# NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Broseley Local History Society

*INCORPORATING THE WILKINSON SOCIETY*

August – 2026 Issue: 70

**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.

**CONTENT**


| | |
|---|---|
| **BLHS Programme** | Page 1 |
| **New Members & Subscriptions** | Page 1 |
| **BALH & Previous meetings** | Pages 1-2 |
| **Future Meetings** | Page 3 |
| **Accident at Benthall Edge** | Page 4 |
| **Shropshire Family History Society** | Page 4 |
| **Museum of Carpet** | Pages 4 & 5 |
| **Jackfield Visitor** | Page 5 |
| **Broseley Hall Plaque** | Pages 5 & 6 |
| **Church Rate & Obituary** | Page 7 |
| **Event + BLHS Admin Information** | Page 8 |


## 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.**

**2026**

**Sept 2** -'Britannia': part 1, Willam Camden (The work of the late 16th / early 17th century topographer),

Patricia de Haan
**Oct 7** - **AGM** followed by The Walker Legacy: part 1 (C&W Walker of the Midland Iron Works, Donnington), Wendy Palin
**Nov 4 at 2.30pm in the Glass Classroom/ Coalbrookdale (TF8 7DQ)** - Joint meeting with FIGM 'James Thomson, civil engineer, iron and coal master', Steve Dewhirst
**Dec 2 -** (Christmas Social Gathering /venue and date to be confirmed later on this year )

**2027**

**Jan 6 -** *Members' Evening*
**Feb 3 -** 'Shropshire through Deep Time', Norman Pagett
**Mar 3 -** 'William Withering: Eminent Son of Wellington', Diana Clarke.

**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**

**MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS (Page 8)**

Thanks to your memberships subscription 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, by cheque or bank transfer (£10 for a single and £15 for a joint subscription ) contact details for the membership secretary can be found on page 8.

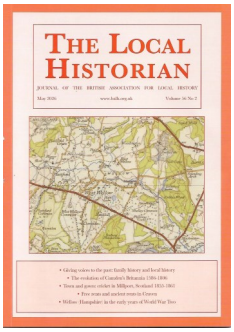
We would like to encourage you to opt for the digital version of the Newsletter if you can, this would help us to keep our cost down; please let the membership secretary know about your choice. Many thanks in advance.

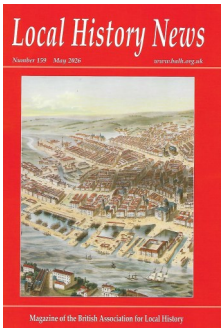
## What's On Elsewhere?

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** )

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY NEWS**

Do check out the BALH website as there are interesting talks and articles on all sorts of subjects – lots better than the incessant television repeats!




(Pictures courtesy of BALH)

***Comments by Janet Doody***

**NEWS FROM THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY:** New Head Office Address for BALH Office at Fountain Precinct, Balm Green, Sheffield, S1 2JA

**LOCAL HISTORY NEWS: number 159; May 2026**

Winners of BALH Awards for Local Historians for research & publications in short & long articles announced and the BALH Society Newsletter Award was won by the Heanor & District Local History Publishing - 3 book special offer: Reading Early Handwriting 1500-1700; Manors & Manorial Documents after 1500; Dates & Time, a hand book for local historians; Exploring Local History – a practical guide for teachers. New Book: Words from Wills – a glossary.

**NEWS: Online** – National Library of Scotland has added 71 more OS maps across the UK from 1901-1914; FindmyPast has added more records for Northants; Ancestry has 'a major collection' released East Yorkshire parish records. Societies: **The Twentieth Century Society has applied to Historic England for Grade II listing of the first and last triangulation pillars, Cold Ashby (c1936) & Thorny Gale (1962) as they are now obsolete in this GPS era. Museums: Kidderminster Museum of Carpet saved; Walsall Leather Museum to be relocated to 1-3 The Bridge a town centre building bought by Walsall Town Council.

Useful articles on publishing and copyright; also 50 years of Blue Badge & Tour guiding; a previously unknown account for an excursion to Liverpool in 1845; Producing oral recordings; and the Lancashire weavers uprising in 1826.

**THE LOCAL HISTORIAN: volume 56 No.2; May 2026**

Articles:

Giving voice to the past – how family historians can contribute to local history: a case study of the Drabble family of Sheffield 1930-1950's

From Camden via Gibson to Gough: the evolution of the Britannia 1586-1806

Garrison Cricket Club: town & gown in Millport, Scotland 1855-1861

Free Rents & Ancient Rents in Craven (Yorks.)

Wellow [Hants] in the early years of WW2; (BALH winner of 'long article')

There are a number of book reviews including "F**loreat** Salopia: A celebration of Shropshire's history and archaeology" by Roger H. White.

These reviews are also available on the BALH website

*****TRIANGULATION PILLARS*** (trig points) are concrete (usually) obelisks used as a solid base for theodolites used in surveying and map-making. Brigadier Martin Hotine was responsible for the design, planing and implementation of re-triangulation that were first used in 1936. The satellite GPS (Global Positioning System) network has now made these iconic symbols obsolete, though they can be discovered and are still marked on OS Maps. Some trig points are venerated, identified and painted; whilst some appear abandoned and neglected; like the one on the Cockshutt in Wrockwardine Wood photographed recently! Nearest trig points around Broseley: Upper Riddings (grid Ref: SJ 69103 01136); Arlescott (SJ 64574 00432); Shirlett Common (SO65360 97317); All Saints Church Tower (a flush bracket on south face). Do visit their **website**

*(picture courtesy of Janet Doody)*

---

***PREVIOUS MEETINGS***

In June, our local walk was led by Steve Dewhirst who took a small group of people around Madeley (refer to the previous newsletter for the full itinerary )

(St Michael's Parish Church / Picture courtesy of Jocelyne Barbier)

In July, the summer guided tour was a success (organised by Margaret Hazletine) and **all pictures are courtesy of Janet Robinson.**

The guided visits were at **Avoncroft Museum** & **Droitwich Spa** Sacred Heart Church.

---

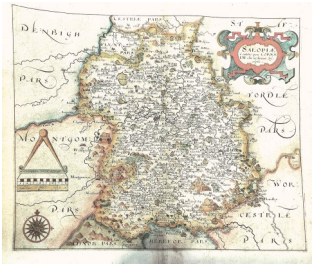
**NEXT MEETING : Sept 2** -'Britannia': part 1, Willam Camden (The work of the late 16th / early 17th century topographer)**, by Patricia de Haan**

Britannia - the ground-breaking work of William Camden (1551-1623) which was first published in Latin in 1586. The work explored Great Britain, county by county. The 6th edition, much expanded, but still in Latin, was published in 1607 and included superb maps of each county.

After Camden's death other scholars continued the work but now translated into English. Each new edition featured up-to-date maps by famous cartographers. The last edition appeared in 1789. The whole enterprise was a resounding success!

Only the best was good enough for Britannia, so come along to hear the story and to see the original maps of Shropshire which were produced for Camden's great work.

***The three pictures below are courtesy of Patricia de Haan***



## ARTICLES

**By Janet Doody**

*FATAL ACCIDENT AT THE BENTHALL EDGE INCLINE (1861)*

Sometimes, by chance usually, historical narratives turn up details of facts long forgotten; such is this extremely sad little article from 1861 when a boy was killed at the Benthall Wind. The reports explain the workings of the "Wind" incline and horrifically how the accident occurred:

"The Wind is a steep plane, on which an iron tramway is laid. The incline is about three hundred and sixty feet in length, having an elevation of nearly one hundred feet. Down this, by means of a drum fixed at the top around which a chain is coiled, a small truck laden with lime-stone is sent to the river's side, while an empty truck is drawn up at the same time." (The Wellington Journal 13 April 1861)

The boy, "named Hassall who met with his death in consequence of a 'runner' as it is called, at the Wind. From the evidence it appeared that owing to some neglect there was a runner down the very steep incline by means of which the limestone is let down the precipitous face of the hill to the Severn; that deceased who was the driver of a horse, seeing the accident got out of the way, as he thought, of the rapidly revolving barrel; but, from the terrific impetus given to the machinery the recoiling chain flew like lightening to the spot where the boy stood, and completely scalped him, taking off the upper portion of the skull as completely as though it had effected by a sharp instrument: Verdict – "Accidental Death" (11 April 1861 Shropshire News)

No industrial injury compensation or investigation there then!

The young boy was one Erasmus Hassall, born in 1848 at Croome, Worcestershire to Thomas and Eliza. Thomas was from Much Wenlock and returned to Ironbridge during the late 1850's to work as a lime-stone miner. Erasmus was buried at St. Michael's, Madeley on 10 April 1861, aged just 13 years.

Sources: British Newspaper Archive & Ancestry.co.uk

*SHROPSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS*

Their latest Journal (47 June 2026) reports on the launch of the Shropshire Family History Society Hub an 'online home for Shropshire local history, family history and nostalgia'. The core purpose 'to build a useful, welcoming starting point for anyone exploring Shropshire connections"

Visit **https://www.sfhs.org.uk/** for plenty of information even if you're not a society member!

News from Shropshire Archives: they have begun a 'phased return to normal hours' now open Wednesday and Thursdays; but do check before setting out, also it may be wise to book too.

Bridgnorth Library Family History Volunteers offer 'drop-in' sessions 'every Tuesday afternoon between 2pm and 4.30pm. They also offer this advice, with which I whole heartedly agree "Be warned – family history research is addictive"!

*TAKEN FROM Local History News May 2026 number 159*

Kidderminster Museum of Carpet saved

Having announced its permanent closure at the end of 2025 in the face of mounting financial pressures (as reported in LHN 158), this north Worcestershire Museum has recently received good news and will, from April 2026, be able to open two days a week, Saturdays and Tuesdays, between 10am and 2pm. The local community's support for the Museum was voiced extensively in the press and media (especially social media) and expressed when a record-breaking over 1200 people visited the Museum over the course of four 'one-off' Open Days in February 2026. As a result the local authority, Wyre Forest District Council, agreed to a grant of £50,000, to be paid over two years, to enable the Museum to refocus its activities and develop new audiences.

Entirely volunteer run and (until now) with no government funding, the Museum has established itself over the last 13 years as a showcase for the history and heritage of Kidderminster. Located in the Severn Valley and on the edge of the Black Country, the town's location made it an ideal place for a long-established textile industry to become – during the course of the Industrial Revolution – a centre par excellence for carpet weaving and other ancillary industries.

The Museum celebrates that heritage by maintaining two full-size vintage power looms and two wooden hand looms in full working order. The looms are run by volunteers during Museum opening hours and textiles woven on them are sold in the gift shop. The Museum also has a nationally important textile design archive, which includes original art by designers such as C.F.A. Voysey and Lucienne Day, among others.
Readers of LHN are strongly encouraged to visit the Museum if they are in the region and/or to engage with it on social media, as potential future funding will be dependent on demonstrable support.

*A VISITOR'S VIEW OF JACKFIELD IN 1870!*

A visitor's view of the Ironbridge Gorge in a letter to the editor of The Ironbridge Weekly Journal dated 22 October 1870. To The Editor of the Ironbridge Journal
*"Sirs, In a walk from Coalport Bridge to Ironbridge, I counted no less than fourteen public-houses. They are: The Bridge Inn, the Werps Inn, the Duke of Wellington, the Boat Inn (J. Oswell), the Boat Inn (W. Oswell), the Half Moon, the Ash Tree, the Severn Trow, the Black Swan, the Lloyd Head, the Tumbling Sailors, the Summer House, the Dog and Duck, and the Station Inn. I am unacquainted with the population of Jackfield, but surely the above enumeration of public-houses, some next door to each other, others opposite to each other, and several within a stone's-throw of each other, must be greatly in excess of the requirements of the neighbourhood, and largely tends to the drinking habits, which are a disgrace of this district. What can the licensing magistrates be about to permit such a system of demoralization?*
*All efforts, clerical or lay, to improve and elevate the inhabitants must be rendered nugatory by it. With reference to this subject permit me to call attention to the payment by the several manufacturers of fortnightly, instead of weekly wages, which, very much increases the evil complained of. The Royal Commission on the South Wales Mining District unanimously report that the works where monthly or fortnightly payments prevail, are the worst conducted, and those that adopt the weekly payment are the 'best conducted'.*
*They also condemn the "truck system". Is there no truck system at Jackfield? Another evil is the employment of girls of a tender age in the several brick and tile yards. The employment of girls at all has a very immoral tendency; and besides depriving them of education, unfits them for every domestic duty. The subject was brought before the Social Science Congress at Newcastle, and having called your attention to the subjects of this letter, I hope some effort may be made to remedy the evils complained of.*
*I remain, Sir your obedient Servant, J. T. D. S.*
*October 19th 1870"*

Of the fourteen public houses listed (although the Boat seems to have been listed twice), five still exist, The Bridge, now the Woodbridge; the Boat, the Half Moon, the Black Swan and the Station Inn (now D'Arcy's at the Station Restaurant). These only cover the public houses on the south bank of the Severn and do not include the Brewery, the Shakespeare and the Robin Hood on the north side!
Interesting conclusion regarding the frequency at which the wages are paid and reflection on the employment of girls.

*BROSELEY HALL PLAQUE*

The Society's 'black plaque' was placed on the entrance to Broseley Hall in 2014 and commemorates Edward Blakeway, (1718-1811) who once resided there. He was involved in the local coal, iron and ceramics industries, he was a supporter of the Iron Bridge project and a partner in the Tontine Hotel. For details of the life of Edward Blakeway see the Society's Journal no. 35, 2013 which is available to read on the Society's website. So with that in mind lets look at the property.
The Hall, Grade II listed in 1950, was built of red brick around 1730; it consists of 5 bays and 3 storeys with stone quoins and leaden spout-heads, internally it has a 'good hall, staircase and panelled room'; Francis Turner Blithe/Blythe inherited the property and during the 1760's commissioned Thomas Farnolls Pritchard to "modernise" the house. This included adding a number of chimney pieces and a garden temple or summer house, described 'a delightful Rococo Gothic trifle'. In 2002 one of the chimney pieces was put up for sale at Sotheby's with an estimated price tag of £5000.

The Broseley Estate continued to be owned by one family into the 20th century, although few spent any time living there, it was generally let to tenants: having been declared 'uninhabited' in the 1861 census an advert of 1865 describes the property:

*Broseley Hall: To Be Let, and entered upon immediately, a Residence with the Garden, Stables, Coach-house, and outbuildings, pleasantly situated on the outskirts of the town, and near the Parish Church.*
*The House contains Entrance Hall, Dining, Drawing and Breakfast Rooms, Kitchen, eight Bedrooms, Housekeeper's rooms, Dairy and other domestic offices.*
*It is a distance of about 1½ miles from Ironbridge and Coalport, two first class stations on the Great Western and London and North-Western Railways.*
*The House is partially furnished, and the premises may be let either for one year or for a term. The rent is extremely low.*
*Further particulars may be obtained from Messrs. Potts & son, Broseley*

From around 1901 until his death in 1942 it was the residence of solicitor, Alfred Thorn-Pudsey. During this time the Broseley Estate was inherited by Major Charles Edward Jenkins of Cruckton Hall, (died 1949), his obituary stated he "belonged to an old Shropshire family". In 1913 Major Jenkins decided to sell the estate which then consisted of over 300 acres with a rent roll of over £740 and included:
*Broseley Hall and grounds, The Woodhouse Farm, Conybury Farm, The Severn Trow (pub); three small holdings, Jackfield Encaustic Tile Manufactory, Blacksmith's and Wheelwright's shops, 91 acres of accommodation land, 23 cottages with gardens, Jackfield Post Office.*

Broseley Hall itself was withdrawn from the sale as an agreement had been reached with Mr Thorn-Pudsey.
Post WW2, following the death of Mr Thorn-Pudsey, his widow decided to move to Ironbridge, selling surplus furniture and effects in 1954, and the Hall came into new ownership.
Mr William Harold Dixon and his family became the next occupiers; he was the founder of W. H. Dixon (Engineers), initially established at Sutton Maddock, then Dale End, before moving to new industrial unit in Cockshutt Lane. Mr Dixon was a keen sailor but in 1959 October he was involved in a dramatic sea rescue by the Royal Navy.
The family set out from Aberystwyth in their yacht "Amour", for a holiday cruise in the Mediterranean. Whilst in the Bristol Channel the weather changed, 'battered by heavy seas' and 'with one engine out of action' eventually the naval frigate 'Salisbury' responded to their distress flares. The family were rescued and yacht was towed to Pembroke Dock; a footnote added that serving on the Salisbury was Able Seaman Brian Russell of Broseley.
Other residents were Mr Alec and Mrs Veronica West, who throughout their time in the town became very active in the community serving as parish councillors. They also supported the Wilkinson Society (later the Broseley Local History Society) by offering a 'home' to its collection of artifacts when the Lawns became unavailable. Sadly in 1986 Mrs West, aged just 43, died and her husband announced he would be selling the Hall.
Mr Ken Sheffield and Oyster Communications arrived in 1987 selling, distributing and servicing satellite television equipment. The company and Mr Sheffield also supported local community events and especially charity's concerned with disabled children. However this could have all come to grief in 1996 when a 'DIY repair session' on a flat roof at the Hall resulted in the felt and bitumen caught fire. Mr Sheffield had 'swung into action' with buckets of water and fire crews quickly arrived. Thankfully the Hall was saved and stands today with two other fine Georgian houses Whitehall, the Lawns and the Victorian Church of All Saints forming a group of important buildings.

**Sources:** www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk
www.ancestry.co.uk /www.historicengland.org.uk
www.broseley.org.uk

- Pevsner, Nicolaus & Newman, John Shropshire Yale University Press 1994
- Forrest, H. E. The Old Houses of Wenlock Wilding & Son 1914

*(Left to right: pic of the plaque by Philip Halling & pic of the Hall courtesy of the English Heritage website)*

## Article by Steve Dewhirst

*THE CHURCH RATE*

Church rates were levied on the occupants of land or houses in the parish to cover the costs of maintaining the local parish church and paying the salaries of officials. This was in addition to the stipend received by the parish rector. With the rise of nonconformity, objections to these taxes grew, and more people refused to pay them. In the 1830s, several societies were formed to try to abolish the levy.

In 1861, there was a Church Rate Abolition Conference in London, amongst the delegates were Rev. William Yate and Mr James Mason from Broseley. In that year, Walpole's returns show that in the previous seven years in Broseley, £752 6s had been raised and £51 2s 5d expended on repairs to the Church.

In Broseley, controversy arose in 1864 when the church wardens were overzealous in collecting the rate, with newspapers nationwide reporting 'A Cruel Church-Rate Seizure'. The churchwardens levied a distraint on the goods of James Clark for non-payment of 1s 3½d of the church rate. They seized his possessions, including a clock, an oak chest, an oak cupboard, two tables, seven chairs, a tea tray, a looking glass, a smoothing iron and a straw mattress. The household was said to comprise: his wife, seven children, his bedridden mother aged eighty-three and his 'idiotic sister' aged forty-three. Contributions were sent to the papers for Clarke.

Although there was an outcry, the census paints a slightly different picture of James Clarke. The only James Clark(e) listed in the census was a tobacco pipe burner living on King Street, and two of his children were working: Sarah (16) as a tobacco pipe maker and Ellis (12) as a coal miner. The Roberts family were also boarding with them; Roberts and his wife ran a hat-making business. The census does not mention the mother or his sister.

*(Stain glass in All Saints Church/ Pic by J. Barbier)*

The list of items seized also suggests that the family were not below the poverty line, so it is surprising that they could not find such a relatively small amount to pay the rate. A correspondent to the Wellington Journal stated that his friend had paid the rate for him but pointed out that 'he is not in the poor condition generally stated, for he is comparatively well off, and that his afflicted relatives are well cared for by the parish and by kind friends'.

There were also two other cases, including one against a Mr Yates who owed 3s 5d. His household goods, comprising: a table, half a dozen chairs, twenty pounds of ham, a dozen pounds of bacon and a basket, were sold at the Lion, raising £1 3s 1d.

The local Rector, R. H. Cobbold, was reluctantly drawn into the controversy and, not surprisingly, was on the side of upholding the law and somewhat disparaging of dissenters; however, to his credit, he did state that he would have gladly paid their rate if they had pleaded poverty.

There is no doubt that the churchwardens were fervent in pursuing those who were not prepared to pay the rate, but there certainly seems to be an element of the media latching onto a story amid general dissatisfaction with the rates, exaggerating it and failing to investigate the full circumstances. After an act of Parliament was passed in 1868, it was no longer compulsory to pay the rate; however, voluntary contributions still continued to be collected.

———————————————————————

## ***OBITUARY: HAROLD GRICE by Neil Clarke***

It is with sadness that we report the death of longstanding society member **Harold Grice**. Harold was born in 1933 and spent most of his working life in the Oakengates/St Georges area, where he ran the Wrekin Motors business from 1960 until his retirement. For 45 years he was an active member of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and the Friends of the Museum, particularly as a regular volunteer at Blists Hill Museum, where his mechanical expertise was put to good use in operating the mine winding engine and driving the steam roller and the Trevithick locomotive.

Harold was a former president of our society (2010) and regularly attended our meetings until ill-health intervened. He passed away peacefully at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital on May 16. I represented the society at his funeral at Aston House, St Georges.

**EVENT**

The Cavalier Centre, which is off the Much Wenlock to Buildwas road, will host a Discovering History and Metal Detecting weekend from 11th to 14th September. Further details will be available on their website (**https://cavaliercentre.org/**) and on their Facebook page.

**DISTRIBUTION OF NEWSLETTERS & SUBSCRIPTIONS**

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 who 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 and £15 for a joint subscription)**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT ALL PAYMENTS TO BROSELEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

Broseley Local History Society has changed its bank account to Dudley Building Society.

You can still make your cheques payable to: Broseley Local History Society.

However if you wish to pay your subscriptions through bank transfer, our account details are as follows:

Dudley Building Society

Payee Name: Broseley Local History Society

(*) Account Number: 10001008

(*) Sort Code: 60-83-18

(*) Roll Number: 550434577

**(*) All three references are needed for your payments to reach us. Depending on your bank's system the Roll Number may be entered in the "reference" field.**

## Broseley Local History Society Committee

**Committee Members**

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Chair*** | *Kathryn Warren is acting as* |
| ***Secretary*** | Dot Cox |
| ***Treasurer*** | Reha Derici |
| ***Membership Secretary*** | Janet Robinson<br>*26 Coalport Road*<br>*Broseley*<br>*TF12 5AZ*<br>**01952 882495**<br>janetc46.jr.jr@gmail.com |
| ***Programme Secretary and Journal Editor*** | Neil Clarke |
| ***Newsletter Editor*** | Jocelyne Barbier |
| ***Publicity*** | Jocelyne Barbier |
| ***Research*** | Steve Dewhirst<br>Janet Doody<br>Richard Sells<br>Neil Clarke |
| ***Other Members*** | Gillian Pope<br>Margaret Hazeldine<br>Kathryn Warren |
| ***Website*** | www.broseley.org.uk |
| ***General Email*** | steve@broseley.org.uk |
| ***Social Media*** | www.facebook.com/BroseleyLocalHistorySociety/ |

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

**https://www.broseley.org.uk/news.htm**

© Published by Broseley Local History Society

Printed by MDT Reprographics