

Newsletter

Newsletter of the Broseley Local History Society

Incorporating the Wilkinson Society



August 2004

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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.

Visitors are welcome but are asked to give a donation towards Society funds.

Programme

- 1 Sep Memories Evening, *Ceramic Enterprises in Broseley*
- 6 Oct AGM, followed by a talk by Paul Luter, *The Sutton Wharf Tramway*
- 3 Nov *The Wolfsons of Jews Jitty*, by Ivor Southorn and Ray Johnson
- 1 Dec Christmas dinner
- 5 Jan *Bridleways in and around Broseley*, by Derek Pountney
- 2 Feb *A tribute to Eustace Rogers*, presentation by Ken Jones and Ron Miles

2 Mar *John Wilkinson, Copper King*, by Vin Callcut

For further information contact Neil Clarke on 01952 504135.

New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Mr Richard Sells, Bridgnorth

Mrs Shirley Sawyer, Stirchley, Telford

Mrs Lynne Williams, Halesowen, West Midlands

Society News

Annual General Meeting

The Society will hold its Annual General Meeting on 6 October when the agenda will include the election of committee members. While all current members have agreed to stand for a further term we are always ready to welcome new faces, and anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact secretary Dot Cox on 01952 883568 for a nomination form. The AGM will be followed by a talk by Paul Luter entitled *The Sutton Wharf Tramway*.

Benthall Edge Project

Last year the Society worked with the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust in gathering information about the history of Benthall Edge. An organised walk along the Edge last summer, coupled with a very memorable Memories Evening, produced a wealth of information which has now been incorporated into a booklet, published by the SGCT, called *Benthall Edge, Five Historic Guided Walks*. Beautifully illustrated, this booklet gives precise directions for the walks, things of historic interest to look for on the way, and information about the various trees and plants, as well as snippets of social history.

The booklet will be officially launched later in the year but, in the meantime, copies are available from the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, tel: 01952 433880, at a cost of £3.99.

Interact Project

In the May Newsletter we reported on how the Society is working with Maureen McGregor of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust on a scheme to raise children's awareness of their local heritage. Since then, Maureen has had a very positive meeting with staff at John Wilkinson Primary School, with whom she is hoping to run a pilot scheme during this coming school year. If this proves popular, approaches will be made to the other primary schools in the area.

The idea behind this scheme is to introduce children to the rich legacy of history that is on their doorsteps, and at the September meeting John Freeman will be speaking more about this project and encouraging people to become involved. Alternatively, interested persons may contact Maureen McGregor on 01952 435909 or email maureen.mcgregor@ironbridge.org.uk.

Previous Meetings

May meeting

In May Dr Sylvia Watts, who gained her doctorate on research into market towns in Shropshire in 16th and 17th centuries, gave a fascinating talk on Thomas Beddoes, a friend of William Reynolds and a man destined to become a chemist and physician of some note.

Born in Shifnal in 1760, Thomas Beddoes was an extremely bright lad with a lively and enquiring mind. If it had been left to his father, however, he would probably have joined the family firm of solicitors in Shifnal and no more would have been heard of him. Fortunately, however, his grandfather recognised his considerable abilities and arranged for him to attend Bridgnorth Grammar School and later Pembroke College, Oxford. There he read medicine, at the same time teaching himself French, in order to read scientific books in the original, as well as German, Italian and Spanish.

From Oxford he went to London to study anatomy under Dr John Sheldon and later met Professor Joseph Black of Edinburgh Medical School who

was researching the effects of gases on combustion. It was this meeting which piqued Beddoes' interest and from there he went to Paris to meet Lavoisier, the man who proved that air was a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen.

On his return in 1788, he was appointed reader at Oxford University, lecturing on chemistry, atmosphere, electricity and geology. His lectures were popular with his students, but his increasing sympathy with French revolutionary forces met with resistance and in 1792 he resigned his readership.

On his return to the Shifnal area, he stayed at William Reynolds' house in Ketley, with whom he developed a friendship as well as shared interests. While there he visited one of Reynolds' ironworks and became interested in the science behind the working of iron. He subsequently became an adviser for Reynolds.

Although younger than most of the members of the Lunar Society, he attracted their attention and became a friend of Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles. It may have been Erasmus' belief that the men who worked round lime kilns did not get tuberculosis because they breathed more oxygen, that prompted Beddoes to try using gases to treat illness.

In pursuit of this, he went to Bristol to set up a pneumatic institution for the treatment of diseases by the inhalation of different gases, in which he was assisted by Richard Lovell Edgeworth. Here the story takes a romantic turn when Beddoes fell in love with Richard's daughter Anna. Her father, however, not approving of this liaison, sent Anna to Ireland to cool their passion; whereupon Beddoes promptly followed her, married her and brought her back to Bristol, visiting Shifnal and his family on their return.

Back in Bristol, he became known as a leader in his field, researching the administering of gases such as carbon dioxide and oxygen to people suffering from diabetes and tuberculosis. In this he was helped by James Watt, whose daughter had died from TB.

In 1798 he opened a private institute with Humphrey Davy in charge of the experimental team. It was Davy who discovered the interesting properties of nitrous oxide, its 'happy' effect

becoming quite a craze. The venture, however, was not a success and the institute eventually became an ordinary hospital serving the poor.

A man intensely interested in the welfare of ordinary folk, Beddoes promoted hygiene as a health measure and censured the upper classes for leading dissolute and unhealthy lives. He advocated the proper care of children, both physically and psychologically, and thought that girls as well as boys should be taught science. He was also interested in mental illness, work related diseases and alcoholism, writing a book, *The History of Isaac Jenkins*, on the evils of drunkenness which sold over 40,000 copies.

Beddoes was a man with a formidable intellect, a vivid imagination and a strong drive to effect social change by demystifying medical knowledge. Mocked for his philanthropic views, however, he died in 1808, his pioneering work on the treatment of disease by inhalation of gases unrecognised in this country.

Summer Soiree



A perfect summer evening

It was a perfect summer evening in June when some 30 or more members of the Society gathered in Michael and Gillian Pope's garden to enjoy a glass or three of wine, feast on the delicious spread of cheese and biscuits and explore their beautiful garden.

It also gave members an opportunity to get to know each other in a less formal atmosphere, have a good chat, swap holiday stories and generally get in the mood for summer.

So a big thank you to Michael and Gill for opening up their home – it was a really lovely evening which was much appreciated by everyone.

Summer Walk



These hardy souls braved the stormy weather for a fascinating tour of Cookley

This year the July Summer Walk took us to Cookley, a small town just north of Kidderminster.

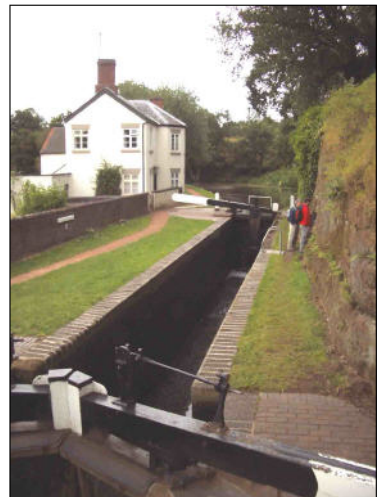
The idea had been that of member Betty Caswell who, although she has lived in Cookley for many years, had been brought up in Broseley. Betty is a local historian with several publications to her name, and she was keen to share some of Cookley's history with us. So it was that, on an evening more like March than July, some 15 or so members braved the blustery weather and joined her and author Ron Griffin on a stroll through the town.

Cookley sits both alongside the Stour and astride the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. This 46 mile long canal, the first to become navigable, was built in 1770 to link the Severn to the Trent.

Our first stop was Debdale Lock, from where on our left we could see the Elan Valley water supply pipeline as it crosses the canal on its 73 mile journey to Birmingham. In the other direction was one end of the 65 yard long Cookley Tunnel, built by James Brindley specially for canal traffic.

Situated between the canal and the Stour we passed Cookley's biggest

Debdale Lock on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal



industrial concern, Cookley Ironworks, a business which has seen some significant changes in its working history. Originally started as one of several corn mills along the banks of the Stour, it later became an ironworks. According to our guide, some of the wooden paddles of the giant water wheel, built in 1754 to operate the machinery, are still in position under the Works.

But it was the opening of the canal in 1770 which really gave the company a boost, providing as it did a reliable means of transport for both raw materials and finished product. Cannon were produced during the Napoleonic wars, while a now world famous method for tin plating iron articles was invented by two of its employees.

The business suffered a severe setback when the railway failed to come to Cookley and many townfolk had to seek work elsewhere. But the advent of road transport turned things round and in 1904 the company began manufacturing wheel rims for heavy commercial vehicles.

Now known as Titan Steel Wheels, it produces 120 tons of steel wheels every day, 85% of which are exported.

Further on we passed the aptly named Rock Tavern before re-crossing the Stour over an iron bridge, the design of which was based on its more famous namesake. Here the river runs almost alongside the canal, on the opposite side of which is an impressive one-sided sandstone cutting known as the 'Hanging Rock'.

Over Austcliffe Bridge and round the corner, Ron Griffin showed us over his beautiful old house with

This iron bridge over the Stour is a smaller version of its more famous namesake



its collection of 'historiana'. Then past the Bull's Head under which are a number of large caves which, in the mid 1800s, housed a woodscrew factory. The site was later developed into a wire and nail factory which ceased trading in 1892. And so back to the Eagle.

This certainly was an evening to remember, and not just for the stormy weather and the glorious sunset, and the Society would like to thank both Betty and Ron for taking the time to share some of Cookley's fascinating history.

South Wales Trip

Last year Steve Rowson gave an illustrated talk on his native Taff Valley. Following this, the Society received an enthusiastic letter from member Barbara Tyler of Shrewsbury suggesting we arrange a trip to the area. So we did and, in conjunction with the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Neil Clarke did a splendid job of organising this remarkable day. Here are his impressions.

The 40 or so participants enjoyed an outward journey through the Brecon Beacons and, after picking up Steve Rowson, spent the rest of the

The only complete building now left on the Dowlais site, this library was built on land donated by Guest Keen and Nettlefolds Ltd. Its walls are faced with local stone and have red Alveley stone dressings from Shropshire, carved by T A Jones of Cardiff



One of the huge furnaces of the Cyfarthfa Ironworks which were the source of the Crawshay empire and the main rivals of the Guests in trade



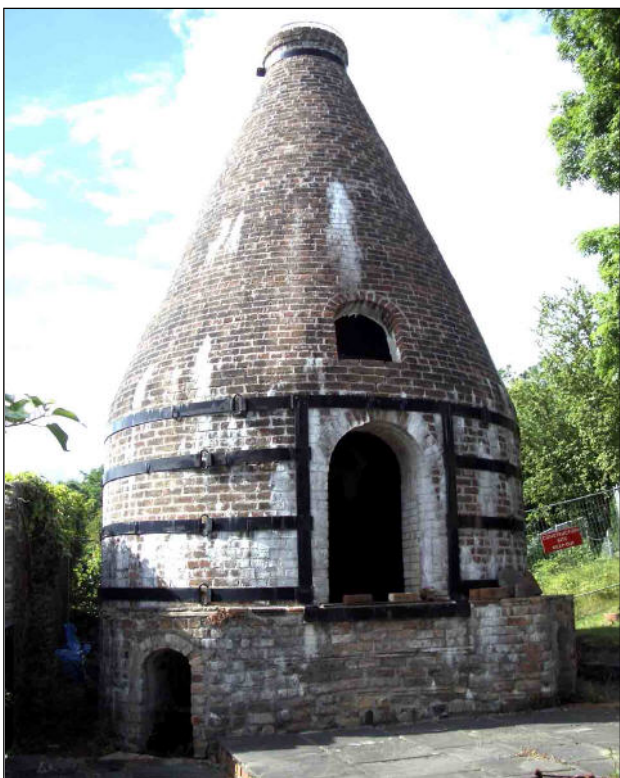


Pontycafnau, the 1793 cast iron tramroad bridge from the Gurnos limestone quarry which also carried two water feeders to the works

morning viewing the ironworks sites at Dowlais (the largest ironworks in the world in the early 19th century and owned by the Guests of Broseley origin) and Cyfarthfa. We returned for lunch to Cyfarthfa Castle, the early 19th century stately home of the Crawshays, now housing a fine museum and art gallery.

Our afternoon itinerary took us down the valley, first to Quakers' Yard, and then along the course of

A kiln at the Nantgarw Chinaworks. It was here, on the bank of the Glamorganshire Canal, that William Billingsley produced fine soft paste porcelain before he joined John Rose at Coalport in 1820



the Merthyr Tramroad on which Trevithick's Penydarren locomotive ran in 1804. Admiring Brunel's stone viaduct, which was built in 1841 to carry the Taff Vale railway over river and tramroad (and later widened) we discovered this was one of our chairman, John Freeman's, favourite structures.

After briefly viewing the site of the junction of the Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals and the terminus of the Merthyr Tramroad at Navigation (modern day Abercynon), we moved on to Nantgarw, where we were welcomed by Sylvia and David Erasmus, leading members of the Friends of Nantgarw Chinaworks. It was here, on the bank of the Glamorganshire Canal, that William Billingsley produced fine soft paste porcelain before he joined John Rose at Coalport in 1820.

Refreshed by tea and cakes at Nantgarw, and exhilarated by the experience of the industrial heritage of the Taff Valley, we returned to Shropshire via the motorway. Our thanks to Steve Rowson for organising such a wonderful day – including fine weather!

Archiving the Journals

Vin Callcut has been tackling the huge task of archiving the Society's Journals and other publications with the aim of producing a CD. This is how he is getting on.

A good start has been made on this project which will make a wealth of information easily accessible. The material available includes all the Journals of the Wilkinson Society, Journals of the Broseley Local History Society, Newsletters, Memories Evenings and other publications.

The most significant papers, which have already been put up on the Society's website by Steve Dewhirst, have established the standing of the Society worldwide. A few others had been scanned by Peter Cooper.

All the rest are now being scanned and proofed ready for compilation. Some of the earlier articles are so faint that they resist scanning and have had to be largely retyped. Recent material has been prepared on PCs and can be transferred. Given the large capacity of CDs, it will be possible to add illustrations to the older articles and include more photographs elsewhere.

The material will be indexed both chronologically and alphabetically, using the list compiled for the last issue of the Journal (No 25) that marked the first thirty years. From these index pages it will be easy to click on the title to go straight to the issue or article that is wanted. At the end of articles there will be cross-referencing to any subsequent correspondence. Journals up to No 20 have been accessed, Nos 1-14 are being proofed at present. A chronological list of reported Society activities is also being compiled and added.

While compiling this material, it has been fascinating to catch up on the history of the Society and its members. It is possible to appreciate the tremendous work done by enthusiasts researching and reporting much archive material, organising meetings, membership and excursions and assembling the collection of artefacts.

The history of the exhibition of the Society's collection of items of local interest is already long and complicated. Hopefully it will soon be given a new lease of life. The earlier journals give the location and opening hours of the display relevant to the time. In an introductory page we will have to include a useful update on any such items that have changed.

The acquisition of this material will continue indefinitely as more becomes available. CDs can be archived annually to preserve the information and keep it accessible to members. At some time the Committee may agree that it will be appropriate to publish it for commercial sale, perhaps to celebrate another significant anniversary. The availability of the wealth of thirty plus years of Society information will be quite an asset.

New Traces of John Wilkinson?

David Lake visits Janet Daniels to investigate some intriguing features of her new home.

New members are always welcome, but Janet Daniels comes to us with an especially interesting address – Dean Corner, on the Willey Estate.

From her home the old track, once part of the network of roads around Willey, descends steadily to John Wilkinson's New Willey furnace site.

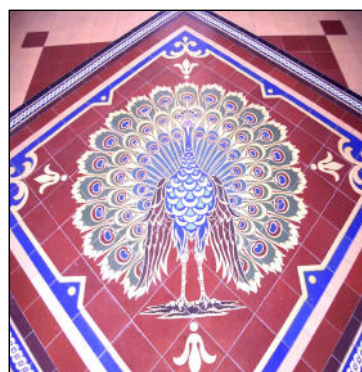
The old house itself and its outbuildings, including a malthouse drying kiln, have many intriguing

features. Janet discovered when clearing up around the site just how close the coal seams are to the surface – a partly backfilled mineshaft is only a few metres from the house, and several sinkings from old bellpits can be seen.

She has also discovered a substantial brick wall, about two metres high and retaining a great bank of earth or pit spoil. Whether this served some purpose, perhaps as a loading platform, is open to our analysis and speculation.

Janet has kindly offered to show members, by appointment and by prior permission of the Willey Estate, something of this important and fascinating spot. Anyone interested is asked to contact the Secretary, Janet Robinson, on 01952 882495.

Jackfield Tile Museum



This 'welcome mat' is a copy of a mosaic in the Mysore Palace, India. The original was made by Maw and Co in 1907 from a design by Walter Bradburn; this copy was made by Chris Cox of Craven Dunnill in 2004

After months of closure the Tile Museum at Craven Dunnill in Jackfield, one of the Ironbridge Gorge Museums, has now re-opened.

From the 'wow' factor at the entrance, through the visually stunning story of the Craven Dunnill operation, to seeing tiles actually being made, this is a visit not to be missed.

Further work of restoration, rearrangement and restyling is ongoing under Michael Vanns' leadership, but what has already been achieved is breathtaking – a world class display of world class products on our doorstep.

The museum is planning a series of tubelining workshops from October and anyone interested should contact Jennifer Hill on 01952 884124.

A Pleasure in Store

Bronwen Mason, daughter of the late Dennis Mason who was a forthright and influential resident of Broseley and Benthall, has kindly loaned the Society a copy of Dennis' unpublished *Memories of a Shropshire Lad*. These are well written, sharply observed and frequently very amusing, so if Neil Clarke is able to find a way to make copies of this available we have a treat in store.

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust News

Occasion: Challenge Walk to celebrate the opening of the new South Telford Way

Date: Sunday 19 September

Meet: Spout Farm House
Telford Town Park

Registration: 9.00 – 10.00 am

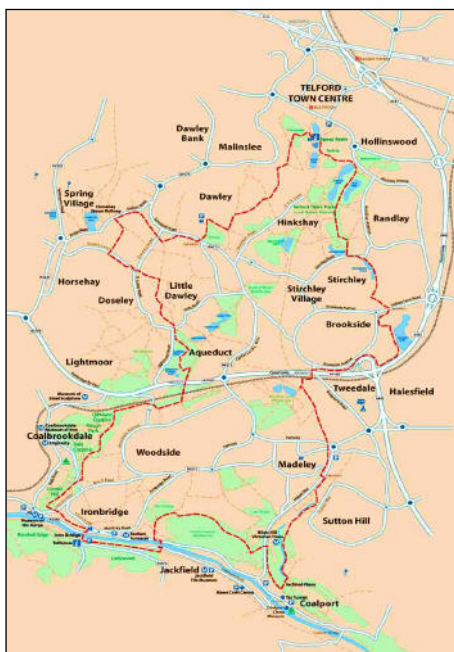
Distance: 3, 6, 9 or 12 miles;
or a 40 minute stroll

Entry fee: £1.00

The SGCT is one of several concerns funding the South Telford Rights of Way Partnership in opening a new long distance footpath, the South Telford Way.

To launch this, the first ever Telford Challenge Walk will take place on 19 September, National Walking Day.

The walk will follow a 12 mile loop route which will also be split into three, six and nine mile



The new South Telford Way will be officially opened on 19 September, when the public is invited to take part in a Challenge Walk

stretches spread over four checkpoints. For the less active, there will be a South Telford Stroll of about 40 minutes.

The event is open to all ages, individuals and groups, and can be entered simply as a 'challenge' or to raise money for your chosen charity.

Anyone interested in obtaining an entry package should contact either Julie Jones or Malcolm Morris on tel: 01952 278001.

Harvey Eginton and Charles Kempe

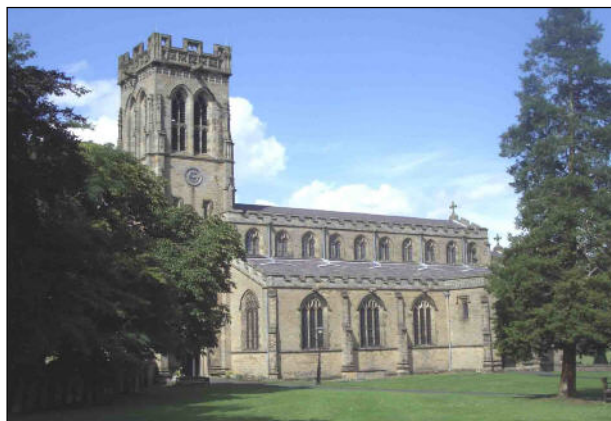
Their part in the building of All Saints' Church, Broseley

Michael Pitchford of Bewdley has sent the Society a leaflet on Harvey Eginton, the designer of All Saints' Church in Broseley. This brief sketch of Eginton's work is based on that leaflet and acknowledgement is made to the author Alan Postlethwaite for the use of his material.

Harvey Eginton, described as "an unusually serious and competent gothic designer" was the architect responsible for Broseley Church.

Born in 1809, the son of Raphael Eginton, a Worcester glass painter, Harvey Eginton learned his architectural skills simply by studying the Cathedral there and absorbing information from his father. After obtaining some early commissions, he was fortunate in gaining the attention of a Wiltshire magistrate called Ludlow for whom he undertook the building of a new church and the design of a new school at Westbury. Another personal recommendation brought Eginton the prestigious

All Saints' Church, Broseley was built in 1845 at a cost of £9,000 to a design by Harvey Eginton



commission for the restoration of the Parish Church at Stratford-upon-Avon. At about the same time (1835) he was directing the restoration of St Lawrence's Church, Evesham.

Further ecclesiastical work followed and in 1845 churches at Broseley and Dawley were built to his design, All Saints' in Broseley at a cost of £9,000.

At the same time he was supervising major works of restoration throughout the Midlands as well as completing drawings for the restoration of the Guesten Hall of Worcester Cathedral, a project that was sadly not pursued.

A man of many talents, he also designed vicarages, mansions, police stations and schools as well as an extension to Worcester County Prison.

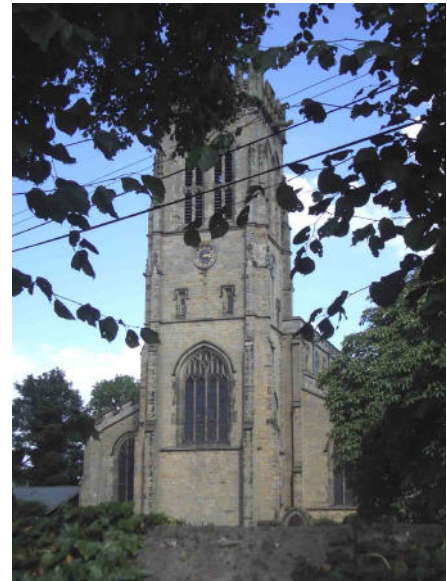
Eginton died in 1849 aged just 40. Although several of his churches have now been demolished or replaced, sufficient of his work remains to testify to the originality and inventiveness of his approach and to his care for detail and attractive decoration.

But more is owed to Eginton than his direct legacy of designs. In 1838 he encouraged Walter Chamberlain, a Worcester porcelain manufacturer, to take up the making of inlaid tiles by a process invented by Samuel Wright of Shelton, Staffordshire. Eginton supplied Chamberlain with some original designs as well as tracings from old examples, and tiles made in Worcester were employed by Eginton in many of his building and restoration projects.

Michael Pitchford also writes that when he visited Broseley Church in 1986, he was disappointed to find that the stained glass window designed by Charles Kempe was no longer visible from inside but was hidden by the pipe organ.

He goes on to say that Charles Kempe, who was born in 1837, had wanted to become a clergyman, but a speech impediment had made this impracticable. He, therefore, decided that "if he was not permitted to minister in the Sanctuary he would use his talents to adorn it".

It was to the medium of stained glass that he was particularly attracted and he eventually became an authority on mediaeval glass. Its influence on his designs may be seen in all his ecclesiastical stained glass work and "the style of design, the use of



The west window of All Saints' Church, Broseley, which can no longer be seen from inside, was designed by Charles Kempe

mainly green, blue and ruby glass, the delicate and detailed painting of figures and their settings, and the masterly use of large areas of silver stain, all combined to produce a new refreshing interpretation in Victorian stained glass, which quickly gained in popularity."

Kempe also produced designs for church furniture and fittings, as well as embroidered vestments and altar frontals, while possibly his most prestigious commission was the window of St George in Buckingham Palace. He died in 1907.

Mailbox

Tony Murphy, who was evacuated from Liverpool to Broseley where he lived in Hockley Bank from 1941-44, writes again. In the May Newsletter, Tony told us of some of the people and places he remembered from that time; in this issue he backtracks to the day he actually arrived.

In May 1941 I, along with some of my family, got off the train at Ironbridge station; that was the first day of some of the happiest years of my life.

The first thing that struck me was how green it all was, how much space and how quiet. I was used to rows and rows of terraced houses, warehouses, cobbled streets and smoke blackened buildings; and to noise from all quarters – lorries, tram cars, railway locomotives, ships' sirens, factory hooters and whistles. So this was unbelievable. And a river without huge ocean going ships, where you could see the bottom and with no oil on the surface, this was unreal.

Once in Broseley we found the house where we were going to live. Whitewashed outside, it was tiny inside, with only two rooms, one upstairs and one down. The upstairs room was divided to make two smaller rooms. The downstairs room had a big range, a gas point and a gas light in the ceiling – the only lighting in the house. Outside was a massive garden, with apple trees, a damson tree, blackcurrant and gooseberry bushes. We went down the path to the bottom of the garden, squeezed through an opening in the hedge and hey presto! were in another world. Fields upon fields and in the distance woods. We'd only ever read about these things in adventure books, William Brown stories. The trees in the garden couldn't be real, everyone knew that apples, damsons, blackcurrants and gooseberries came from the greengrocers!

As the days turned into weeks and then into months, we discovered more things about which us city kids had previously only read. Country lanes, fields, woods, a haunted church, cows and sheep roaming free, a pond with frogs and newts. Rabbits that were alive and not hanging in a butcher's window. And birds – larks, nightingales, owls, swallows and swifts. There were hedgehogs and other wildlife the local children took for granted, but which represented a whole new world for us. Such was Broseley.

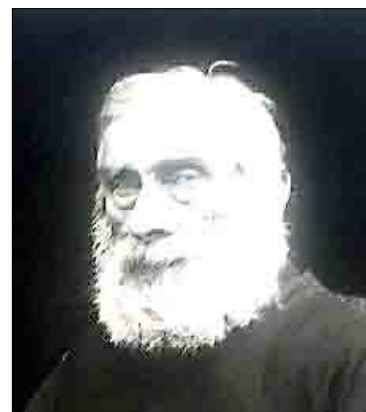
Earlier this year, I went back for the first time in 40 years. Oh dear, what has happened to the village I knew and loved? Gone are so many of the fields and woods, gone the whitewashed cottage in which we lived. The magnificent Town Hall has been replaced with a garish fronted supermarket; the secret lanes have gone. Where there once was peace and tranquillity there is now industry and commerce. Such is the price of progress. Fortunately for me memory outlasts fact

Ann Jones is interested in finding out more about Crews' Park, as she believes her husband's ancestors, William Jones and family, lived there in 1841. It is thought that William was a miner and Ann is keen to find out what the area would have been like in those days. She may be contacted at annken@walmer84.freeserve.co.uk.

John Rowley would like to find out more about his family who have been miners for 250 years, his father being the last. Apparently the Rowleys

moved to Broseley from Worfield in 1639 and one of them, Benjamin Rowley, who lived from the 1750s to 1816, was a mine owner. John believes that at one time he owned Snedshill forge as well as a mine in Shifnal, but it seems left nothing to his children when he died. He is thought to have lived in Benthall. John may be contacted at rowleyjohnuk@yahoo.co.uk.

Wendy Mazda is looking for information on her family. She says that her mother, whose maiden name was Freda Sarah Morris, was born in Shropshire; she recently died at the age of 75. When looking through her effects Wendy found a photograph which she believes could be her great-grandfather. This photo-graph of him, which was taken by the *Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News*, is undated. Anyone who can help should contact Wendy at wendymazda9@fsmail.net.



Believed to be the grandfather of Freda Sarah Morris (b 1928), this undated picture was taken by the Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News

Interested in the industrial and social history of this area?

Like to join the
BROSELEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY?

Just complete the form below and send to Janet Robinson, 26 Coalport Road, Broseley, TF12 5AZ

Name: _____

Addr: _____

Tel: _____

I enclose my cheque for £3.00 made payable to the Broseley Local History Society.