

Forest Clearing

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Chairman's Chatter

I think I could almost reproduce my Chatter from November last year because it seems very little has happened since; certainly not since the early part of this year in any event. I could wish you all a Merry Christmas as I did in 2019, except that it will clearly be different for most of us this time around. I hope that you are looking forward to meetings starting again at some time, probably the middle of next year, as it looks at the moment, but a good vaccine or two could certainly change that. We can't run our standard meetings at all at the moment, of course, but like many other groups we are looking to run some virtual meetings, using Zoom, beginning in December. I will invite anyone who wishes to join in but to do that, I need to know who has Zoom on their computer or tablet (it's free and easy to download). If you have that or have downloaded it and would like to come to the meeting, please let our Secretary, Sandra Charlton, know (details on page 4) and I'll make sure you are invited by email. The date and the speaker will be confirmed in the near future. We can't have our usual Christmas Social with the Grace Notes this year, which is sad for it's always an excellent gathering but, with a bit of luck, we'll be back with them next year. In spite of all the problems this year, the Committee remains intact and enthusiastic and will certainly be up and running as soon as we are allowed to be. We just hope you'll all be up and running with us too! Until then, we'll rely on Zoom to keep us going.

Please look after yourselves and stay safe, while having as good a time in the Festive Season as circumstances allow.

Norman Broadfield

I enjoyed Ann Taylor's article on the change of calendar, but do you realise that this is an early example of parliament passing a law which applies to everyone, but deciding that it should not apply to them. The Government financial year ended on Lady Day (25th March) each year, but in 1752 the year was shortened by 11 days. This meant that the financial year would be 11 days short, which was deemed unacceptable, so the year end was extended by 11 days, which is why the tax year ends on 5th April each year.

Stuart Leadley

Lance Sergeant Johnson Gideon Beharry VC

Born 26th July 1979 in Grenada. Served in the 1st Battalion Princess of Wales Royal Regiment

On 1 May 2004, Beharry drove his Warrior armoured vehicle onto the streets of Al Amarah in Iraq, with four other Warriors behind him. A rocket-propelled grenade hit his vehicle, setting it on fire and knocking out his commanding officer. Beharry took over command, forcing his vehicle through a barrier blocking the road and driving over a mine that failed to explode before accelerating away. He was shot in the head – but still managed to lead his own Warrior and the four behind him to safety. Under continuous fire, Beharry then climbed out of his burning vehicle to rescue his commanding officer and their badly burned gunner before leading two other soldiers to safety. Still under fire, he drove his Warrior where it would do no damage if it exploded, disabled the vehicle and its weapons and ran for cover. Once safe, he collapsed from exhaustion. Beharry was sent to hospital but soon discharged himself and was back on duty within six weeks.

41 days later, on 11 June 2004, he was again driving a Warrior through the streets of Al Amarah when his company were ambushed and a rocket-propelled grenade hit his vehicle, exploding inches from Beharry's head. Terribly wounded, suffering severe head injuries and barely conscious, he reversed the vehicle out of the ambushed area at high speed, bringing himself and the rest of the crew to safety. Despite Beharry's injuries, which included a fractured skull that would leave him in a coma for weeks, he saved the lives of all his fellow soldiers in the Warrior.

The citation reads:

"Private Beharry carried out two individual acts of great heroism by which he saved the lives of his comrades. Both were in direct face of the enemy, under intense fire, at great personal risk to himself (one leading to him sustaining very serious injuries)... Beharry displayed repeated extreme gallantry and unquestioned valour, despite intense direct attacks, personal injury and damage to his vehicle in the face of relentless enemy action."

Johnson Beharry became the first recipient of the Victoria Cross in the twenty-first century on 18 March 2005. He's also the first living soldier since 1969 to be awarded this medal, and the first serving Victoria Cross in the British Army since 1985.

Beharry's Victoria Cross is extremely valuable and he only ever wears copies. In October 2009, Beharry placed the first copy he had made into The Imperial War Museum's keeping. His original Victoria Cross is kept in Buckingham Palace.

Janice Evans

Diary Dates: Who knows? Not before April!

Stuart Parsons has written what he calls a “Short History” It will, of necessity, be shown in Forest Clearing in a number of episodes:

STOURPORT POWER STATION — A SHORT HISTORY



The original frontage built in the Art Deco style of the period, the brickwork was inlaid with Ketton Limestone blocks

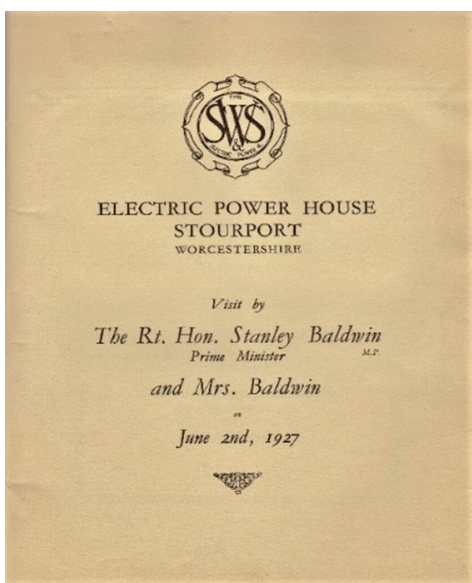
The story of Stourport Power Station began in 1903 when a special Act of Parliament gave the Shropshire, Worcestershire Electric Power Company the authority to supply electricity to the counties of Shropshire and Worcestershire. A further Act in 1905 increased the supply area to cover the county of Staffordshire, a total supply area of 3766 square miles.

The main power station at this time was in Smethwick and supplies of electricity were first provided in 1908 predominantly for street lighting and power for electric tramways, however by 1918 due to increases in demand following WW1, the Smethwick site had reached the limit of its site boundaries and authorisation was sought to construct another power station. This would require further Acts of Parliament and these were passed in 1918 and 1920.

Surveyors were dispatched across the three counties and a suitable site was eventually found in Stourport at the confluence of the River Stour and the River Severn and close to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal and the Great Western Railway. These transport links would bring in the coal needed from the Midland and Welsh coalfields, with the River Severn providing the cooling water required without the need for the usual cooling towers. There was also a sandstone bedrock suitable for the foundations a large building needed.

Unfortunately, due to the economic downturn following World War 1, only preliminary work was carried out and construction of the main plant did not begin until 1923 when the sum of £700,000 was made available by the treasury under the ‘Trade Facilities Act’. Electricity was first produced on the 1st April 1926 and the site was officially opened by the local MP and then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin on the 2nd June 1927.

The cover of the presentation booklet prepared for the grand opening by Stanley Baldwin M.P.



In his speech to the assembled masses Baldwin was reported to have said “To those of us who like myself have played cricket and football on the site of this power station, it seems like a nightmare to stand here in this crowd” whether he meant the crowd was a nightmare or the fact that the power station now stood on the cricket pitch we will never know.

TO BE CONTINUED

THOMAS JONES

Thomas Jones was born 15th July 1820 at Cakebole near Chaddesley Corbett. He led a very lowly existence all his life. As a child he did not attend school and therefore was illiterate; as an adult he acquired a position as a cowman at Cakebole House Farm, living in a garret at The Willows near Chaddesley Corbett. He owned very few possessions; his only furniture was a bed made up of old clothes on the floor. His washing facility was a tub at the bottom of the garret stairs. However, he did own a smock which he wore on a Sunday to attend church.

During his time as a cowman, he was earning 12 shillings and sixpence a week, (in today's money, 63 pence). Somehow, Thomas managed to acquire a field in Wilden which he rented to Mr Felton, who was the manager at Wilden Works, and Thomas would collect the rent once a week.

When Thomas wasn't working, he used to love to listen to the children playing in the Wilden School playground which was adjacent to the church. He also attended the church regularly.

When Thomas died, he was still living in a garret (which is at the top of a large house, namely an undeveloped attic), which previously had been a grain store in the hamlet of Bradford, near Kidderminster. There he had no furniture, and his bathroom was a butt or water tub at the bottom of the stairs outside.

As he was nearing his 79th Birthday Thomas fell ill. While a doctor was attending him, he asked him if he would call a Mr Millward as he wanted to make his will. However, the gentleman was actually playing cricket on the field not too far away. After much persuasion Mr Millward was eventually persuaded to go to see Mr Jones as he couldn't believe that he would have much money knowing his occupation and what his wage would have been. Thomas asked everyone to leave the room except Mr Millward, then asked him to lift him from his bed, where there were hidden several bank books containing entries of several hundreds of pounds. So, on 25th May 1899 the will was made with several bequests, the largest of which was to Wilden School to provide annual treats to the school children of Wilden. The value of this bequest was £876 (2020 value £113,306.95). Obviously, this money has run out, but the tradition of celebrating Thomas's birthday, by putting flowers on his grave, is still carried on today. (15th July, which is also St Swithin's day).

Pauline Carroll

Latest News

As part of the 'In Their Own Write' project there is a new initiative from the National Archives Education Department, 'Workhouse Voices', this has brought together a collection of letters from the project to make a teaching resource for secondary schools. The Education department has added a voice-over to each of the letters. The voice overs have been made by actors, reading the letters in regional accents.

The link: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/workhouse-voices/> will take you to this wonderful project which I am sure many people interested in English History will enjoy.

The ITOW project was due to finish in January but due work having to be delayed due to the virus the project has been granted an extension until July.

Further information and articles about the project can be found on intheirownwriteblog.com

Ann Taylor

A German Baroness may have been the inspiration for “the fairest of them all”.

The gravestone of an 18th century woman who may have inspired the fairy tale Snow White has gone on display in Germany.

Maria Sophia von Erthal was a German baroness who lived in the castle at Lohr am Main, Bavaria. Her father was in charge of a mirror and glass works, and gave his second wife Claudia (Maria's stepmother) a mirror that can still be seen in the museum of Lohr am Main Castle.



Claudia was believed to have been cruel and neglectful of her stepchildren - echoing the story of Snow White and her evil stepmother's enchanted mirror - and the family's story was well known by the time the Brothers Grimm came to write their dark tale in 1812. In a nearby town, there were mines that were so small that only children or those of stunted growth could work in them, which may have served as inspiration for the seven dwarfs.

Maria died in 1796, unmarried, in a convent. Her gravestone was originally in a church - significant in itself, as women of this time were not usually given their own gravestones - but the church was later knocked down. The memorial fell into the hands of a local family, who gave it to the Diocesan Museum in Bamberg, where it is now on display.

Another contender for the woman who inspired Snow White is

German countess, Margaretha von Waldeck. A famed beauty, Margaretha's father owned many mines where children were used as labourers. She died of a mysterious illness in 1554, aged 21 - possibly the result of poisoning.

Thanks to the BBC History Revealed magazine from which this item was taken.

Manchester Mercury 17 May 1774Secretary:

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NAVIGATION NOTICE is hereby given,

THAT a BOAT will set off from Birmingham and Stourport, on the Riven Severn, every Saturday Morning at six o'clock, with Goods for Manchester and Liverpool, which Goods will arrive there on the Saturday following; and Goods sent from Manchester and Liverpool on the Thursday, by his Grace the Duke of Bridgewater's Boats to Stockton Quay, near Warrington, will be delivered at Birmingham and Stourport on the Thursday following, at 2l. 12s 6d a Ton.

The first Boat will go from Birmingham and Stourport on the 14th May, and Liverpool and Manchester on the 18th. By Hugh Henshall and Co.

N.B. By the above Conveyance, Goods may be sent to and from Bristol, Gloucester, Worcester, Bewdley and Places adjacent; likewise to and from all Places on the Trent and Mersey, the Birmingham and Wolverhampton Canals, to and from all Parts of Cheshire, and also to and from Warrington, Wigan, Kendal, the rest of Lancashire, Yorkshire and other Parts of the North; also Boats go regularly for conveying Goods to and from Litchfield, Burton, Derby, Loughborough, Leicester, Nottingham, Newark, Gainsborough, Hull, London, and all Parts of the Eastern Coast.

Navigation Office, Stone Staffordshire,
April 21, 1774

The Owners are desired to be very particular in their Directions and Consignments of Goods

While researching in the newspaper archive, I came across the following articles:

Birmingham Gazette 28 October 1922

TEETH ON LOAN**Guardians Offer to Their Patients**

Patients under the care of Lewisham Board of Guardians, it was reported yesterday, are to be supplied with artificial teeth – on loan.

In connection with the same Board, it is reported that when a test fire call was made, not one of the 13 male staff in the porter's mess-room stirred to find out what was happening.

In the same paper it is recorded that Mrs Harry Know (formerly Miss Valerie May) has established the first ladies one-hour record at Brooklands. She drove at a speed of 71.16 miles per hour

Ann Taylor

Was Colonel Sanders a real colonel?

Harland Sanders dropped out of school and had a hard time holding down jobs (from farmhand and streetcar conductor to insurance salesman and lawyer) before finding his Kentucky-Fried-Chicken-based calling at the age of 40. He did have a spell in the US Army in 1906, but it was brief and required him to falsify his documents as he was only 16. Needless to say, he was no military colonel. Instead, Sanders proudly held the honorary title of Kentucky Colonel. State governor Ruby Laffoon awarded him this commission in 1935 in recognition of his finger-lickin' service to the community, with his first fast-food chicken restaurant in North Corbin.

Experts have confirmed the cause of 1665 plague

The disease known as the 'plague' that killed thousands of people in London in 1665 has been definitively identified for the first time. Scientists examining DNA sequenced from skeletons in a burial pit found during excavation work at Liverpool Street have confirmed the presence of the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium, which causes bubonic plague. The result was widely expected, although some authors had thought that the outbreak may have had a different cause.

Thanks are due to The BBC History Revealed magazines from which these items were taken.

This is all you need to find our website:

News, events, photographs, links and more!

wfhr.org.uk