



NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Broseley Local History Society
INCORPORATING THE WILKINSON SOCIETY

May – 2025

Issue: 65

MEETINGS

Meetings of the Broseley Local History Society are normally held on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm at the Broseley Social Club, High Street unless otherwise announced.

New members:

Welcome back to Chris Wilson!

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MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS (Page 8)

Thanks to your memberships subscriptions we can offer you monthly talks, a quarterly newsletter, and a yearly journal. Subscriptions to the History Society run from **October to September** of each year, and can be paid either in cash or by cheque or bank transfer (£10 for a single entry and £15 for a joint subscription) contact details for the membership secretary can be found on page 8.

[We would like to encourage you to opt for the digital version if you can, this would help us to keep our postage fees low ; please let the membership secretary know about your choice. Many thanks in advance.](#)

What's On Elsewhere?

Broseley Local History Society is affiliated to the British Association for Local History and receives every quarter their newsletter and Journal, both of which are available at our meetings (the Local History News is also available online at the [BALH website](#))

BLHS PROGRAMME 2025/26 (TALKS & EVENTS)

by Neil Clarke

Please note: check our website or our Facebook page to confirm, that the event you wish to attend is still going ahead.

2025

May.7 - *Early Steam Engines in Broseley*, Steve Dewhirst

June.4 - Much Wenlock walk with SD, meeting at 7pm by the memorial clock

Sat July.5 - A guided tour of the Stourbridge glass museum + heritage walk (fill in the form at the back of this newsletter to book your place)

Aug (Summer break)

Sept.3 - *Transport in Shropshire with old postcards*, Ray Farlow

Oct.1 - AGM followed by *A Field somewhere near Broseley*, Allan Smith

Nov. 5 - Joint meeting with IGMT Friends/topic to be decided

Dec.3 - Christmas Dinner

2026

Jan.7 - Members evening

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY NEWS

News from the British Association for Local History (BALH) by **Janet Doody**

Local History News (no. 154):

The British Association for Local History AGM is on 22 May, Zoom only details on the website.

News round -up of local history, including Historic England who have added 265 sites to their list, including The Crown Inn, Birmingham, 'The Cradle of Heavy Metal' and where Black Sabbath performed their first gig; English Heritage who are under going a major restructuring resulting in some sites limiting their opening hours and/or closing for winter.

Buildwas Abbey (free to enter, parking charges for non-EH members) and Wenlock Priory are our nearest sites, but not forgetting Boscabel, Haughmond Abbey, Wroxeter and the Iron Bridge, always check website prior to visiting; news also from Societies, Museums and Archives. ‘Gardens have history too’ by Dianne Long is an interesting article, grand estate walled gardens and landscapes are often well recorded but many towns have lost the gardens attached to their larger villas and town houses; in Broseley for example the garden to Bank House, now the Social Club’s Bowling Green (see map). Alan Crosby’s witty article on town twinning surprised me that Rugeley, a town I visit at least once a month is twinned with Western Springs, Illinois; although the only acknowledgement now is Western Springs Road!

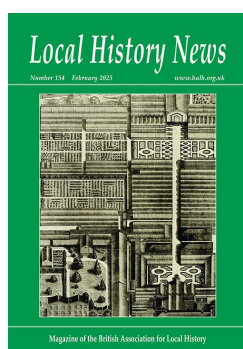
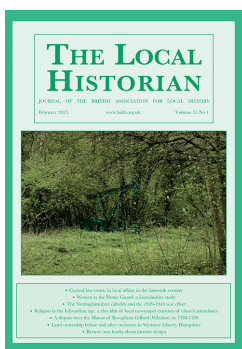


(Picture courtesy of Janet Doody)

The Local Historian (Vol.55 No.1):

I’ve said before History is coming closer my lifetime, especially with the WW2 VE Day 80th commemorations this year. Two articles concern WW2 ‘The Nottinghamshire Oilfields and the 1939-45 War Effort’ and ‘Women in the Home Guard – a Lincolnshire Study’. This latter article is worth perusing – were there any Broseley women in the Home Guard?

On-line book reviews include: ‘All for Smethwick: the life & legacy of Dorothy Parkes 1644-1728” by Mary Bedfish and “Early Records of Newport, Shropshire c1150-1650” edited by Judith Everard is a recent publication.



(covers courtesy of BALH)

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

On the 5th of February Kate Cadman delivered a talk on Broseley Pipeworks , with an introduction by Ian West on the current closure of the museum. It took many years of hard work to make the buildings and collections ready for the visitors, however its fate remains uncertain



The March talk (Annual Wilkinson talk) was the final piece of the King Of The Ironmasters’s trilogy, delivered by Richard Sells

On the 2nd of April , Neil Clarke talked about Bow hauling on the Upper Severn, when it was done by man power, then replaced by horse power.

Broseley Local History Society
‘Bow hauling on the Upper Severn’ A talk by Neil Clarke

Wednesday 2nd April at 7.30pm/ Broseley Social Club downstairs

The practice on many navigable rivers of towing vessels by gangs of men over stretches of the waterway goes back over several centuries. In the case of the Severn, there is evidence of its use from the Middle Ages until the mid-nineteenth century. In this talk I’ll be looking at this bow hauling on the upper reaches of the river, with particular reference to the Severn Gorge.



Picture courtesy of IGMT

FRIENDS OF THE RED CHURCH

Dowlais, the Guest family, the most famous cigar smoker and Dowlais reborn by *Graham Hollox*

That's quite a title which I hope will be explained by the end of this article.

The Dowlais Iron Company of South Wales was formed in 1759 by a group of eight people including Issac Wilkinson, father of John 'Iron-Mad' Wilkinson (1728-1808) who played such a significant part in the development of ironmaking in Broseley. In the history of that company, John Guest (1722-1787) from Broseley was appointed Manager in 1767 and became part-owner by 1781. Clearly experience from Broseley played a major part in the early stages of a company that more than 200 years later had diversified into an international business with automotive and aerospace interests, activities that its early employees could not have imagined. Far from its origins, it grew to be Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds (GKN).

On what may seem to be an unrelated subject, one of the few artefacts that we have from the old Red Church is a memorial now in St Mary's Church, Jackfield. Sadly, it is hidden away in the normally-locked vestry, with its very stark reminder "Reader, Forget not to observe how transient their days And such may be thy own." That memorial is to Thomas Carter Phillips and his wife Margaret who both died within a few weeks of each other from unknown causes. They were buried at the Red Church on January 14th and March 4th 1783 respectively. We don't know much about Thomas but on the death of his father in October 1765, he inherited a substantial fraction of the old Wrockwardine estate at the tender age of 12. This included much of Telford and Wrekin, with parcels of land, houses, industry, coal, limestone and iron mines.

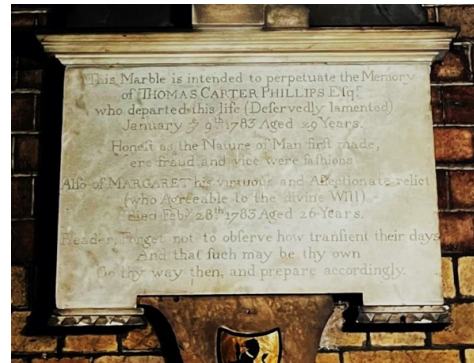
In the course of exploring the Phillips family, we have been led to Thomas's sister Jemima (b 1755). She married Thomas Guest (1748-1807), the son of that John Guest who managed the Dowlais Iron Company. Their children included Josiah John Guest (1785-1852) who is described as an outstanding contributor to the company as a result of which he was knighted. It was a time of expansion of their manufacturing capabilities including bar making to feed the expanding network of railway lines.

Sir Josiah's children led us in an unexpected direction to the aristocracy. They included Ivor Bertie Guest (1835-1914) also known as 1st Baron Wimborne who married the daughter of the Duke of Marlborough, Lady Cornelia Henrietta Maria Spencer-Churchill (1847-1927). On his birth in 1874, this couple became aunt and uncle to her brother Randolph's son, Winston, more widely known today as Sir Winston Churchill, whose fame needs no introduction.

The name of Dowlais has hardly been mentioned in GKN for the last 200 years. However, as recently as 2023, GKN's automotive business was incorporated in a new group interestingly named 'the Dowlais Group' – a return to the name from 1759.

That name appears likely to become lost again. In January 2025, the Dowlais Group was purchased by the American Axle and Manufacturing Company.

References: Edgar Jones "A History of GKN Volume 1," Julie Wright, (Shropshire Archives) and Steve Dewhirst "The Guest Family of Broseley," Jemima Revel Guest on Wikipedia (details to Churchill checked), Dowlais.com



You can still purchase Tales of The Red Church /part 2
Payment can be made by Cash, Cheque or BACS transfer.
Contact me by e-mail to: grahamhollox@gmail.com



'The Old Red Church' by Edward W Ball, 1931 (reproduced by permission of Brian Stamper)

JACKFIELD HALT by Janet Doody

Jackfield Halt opened in 1934 as an unstaffed request stop on the Severn Valley Railway Line and was originally sited west of the Maw & Co. sidings. However in 1952 the severe Jackfield landslip moved the line around 25ft nearer the river; when the Halt was reopened in 1954 it was relocated to firmer ground ¼ mile further east and consisted of a wooden platform and shelter. The closure of the northern section of the line in 1963, which included Jackfield Halt, was planned before the Beeching Report and the Halt was demolished shortly after.

Jackfield Sidings (now sited near the rear of the Black Swan), served a number of local industries; the sidings were progressively extended and by 1900 had reached around half in length. The sidings also had 3 ground frames each controlling the local points and signals and a set of crossing gates that spanned 3 sets of tracks together with an adjacent crossing-keepers cottage. The pair of wooden level crossing gates, with circular cast iron gateposts, measured some 38ft, and were Grade II listed in 1983. However by the 2010's it was becoming apparent that they needed 'attention'; it was initially intended that they be restored but in 2018 it became clear that the gates were 'beyond repair'. The decision was made to make exact replicas and these were fitted in 2019.

There was also another level crossing where the road bends left before the Ironbridge Gorge Tile Museum's (previously the Craven Dunnill Tile Works). The road originally continued left of the church whilst the railway line went straight on, following the line of the present road. A photograph, looking east, by the artist John Piper shows the ground frame hut alongside the crossing keepers cottage together with the level crossing gates 'of an unusually ornate design'. (The photograph is available to view on www.svrwiki.com.)

Note: John Piper and poet John Betjeman came to Shropshire to research a book in the Shell Guides to the Counties of Britain and the museum holds one of John Piper's paintings.

Sources:

Broseley Local History Society

www.svrwiki.com

wikipedia.org



(Pictures above courtesy of BLHS and Pictures below courtesy of www.svrwiki.com)



MISCELLANEOUS

NEW BOOKS

1 - New book marks 600 years of the Shrewsbury 'Loggerheads'

The year 2025 marks the 600th anniversary of the heraldic arms of Shrewsbury – the three leopards' faces. Over the years, they have got their own specifically-local nickname, becoming known in the town as 'the loggerheads'.

As the emblem of the town for centuries, they have been embroiled in controversy, but also have become much-loved. Even today they appear in dozens of guises all around the town!

A new book now looks at their story, the first-ever to do so. 'The Mysteries of The Loggerheads' tries to unravel the myths but also explain their huge importance over the years.

As well as delving into deep history, the book also asks the basic questions – why exactly are they called 'loggerheads'? Why are they in the design that they are? – and looks at the modern issues too – why did football fans hold protests about them? What have they to do with turtles ?

In this readable, beautifully illustrated and well-researched book, historian **Mark Stewart** comes up with the answers to these questions... and more...

This is a book for both the Shrewsbury lover and the historian.

Comprising fifty pages, 'The Mysteries of The Loggerheads' is on sale for £7.99 at selected bookshops in Shrewsbury, and online.

(For details of the bookshops and online sales, see website: <https://salop-loggerheads.blogspot.com/p/new-book-new-trail-2025-loggerheads.html>)

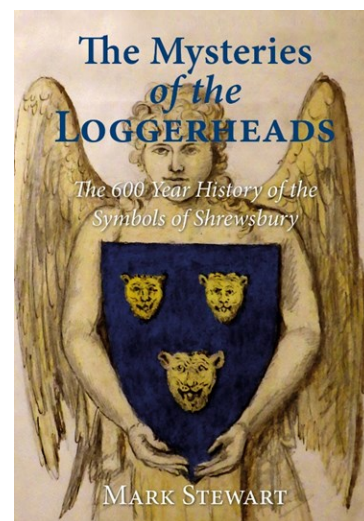
Contact Email: SalopLoggerheads@gmail.com

Additional Notes

In 1425, the heraldic arms of Shrewsbury first come to light, appearing on the town's Common Seal, the original of which can still be seen today in a special case in Shrewsbury Museum.

It is not quite realised how popular they still are. Today, within Shrewsbury Old Town alone, over 100 instances still appear on the sides of buildings, on monuments, in stained glass, on signs, and even in the logos of local businesses.

In the book, each chapter deals with an aspect of the loggerheads' story. Why are they leopards? Are they indeed leopards? Why are they called loggerheads? Why are they always in gold & blue? Why are they the cause of arguments between local councils? What have they got to do with the Welsh? Why did some leading figures 'adopt' them? What is the story of the mysterious 'Golden Loggerheads'? When is Loggerheads Day? When did the Great Seal go missing – and how was it found again? ... and much more. For more photos and more information, please contact SalopLoggerheads@gmail.com



(Pictures courtesy of Mark Stewart with permission from the Shropshire Archives' collection for the cover image)

2 - Hinkshay Rows, by Heather Duckett, published by You Caxton Publications (2025)

Review by Neil Clarke

Following many years' research, the author has produced an in-depth study of the history of the Hinkshay Rows community on the eastern edge of the parish of Dawley from the building of the first houses there in the mid-1820s to the demolition of the three rows in 1968. In its 229 pages, including 32 illustrations, the work is organised in four chronological parts, and concludes with an epilogue on the use of the site since 1968, an appendix on the Botfield family, a bibliography and a detailed index that includes the families who lived in the settlement over its 144-year history.

Part 1 covers the settlement's origins and the period up to 1871. The Botfield Company, already operating the Old Park ironworks and about to open further works at Stirchley and Hinkshay, built three rows of houses to accommodate the workforce. Primary sources, including the parish registers of Stirchley, Dawley and Malinslee; census returns, 1831- 1871; and the Botfield Papers in the John Rylands Library (University of Manchester), are analysed for details of the origins and makeup of families living in this close-knit community and the occupations of the workforce. From these sources we learn that many of the families were from the locality, with others from further afield within Shropshire and a few from neighbouring counties. Occupations ranged from ironworkers (forge men, puddlers, labourers); coal and ironstone miners (and pit girls); cokers (making coke and charging the furnace); and blacksmiths, engineers and carpenters. Skilled jobs, especially, attracted workers from ironworks outside the area, and nine of these families are examined in detail. By 1861 the population in the 80 houses had peaked at 457.

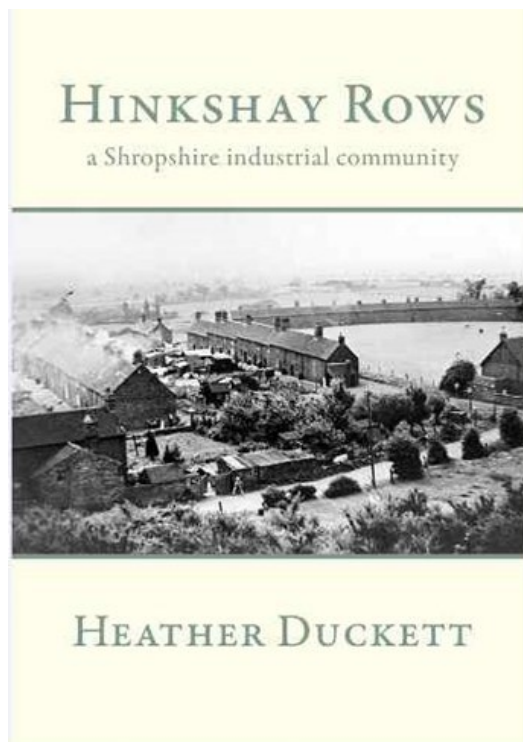
By 1891 it had dropped to 170, with only 30 of the settlement's houses occupied, reflecting the decline in the local iron industry, the implications of which are covered in the second part. While the successor of the Botfields, the Haybridge Iron Company, was attempting to diversify industrial activities during that period, they continued to employ workers from the Rows. But examples are given of families who moved to iron and steel-making areas, such as Sheffield, Gateshead and Motherwell, while for those who stayed provision was made for a mission church and school, nonconformist meetings and sporting activities including football and cricket, with the White Hart public house the hub of the community.

The beginning of the 20th century saw a short-lived revival with the arrival of new owners of the Stirchley ironworks. But final closure in 1904 caused real distress, deprivation and hunger among the Hinkshay population. By 1911 the author finds the population falling to 141 living in 28 houses (which were now under change of ownership), and employment provided by other local ironworks and pits, in the surviving Wrekin Chemical Works (until 1932) and the expanding Randlay brickworks. This third part of the book includes details of the six Hinkshay men lost during the First World War, and the economic ups and downs of the 1920s and 30s. With loss of information from the 1931 census (destroyed by fire), the General Register ordered by the Government at the beginning of the Second World War shows that the number of inhabitants of the Rows had increased to 182 and 45 houses were occupied, no doubt due to the severe housing shortage between the wars. Of the Hinkshay men who served during the Second World War, two gave their lives, while the White Hart served as the headquarters of a Home Guard platoon.

The last 20 years or so of the Rows are covered in the final part of the book. Electoral registers show the settlement declining: 43 houses occupied in 1951, 39 by 1960, and by 1968 just six; with many families being rehoused in the new estates built by Dawley Urban District Council at Langley Farm and Manor Farm. The employment opportunities which had brought Hinkshay to life in the early 19th century no longer existed, but local work was available at the iron foundry of J.C. Hulse & Co, who had taken over the Hinkshay brickworks site by 1947; at the new Ever Ready battery factory, established adjacent the Rows in 1956; and at the Randlay brick and tile works. The Mission Church and the White Hart remained the focus of communal activities. But the designation of Dawley New Town in 1963, alongside the run-down of the properties, was the final nail in the coffin for the Rows, which were demolished in 1968.

An epilogue brings the story to the present. Following the demolition of the Rows, the neighbouring Ever Ready factory continued to manufacture batteries for the next 16 years before closure in 1995. With the clearance of its site, together with that of the burnt down White Hart pub some years later, new housing development was undertaken. A community archaeological excavation on the site of the Rows took place in 2010, with some former residents present. Surveying the site in recent years, the author concludes: *'There are no longer any visible remains and there is no obvious evidence that the Hinkshay Rows ever existed. A thriving community of 80 houses with a population at its largest of almost 500, in existence for nearly 150 years, has been completely extinguished'*.

In the introduction to her book, the author subscribes to 'the now-current view that local communities are worthy of study in their own right,' and by 'undertaking comprehensive and in-depth research into the small industrial village of Hinkshay' she has demonstrated the value of such an approach. The book is well researched, written and organised. The many case studies are a mine of information for the social historian and the work is a significant contribution to the industrial history of the area. None of the other contemporary examples of industrial housing on the East Shropshire Coalfield, such as the nearby Old and New Rows at Horsehay built by the Coalbrookdale Company and the Long Row (Foster's Row) at Aqueduct built by James Foster of Madeley Court ironworks, have received such close attention. Heather is to be congratulated on this *tour de force*.



(Picture of the cover book courtesy of Heather Duckett)

MISCELLANEOUS

I was involved in the Jackfield Then and Now exhibition last year at the Footprint Gallery in Jackfield.

One of the local history pictures that was brought in was from a Mrs Bowen. I am currently working on a second edition of The Ironbridge Book and I would like to ask her for permission to use it in the book.



I wonder if you know her and if so, could you ask her to contact me?

Graham Peet /Ironbridge Coracle Trust/
ironbridgecoracles.org

0785 595 6089 / gpeet@mac.com

GET ACQUAINTED WITH A COMMITTEE MEMBER, THIS MONTH MEET...

Steve Dewhirst

1) What or who made you interested into improving your knowledge of History?

I have always been interested in history

2) Who is your favourite historical character and why? (doesn't have to be British)

I don't have one – there are too many interesting people (often very flawed individuals) many of which are not well known

3) For you, what is the most important legacy that the Industrial Revolution left behind?

I don't. know - Urbanisation, pollution, global warming, higher standards of living for the working class, increased leisure time, monuments etc but it all depends on the move away from subsistence living and the ability for agriculture to feed so many people. So did the Industrial revolution rely on the agricultural revolution coming first?

RESEARCH

Some of you might be entitled to a small grant from the History Society for research, however it doesn't include transport, food etc. This is more to access archives and artefacts, for a small project.

For more information and how to apply please contact Steve Dewhirst on steve@broseley.org.uk

DISTRIBUTION OF NEWSLETTERS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Distribution

Thank you to those members who have indicated they would be happy to have electronic copies of the Newsletter. If there are any other members who would prefer it this way please contact the membership secretary, **Janet Robinson**, see her contact details on the Committee's list (right column).

Those of you would prefer to have it in its printed form can continue to look forward to receiving it through the post.

Subscriptions payments (£10 for a single entry and £15 for a joint subscription)

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT ALL PAYMENTS TO BROSELEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Broseley Local History Society is currently changing its accounts to a new bank/building society, so for the moment being, if you wish to make a payment for a subscription or donation **please do so via cash or cheques only.**

Many thanks in advance for your understanding and co-operation.

Broseley Local History Society Committee

Committee Members

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To see this *Newsletter* in full colour, go to

<https://www.broseley.org.uk/news.htm>

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BLHS SUMMER OUTING: Stourbridge Glass Museum

Stuart Works, High Street, Wordsley, DY8 4FB

(For Satnav please use DY8 4AZ)

Saturday 5th of July 2024 at 10.30am

What to expect?

Tea , coffee and biscuits / An illustrated talk about the collection.

A tour of the museum / Cost will be £16 50 and it should take around 2hours.

If anyone would like to book a heritage walk they could do that in the afternoon, or just do a canal walk without a guide.

Booking Form (**Reply by 4th of June**)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS _____

POST CODE: _____ TEL. NO: _____

MOBILE: _____ EMAIL: _____

NO: OF PERSONS _____ @ £16.50 PER PERSON

Payments: Cash or Cheques to be made out to [Broseley Local History Society](#)

[\(No BACS available\)](#)

Please return completed forms to: **Margaret Hazeldine**

Email: margarethazeldine@gmail.com

Telephone Number: **07721 850 734**

Address: **School House Farm, Sheinton, Nr. Much Wenlock SY5 6DN**

PLEASE NOTE: NO TRANSPORT IS PROVIDED THEREFORE PLEASE COMPLETE THE SECTION BELOW:

I / We need transport: YES / NO - No, of Persons:

I/We can help with transport: YES / NO - No. of Persons: