

Forest Clearing

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Publisher and Editor:
Norman Broadfield

Tel:
01562 60818

e-mail:
normanbroadfield
@hotmail.com

Address:
Four Pines, Burlington Close,
Kidderminster, Worcs. DY10 3DQ.

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Chairman's Chatter

12 months ago, in the March edition, I was happily talking of the New Year going well, membership strong and everyone happy. Speakers were established for the next 18 months, research projects were ticking over nicely and the annual charabanc day out was being organised.

Little did we know what was waiting round the corner!

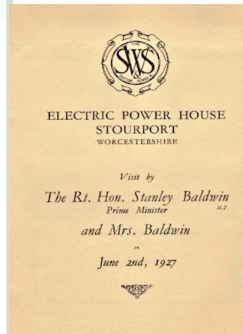
Speakers have now been moved from pillar to post, driving Secretary Sandra into all sorts of maze, charabanc trips have been put back into the garage, hopefully temporarily, and the research projects are largely treading water, although still very much alive. I hope that the membership remains strong, although it will take a few months yet, I think, before we know for sure.

The signs are good though. To keep the ship afloat, like many other groups, we have been using Zoom for meetings and have now run two complete sessions, both successful, fortunately. The latest, at the end of February and on "The Lives of the Lyttletons from Hagley Hall", was attended by over 40 people and Julian Hunt related a fascinating history of a local family that has played an important role in British life for getting on for a thousand years.

I do appreciate that not everyone has the facilities to be able to join us in Zoom meetings but it's great that so many have managed it and I'm sure that we will have a good audience on March 23rd when Max Keen will be telling us all about Prince Rupert of the Rhine, as only Max can tell it. I very much hope that many of you will be able to join in and I'll be sending out the invitation in the near future, if I haven't already by the time you read this! For those who are not able to Zoom, let me assure you all that we will get back into the Corn Exchange as soon as we possibly and safely can. To be honest, I'm not sure when that will be. I expect everyone to continue to be careful even when we have all been fully vaccinated and it could well be the start of our next season's programme in September before we try. We will be asking you how you feel about it before we press the button. Until then, please take care, everyone.

Norman Broadfield

STOURPORT POWER STATION -A SHORT HISTORY (Continued)



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. 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.

At the time of the opening the station was operating two 18000KW (18MW) generating sets supplied by British Thomson Houston with the necessary boiler plant supplied by Stirling Boilers. At the time the operating pressures and temperatures of the steam to drive the turbines (350lbs per square inch and 750° F respectively) were some of the highest in use and would be a significant test of the materials of construction, these pressures and temperatures would both increase significantly over the coming decades as material science evolved.

Due to the demand for electricity increasing year on year the designers of the new generating stations ensured that the new buildings and the sites they occupied could expand with this ever-growing need for this new wonder and this was the case for the new Super Power Station at Stourport.

In 1929, the year ownership was vested to Edmundson Electrical Corporation, a 20,000KW generator was installed and a further 30,000KW set in 1931 again with the required boiler plant and auxiliaries. In 1936 a second boiler house was constructed and two 30,000KW generators were commissioned in 1937. Another two boilers followed in 1939 with another 30,000KW generator (later uprated to 35,000Kw), this brought the total generating capacity to 180,000KW or 180MW.

Ironically it was Stanley Baldwin who would change the face of power generation in the United Kingdom; it was he and his cabinet who instigated the Weir report in 1925, forming the basis of the Electricity (Supply) Act 1926. This act laid down the rules for generating voltages, frequencies and most importantly the formation of a transmission grid which would connect all the generating stations via overhead (and sometimes underground) lines carried on pylons. This grid would cover the whole country and would be the foundation for nationalisation of the industry on the 1st April 1948.

The power station worked all through the WW2 (with its camouflaged chimney stacks) and supplied power to the national grid which was completed by the end of 1935. The grid enabled power to be moved around the country at 132Kv so the vital war industries were never without electricity when power stations were damaged in bombing raids, although it was reported that loose barrage balloons were to cause more damage. Stanley Baldwin would not have known how important his 'Grid' would become when the idea was first tabled in 1925.

By the end of the war industry was focused on rebuilding and it was obvious to the government more generating capacity would be needed to supply this demand and also the new housing which would result as the economy grew. Plans were first made in 1943 to extend Stourport to create a 'Stourport B' station, this would be built on land to the east of the existing station and sit next to the newly constructed standard gauge railway line which would bring in the necessary coal supplies

(To be concluded) Stuart Parsons

Diary Date

Tuesday 23th March

Max Keen will be appearing on Zoom to tell us, in his inimitable fashion, the story of **Prince Rupert of the Rhine**, nephew to King Charles I and leader of his cavalry forces in the Civil War. What follows Max we are not sure (yet), but will let you all know later. **Please make sure this date is in your diaries!**

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.

Ann Taylor

The ITOW project was due to finish in January but, due to work being delayed because of the virus, the project has been granted an extension until July. Further information and articles about the project can be found on

intheirownwriteblog.com

The Forest of Wyre

Between the Severn and Cleve Hills stretches the ancient Forest of Wyre. In former times there was much border warfare in the district and in the village of Arley there was a law which allowed the men to deal with any marauding Welshmen as they wished without fear of punishment.

The Wyre Forest was intersected by highways and byways and later by two railways. Its great oaks have given employment to many: local tanners looked to the forest for supplies of bark and wagon-loads of bark used to be a common sight in late spring when the bark was peeled. Charcoal burners - wood colliers, as they were known (hence the Wood Colliers' Arms in Bewdley) - provided the fuel for the iron furnaces, living in the forest like gypsies. For centuries the forest provided the material for some of the old crafts such as the making of besoms and skips and clogs. Wyre was one of King John's favourite hunting grounds. Castle Hill at Wolverley was once his shooting box and from there he would cross the stream at Kingsford, leaving behind Kinfare (King's Road) and continue to Shatterford (Shooter's Road). Deer are still to be found in the forest and fruit trees are fenced against them; there are beautiful and rare moths in the deep parts of the forest; and in the centre is a tree called the Sawb Tree, said to be the parent tree of the pear family known locally as the Whitty Pear.

The old inhabitants of the forest were not always law-abiding. A hundred years ago the Far Foresters were lawless folk, much of their time occupied in poaching, sheep-stealing and marauding. Uneducated and often unmarried, they lived in long huts, with a pigeon or two, sometimes a donkey and some pigs, which occupied the end of the hut. In 1833 three determined overseers of Bewdley set off to carry out the very difficult task of collecting the rates. They trudged the long distance to Far Forest and went from hut to hut; but not a penny could they get and not a man was to be seen. Abuse, contempt and jeers from the women greeted them as they served demand notes on the men and no-one offered refreshments. Hungry and footsore, they arrived back at Bewdley late that night with the bitter taunts of the women still in their ears, advising them to bring their coffins on their next visit as they would never leave the forest in their shoes.

Taken from "Worcestershire's Hidden Past" by Bill Gwilliam

As one of the Group's "country members" living in Warrington, I always enjoy reading your "Forest Clearing" magazine, which is both enjoyable and informative. My main interest is in tracing the history of my forebears, who relocated here from the Black Country to work in the iron & steel industries, which flourished in Warrington in the second-half of the 1800's.



Prior to that, their origins were apparently in Worcestershire. After some delving around I've narrowed down the birthplace of "John Handley b.1810" to the Areley Kings district; now apparently part of the Stourport conurbation.

I was therefore especially interested in the latest edition of the magazine which contained a reproduction of an announcement taken from the "Manchester Mercury" of 17th May 1774, concerning the inauguration of a canal-based goods delivery service between Stourport and Stockton Quay on the Bridgewater Canal. This happens to be within a mile of our present home! For your possible interest, I provide you with an illustration of the quayside in question, which is alongside London Bridge in Stockton Heath. It remains much as shown and: in more

"normal times" is a very popular watering hole, thanks to the "London Bridge" pub alongside!

Brian Handley

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To most people the Clees are one of Shropshire's landscape jewels, designated an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. But how many know about the dark side of these hills? Few visitors are aware that more people have been killed in air crashes on these hills than on any other highland area in Britain. Research has revealed that the hills were the site of 19 air crashes between 1937 and 1975 with the loss of 43 lives.

Of the two main features, 23 died on Brown Clee Hill, which is the highest hill in Shropshire, while Titterstone Clee claimed 11 lives. Despite these tragic figures, 17 survived, either by parachuting out of the aircraft or escaping with their lives, often injured, after crash landing.

Those who lost their lives were 28 British personnel, six Germans, four Americans, four Canadians and one New Zealander. From these, four Avro Ansons came down, three Bristol Blenheims, two Vickers Wellingtons, a Flying Fortress, a Tiger Moth, an American Mustang, a Miles Magister, a Hawker Typhoon, an Airspeed Oxford, a Jet Provost, a Harrier jet, a Junco 88 and a Heinkel.

Many local people came to help after the crashes including farmers, the Home Guard, anti-aircraft crews, troops from the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, and the local police as well as staff from the RAF maintenance (rescue) unit and RAF accident investigators.

The first recorded air crash on the Clees took place several years before the start of WWII, when a Bristol Blenheim, a twin-engined light bomber of 90 Squadron, was on a navigation exercise flight from RAF Bicester in Oxfordshire when it dived out of cloud and crashed into Lyth Bank, Stanton Long. All three crew were killed.

An aviation historian, Philippa Hodgkiss, of the Marches Aviation Society, Abergavenny, has done much research through the Ministry of Defence and the Air Historical Branch and the Royal Air Force, to trace the identity of those unfortunately killed. Deeply moved by the accounts of those who had witnessed the terrible loss of young lives, she vowed that their lives should be commemorated. For this, she obtained permission from Lord Boyne for a memorial to be placed on the Brown Clee Hill.



Looking for a suitable stone, friends in the Merseyside-based Warplane Wreck Investigation Group helped source a monumental mason who happened to have in his workshop a slate billiard table from the former mess at RAF West Kirby - a wartime recruit training camp. It was put in place without witnesses or publicity by Philippa on Good Friday, 1981.

Each year, about June/July time, a memorial service, organised by the Cleobury Mortimer branch of the British Legion, is held at the memorial site.



Three years ago I learned about this service and decided to attend. We all met at the Boyne Arms for a carvery lunch before proceeding, in convoy, through the Boyne Estate, to within about 300 yards from the site. We then proceeded, on foot, to the site itself where a service was held conducted by the Vicar of Cleobury Mortimer. In attendance were other branches of the British Legion, together with Lady Boyne and Philippa herself, who had travelled from Abergavenny. I was unable to attend the following year due to pre-arranged commitments and last year, of course, it was cancelled due to the virus but I do hope to go again in the future. As a finale to the service, a pre-arranged Chinook Helicopter flew low over the site.

Raymond Blount.

TREASURED TOILETS GIVEN LISTED STATUS



Two rare examples of early female public toilets in Britain have been granted Grade II listed status: Bank Hill toilet in Berwick-upon-Tweed (pictured), which opened in 1899, and Seaburn's seafront loos, which opened in around 1904. Public toilets began to be introduced in the late 19th century, but nearly all of them were for men. Women, it was believed, were too modest to answer the call of nature away from home, a believable theorise was a ploy to keep women's movements to a minimum - *the so-called 'urinary leash'*.

Olive Broadfield: While searching for ancestors in the online Parish Registers for the village of Munslow in Shropshire, I came across this entry by the vicar:.

"1719, Apr. 19. Eliner, ye d. of Rich'd Yeats by Abigal Hopkis, was ... bap.

They pretend to have been married, but 'twas in a illicentiate & Clandestine manner if at all."

Surprised by Kidderminster

Secretary:

Sandra Charlton

Address:

18, Tutors Way,
KIDDERMINSTER,
Worcs.
DY10 1PH

Phone:[01562 863155](tel:01562863155)**e-mail:**wfhrg@hotmail.co.uk

Writing “Walking Bewdley’s History” was easy as I live here and know it well. Writing “Walking Kidderminster’s History” was much more of a challenge. I was born in the town and spent the first 25 years here, but it has changed radically in that time. I had a feeling I could get depressed as I walked its roads. However, it had some surprises for me.

One surprise was the Stack Pool. I read up on Broadwaters and the industrial area along the Wannerton Brook. I knew the park at Broadwaters with the water wheel as I had driven past it many times, but I had never stopped to walk it. And I had certainly never walked from the Horsefair through the woods to discover the amazing pool dominated by the old stack. Years ago, I believe Springfield Park was a tip, but the area has been cleaned up and is obviously cared for now. It is well worth a visit.

A friend asked if I knew about the Rock House. I didn’t, so off she took me to find it. This involved a walk through Low Habberley, past the old farm there and towards Easthams Farm. Up in the trees one can glimpse a dwelling cut into the rock. It has featured on “Grand Designs”, but somehow I had missed that. It was a lovely walk and we lengthened it by walking across the fields at Franche.

I knew the Rifle Range and Devil’s Spittleful, but I didn’t know there had once been a race course there. No sign of it now! In fact, the trackway to it must have been challenging, so perhaps that accounts for the races only lasting for a few years. The information about the race course is in the Historic Kidderminster Project Reports, which I recommend highly. I learned so much.

One day at the Worcestershire Record Office, I came across a reference to a glue factory in Park Lane, which had something called “Japan Ovens”. I had to find out more. I discovered offcuts of leather could be turned into glue, though the process sounded very smelly. But where was this place? You will not find it, other than on an old map.

I also found a wonderful design for a bank in 1856. The drawings were on that old see-through paper (it probably has a name, but reminds me of the greaseproof paper I use in cooking). This “Stourbridge and Kidderminster Bank” was shown, but with no indication as to its location. I took a photo and later printed off the image. I then wandered around Kidderminster trying to find it. It was one of those “serendipity” moments, when I realised where it was and what it looks like now.

I walked all the walks, so inevitably found some unexpected gems. One was the William Mitchell wall, which runs along the ring road between Worcester Cross and the Worcester island. I had seen this as I drove past, but had never taken the opportunity to inspect it. Walking along beside it gave me a real appreciation of its clever design.

Another wonderful surprise was the photograph collection held at Kidderminster Library. I spent hours mooching through that and reliving my childhood as I saw pictures of places that had been changed so much in the 1960s and later. One thing I found was a beautiful water colour of the old toll house at Worcester Cross. This was demolished and replaced in 1876 with the clock and fountain given by John Brinton. I had never seen that image.

Walking and researching Kidderminster was not the chore I thought it might be. It turned out to be a joy and I was delighted by all the surprises I had on the way. My book is for sale in the shop at the Museum of Carpet and also in Kidderminster Library and Kidderminster Town Hall. Other people are now enjoying the same surprises.

Heather Flack

Day Of Destiny

The third of September turned out to be a key date in the life of Oliver Cromwell. On 3 September 1650 his outnumbered army defeated the Scots at the battle of Dunbar. Exactly a year later he defeated Charles II at Worcester in what was the last battle of the Civil Wars. Finally, on 3 September 1658, he died.

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