

Newsletter

Newsletter of the **Broseley Local History Society** *Incorporating the Wilkinson Society*



February 2003

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Wrekin Local Studies Forum of which the Society is a member.

- 23 Jun Guided tour of Willey Hall by Lord and Lady Forester. Numbers restricted, see report below.
- 2 Jul 'You try and stop me!' A summer walk around Jackfield led by Ron Miles. Meet at Jackfield Village Hall at 7.30 pm. Participants will be asked for a small donation in aid of the cost of resiting the Alexander Brodie memorial tablet presently in Jackfield Church.

For further information, contact Neil Clarke (01952).

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

- 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. Visit to Golding Hall, near Acton Burnell, which has links with the Langley family of The Amies. Details to follow.
- 14-15 Jun William Reynolds Bicentenary Weekend, the Long Warehouse, Coalbrookdale. This event is sponsored by the

New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

- Mrs E Boden, Cannock
Mr & Mrs A T Bowler, Broseley
Mrs J Childe, Benthall
Mrs M Cooper, Little Wenlock
Mr M K Evans, Torquay
Mr S Kendal, Broseley
Mr & Mrs J Leek, Broseley

Membership now stands at 134.

Society News

Willey Park

Guided tour by Lord and Lady Forester
23 June 2003

The Society has recently received a very kind invitation from Lady Forester for the Committee and other members to visit Willey Park, where she and Lord Forester have offered to take us on a guided tour of the Hall. It seems that Lady Forester was reading an article in a Society Journal and, aware of the strong links between

Broseley and the Willey Estate, wondered if we would be interested in such a tour. Our immediate and enthusiastic response to her letter could have left her in little doubt as to our pleasure at receiving such an invitation.

Numbers, however, are limited to 30 and knowing this will be a popular event it has been decided that the fairest way to allocate places, once Committee members have taken up their option, would be to draw names out of a hat. This will be done at the meeting on 2 April and anyone interested should complete the form on page 5 and either send it to Janet Robinson, 26 Coalport Road, Broseley, TF12 5AZ to arrive by 1 April, or bring it to the April meeting. The only criterion for being included in this draw is that you have paid up your subscription for this year!

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

by Jim Waterson

As many of you will be aware, the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust is responsible for the long term management and improvement of woodlands, grasslands and open spaces throughout the Severn Gorge and Coalbrookdale. While our main activities involve operational land management, we also recognise the immense cultural value and significance of these areas.

The Trust is keen to work with local people and organisations in finding out more about the history and development of the local landscape, and would greatly value the knowledge and information held by so many. We have always been delighted by people's willingness to share this information with us to enable greater understanding of these fascinating and distinctive places.

With this in mind, we should like to propose working with Broseley Local History Society in the coming year, with a focus on Benthall Edge and surrounding areas. As part of our community involvement programme we have put aside time (and some money!) to work with your Society and should welcome your ideas on how to take this forward.

We are particularly keen to find out and record more about such things as the final days of the limestone working at Pattins Rock quarry and

the history of the Black Pool and Red Pool on the Edge. I am sure there are many other facts, stories and insights of which we are unaware that would help us as the long-term managers of this area and which would also interest many other people.

Our outline ideas are that it could include a workshop meeting and one or more site visits - perhaps a weekend or evening walk in the woods during the summer months looking at some of the more distinctive features in and around Benthall Edge, plus a formal record of the events through reports and articles.

I should of course be delighted to discuss these initial ideas with you at one of your regular meetings and look forward to some useful, entertaining and interesting work with the Society in the near future. If you need to contact me directly, please telephone 01952 433880.

The Janet Butler Collection

by David Lake

Janet Butler was a most diligent student of the life and times of our John Wilkinson, Ironmaster of Broseley, and of an even wider world. Sadly she died a decade ago, but not before completing the first draft of a great thesis on her subject. This draft, and her six boxes of research notes, are in the care of John Powell's library at Coalbrookdale, and we have been given privileged access to them.

Looking after such unique and valuable documents is obviously no small responsibility, especially when the most eminent scholars are not always noted for leaving the paperwork in as good order as they find it - there is the theory that their eminence results from their leaving it in such chaos that other researchers make slow progress!

Be that as it may, Janet Butler has provided us with fascinating material about John Wilkinson for the talk on 5 March - *Today Broseley, Tomorrow the World!*

Previous Meetings

Since the last Newsletter, we have had several very interesting meetings. In November David de Haan, Deputy Director of the Ironbridge

Gorge Museum Trust, gave a talk on the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the impact it had on the British public who, for the first time, were exposed to technological advances and designs from all over the world.

It also proved a fertile ground for entrepreneurs. It was here that the very first flush toilets, costing a penny a go, were installed, while Thomas Cook started a whole new industry by organising the first package tours.

The building, which became known as the Crystal Palace, covered 750,000 square feet and took only 10 months to build, some 3,300 cast iron columns being supplied from Dudley for the construction of the framework. The roof was then covered with canvas and the sides glazed, one side being boarded over to keep out the heat.

According to de Haan, the cost of the building was some £8 million in today's terms, a cost which would have been much greater had not Fox Henderson, who undertook the construction, offered to do it for half price on condition he could have the building back at the end of the exhibition. Compared to the cost of the Millennium Dome (in the region of £780 million) this seems very good value, considering that after it was resited in Sydenham it served as a venue for concerts, the Imperial War Museum and FA Cup Finals before it burnt down in 1936.

The staging of this, the first international exhibition, was largely due to the efforts of Henry Cole and Prince Albert whose wife, Queen Victoria, was so fascinated by the exhibition that she visited it 41 times!

Having recovered from the vicarious splendours of the Great Exhibition, members met at the Lion Hotel in December for the Society's Christmas dinner. This new venue proved to be a good choice, and a merry time was had by all while Rex Key entertained with gossip snippets of Broseley happenings from past newspaper reports.

The January meeting offered members the opportunity to reminisce about old Broseley characters, in particular the organist and the various church ministers. One such gentleman, it was recalled, used to brew his own beer – obviously with a certain amount of success, getting so

inebriated on one occasion that he fell down and broke his ankle. Printed copies of these and past 'Memories' evenings may be ordered at meetings at a cost of 50p each.

The February meeting featured a talk by the Chairman of the Shropshire Family History Society, John Shearman, who gave us an entertaining lecture on various Broseley characters who had appeared at the Quarter Sessions in the second half of the 19th century. One such was Job Allcock (aka Hill) who got 10 years' transportation for "feloniously steal(ing) and carry(ing) away a quantity of Flour, ten pounds weight of Soap, twelve pounds weight of pork, eight pounds weight of Lard, a quantity of Potatoes and two linen frocks the property of him the said Thomas Roden."*

Testimony from one witness in this case makes amusing reading. In her statement Jemima Gough said that as she passed Thomas Roden's store about two o'clock one morning she saw "a lighted candle fastened to the handle of a handbarrow in the yard at the back of his premises." She continued "I . . . saw a man making a hole in the back of Mr Roden's shop. I heard one person say 'that's the way to get the brick out' another person answered 'Hie you', the other replied 'Yes I will'. I have known the prisoner intimately for about half a year and distinctly saw that he was one of the persons in Mr Roden's yard. . . . I said to the persons 'heigh siria, what brings you here', they made no reply. I then threw a brick end into the yard and the prisoner Job Allcock said 'yonder's a wench on that bank, let's go and open her blasted skull'. He ran up the hill after me and I ran to the Black Swan public house and saw Henry Lloyd the Landlord and told him that somebody was breaking into Mr Roden's shop. I then went home."* Obviously a person with a sense of civic duty.

An interesting fact which emerged from these court cases was the high amount of bail set against witnesses appearing in trials. In the case of Thomas Roden, even he as the victim was required to put up bail of £30 in the event of his non-appearance as a witness at the trial, a not inconsiderable sum in 1840.

Another aspect of Shearman's research was the reports of inquests held into unusual deaths.

These normally took place in local pubs such as the King's Head or the Forester's Arms and also involved a jury who were probably local, but not necessarily needing the same property qualification as Assize jurors.

It was also possible to get information on the social structure of the area from the Assize jurors, who represented a cross section of property owning people. By far the largest percentage of these were farmers, but out of over 33,000 jurors covering the years 1831-1920 only a tiny proportion were from Broseley itself.

All this information has come out of a 13 year project by the Shropshire Family History Society and Shropshire Records and Research Centre to index information appearing in the Quarter Sessions Rolls of Shropshire from 1831-1920. The indexing reflects the date, name, trade and place of residence of people appearing in these Rolls and is also available on CD.

**Extracts from the documents concerned with the trial of Job Allcock are quoted here with the permission of the Shropshire Records and Research Centre.*

Shropshire's Trades, Traders and Industries through the Ages

Saturday 15 March

10.00 am – 4.30 pm

The Gateway, Chester Street, Shrewsbury

The Friends of Shropshire Records and Research are holding an all day workshop entitled *Shropshire's Trades, Traders and Industries through the Ages*. Subjects will range from guilds in the post reformation era to the coming of the engineer; there will also be a guided walk. Entry is free for members of the Friends, £7.50 for non members. Contact Neil Clarke for further details, tel: 01952 504135.

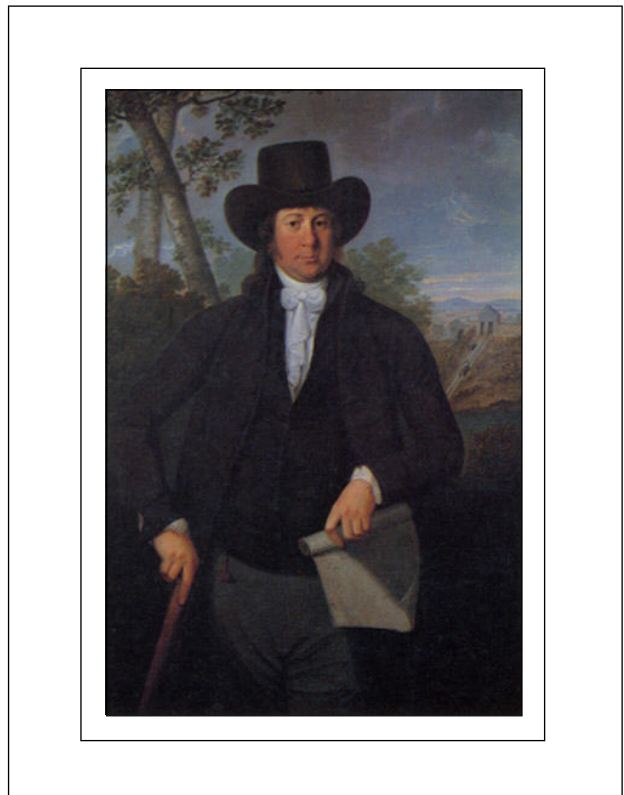
William Reynolds Bicentenary Conference

Saturday and Sunday, 14- 15 June

10.00 am - 4.45 pm

Long Warehouse, Coalbrookdale

To celebrate the life and achievements of William Reynolds, the east Shropshire ironmaster, scientist, inventor and canal builder, who died on 3 June 1803, the Wrekin Local Studies Forum is sponsoring a number of events in June this year which will be centred on the Long Warehouse in Coalbrookdale.



William Reynolds, Shropshire ironmaster, scientist, inventor and canal builder died 200 years ago this June

An exhibition of documents, maps and artefacts associated with Reynolds will be staged at the Coalbrookdale Museum. This will open on 3 June with a 7.30 pm cheese and wine reception hosted by the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum. The evening will include a talk on portraits of Reynolds by David de Haan and a visit to Reynolds' gravestone in the nearby Quaker Burial Ground. All, in particular members of the Society, are welcome to attend this opening for which there will be a nominal charge. The exhibition will run until 15 June (admission free by prior appointment – tel: 01952 432141).

On the weekend of 14 - 15 June a conference will be held which will cover various aspects of Reynolds's life and achievements, with a series of illustrated talks on the Saturday and a tour on the Sunday. The cost of this conference is £5.00 for either day or £9.00 for both days. Bookings and further details from Neil Clarke, tel: 01952 504135.

A Snapshot of the 20th Century

The Society has produced an album of over 150 photographs taken in Broseley and the sur-

rounding area during the 20th century. These photographs show many local events such as Wartime and Remembrance parades, Mayor Making and Hospital Sunday parades, local carnivals and events associated with the Parish Church of All Saints' and the Methodist Church, productions of the old Broseley Local Dramatic Society and numerous views of the town showing Broseley before the advent of the motor car.

The album contains many photographs of local characters and individuals who lived in Broseley during the 1900s. The Society has tried to identify many of them but if local residents can still put names to faces we should appreciate hearing from them.

It is hoped the album will be on display in Broseley Library where it will complement the albums produced by the Broseley Camera Club which celebrate the life of Broseley in the Millennium year.

Mailbox

Gary Humphries has emailed us looking for information on his grandfather, who worked at Maws & Co for about 20 years from around 1920. He asks if anyone knows anything of him or if there are any employment records of Maws & Co available for inspection.

Anyone who can help may email him at GHumph4846@aol.com.

We have also received a letter from Sheila Jelley of Amersham enclosing a copy of the will of her ancestor Thomas Watkiss, Ground Collier, Broseley dated 1683, together with the inventory made up of his belongings at his death. In her letter she says:

It would appear that his children started to be baptised in Broseley in 1638 and in fact Thomas was churchwarden in the original parish registers at that time. There is a death of a Thomas Watkins in 1650 which may have been his father.

I have been unable to find any marriage before 1638 to Elizabeth his wife and there are no Watkiss entries prior to 1638 – so where did he come from??

I would be very grateful for any help that can be offered as to further research on this family.

Anyone who can help may contact Sheila Jelley at Oak House, 37 Copperkins Lane, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP6 5QF, tel: 01494 725124, email: sjelley@waitrose.com.

Editor's note. If anyone can help either of these people with information, would they also copy the Society so that we can publish a follow up for the benefit of readers of the Newsletter. Email address is steve@broseley.org.uk.

GUIDED TOUR OF WILLEY HALL

Monday 23 June, 6.30 pm

Please include my name in the draw for this event

Name:

Addr:

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Please complete and return by 1 April to :
Janet Robinson, 26 Coalport Road,
Broseley, TF12 5AZ
or bring to the meeting on 2 April when the
draw will take place.
Only one entry per person!

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