an Eirco loading shovel and under-cutter, a shaft and cage and ventilation fan which scared me when it started to work. I liked the idea of extending one of the coal roads which is blocked off, which will give more to see underground.

Back on the surface in the museum I saw a display about a Roman settlement found under the Holditch Colliery car park and models and photographs of the mine. I also saw exhibits of rescue kit and a First Aid room.

I think the trip could be improved if the visitors were told about what happened to the coal once

it reaches the surface.

The visit was great fun, the people were very friendly and helpful with everyone especially the children like me. I really enjoyed my visit to Apedale Colliery, it was GREAT.



Alex Perry unveils the plaque on the newly erected monument to the old Caughley China Works. The monument, which is in Pound Lane, has been erected at the nearest point to the former factory, on the site of the gate leading to the cottage, all that remained of the china works after the factory itself was demolished. Alex is the widow of Stephen Perry, who was very involved with this project, arranging for Istock to make the bricks with clay from the Caughley open-cast site before his tragic death early this year

Caughley China Factory Monument

Innocent Espionage

Steve Dewhirst has recently been given a copy of a most interesting book *Innocent Espionage - the LaRoche-foucauld Brothers' tour of England in 1785*, by Norman Scarfe, published by The Boydell Press, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF. Here is an extract:

Broseley: Mr Wilkinson's Works

We spent the whole time after a hurried early dinner visiting the ironworks, and next day (15th) left our inn to go to Mr Wilkinson's house, who lives at the other end of the village.

We had a letter for him. Mr Wilkinson is one of the greatest ironmasters in the world. It is he who invented the art of boring cannon, which hitherto had been cast together with the breach (sic). He established near Nantes the boring-mill I mentioned in my journals of travels in France; it is he who sold a steam-pump to Paris, indeed several others, and who still sends daily several thousand pieces of mechanism we cannot cast. He has acquired immense wealth, mostly by his genius. We are assured that at times he is not only casting pieces for export to France, he is doing it in all his forges - an enormous number - and even in all the forges of Coalbrookdale. I suppose he must employ about ten thousand workpeople every day. One may judge how much business he is doing with foreign countries!

We didn't find Mr Wilkinson: he was in bed with a heavy cold he had caught in London. He read the letter we had brought him and sent us to his nearest ironworks where his agent (com-mis) showed us everything they were doing. The works are very fine and convenient in the sense that all the workshops employing fire are together: they are all ranged round a big empty space into which horses bring the coal and all else necessary: it is all under one roof.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions to the Society are now due. If you have not already paid, please complete the form below and return to Janet Robinson, 26 Coalport Road, Broseley, TF12 5AZ. The cost of a year's subscription is £3.00 and cheques or

Name:	_____
Add:	_____

Tel:	_____
I enclose £	_____

postal orders should be made payable to Broseley Local History Society.

Jack Owen

Jack Owen, the Society's very much hands-on President, has been in the wars recently. First he broke a bone in his wrist and then, perhaps because his arm was in a sling, he had a fall and was taken into the Princess Royal Hospital. At time of going to press, he is in Innage Grange rehabilitation centre in Bridgnorth. We wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing him back in action.

John Wilkinson, Ironmaster Extraordinary, by Ron Davies

This book, which was first made available last year, continues to sell well, due in large part to the efforts of Jack Owen. The perfect Christmas present, copies are available at £6.95 from David Lake, Stocking Lane, Nordley WV16 4SY, tel: 01746 762813. Cheques should be made payable to the Broseley Local History Society.

Christmas Dinner

Date: 4 December
 Time: 7.30 pm for 8.00 pm
 Venue: Lion Hotel
 High Street, Broseley
 Cost: £14.00 per head

Christmas dinner is very much a part of the Society's annual calendar and is an event not to be missed. The menu will cover a choice of smoked salmon and prawn terrine; cream of vegetable soup; pate de campagne; garlic mushrooms; followed by roast beef and yorkshire pudding; roast turkey with sausage and bacon rolls, stuffing and cranberry sauce; fillet of salmon with hollandaise sauce; pork in cream and cider; apricot chicken; mushroom stroganoff. There will also be a selection of desserts followed by coffee and mince pies.

To secure your place, please complete and return the form overleaf to Janet Robinson, 26 Coalport Road, Broseley, TF12 5AZ by not

Please reserve ___ place/s for the Society's **Annual Christmas Dinner**

Name: _____

I enclose cheque/postal order for

Add: _____

£ _____ payable to

Broseley Local History Society.

Please return to Janet Robinson, 26 Coalport

Tel: _____

Road, Broseley, TF12 5AZ, by 22 November

Please state your choice of:

Starter

Main course

later than 22 November. Cheques should be made payable to Broseley Local History Society. Please indicate your choice of starter and main course.