

Forest Clearing

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To guarantee inclusion in the next
issue articles should be submit-
ted before
20th October 2021

Chairman's Chatter

I seem to have been writing the same notes in this column for 18 months, while we all waited for the storm to pass and "normality" to return. Well, another few months have passed and maybe it's returning and maybe it isn't! We'll find out in due course but it seems that, at least, we're moving gently in the right direction. "Gently" should be the right word, too, since Covid has clearly not gone away and, I sense, is likely to remain with us on a permanent basis, like influenza. We must all continue to stay safe, get the booster jab when it becomes available and take care at all times.

Nevertheless, it's time to review where we've been and where we are. Since we last appeared together, 16 or 17 months ago, we've kept the group ticking over nicely by the use of Zoom meetings. I accept that not everyone has been able to join in or has wanted to and that is perfectly understandable. We've held 7 Zoom meetings this year and have averaged a touch under 30 members on each occasion, which has been a great help in keeping in contact with everyone and has given us a good base for the next phase, the moving back into the Corn Exchange in September. You will see elsewhere in this Forest Clearing that we have three excellent speakers set up to get us going again and they will be followed by our traditional Christmas Social with the Grace Notes singers, a gathering for members only. I hope very much that you will all be ready to join us again in The Corn Exchange and we can continue where we left off, what seems like an age ago. I expect that it could take a while for everyone to get back into the swing of it but I hope that by Christmas, everyone will be comfortable with the situation and we will be up and running smoothly again. Next year, all being well, we will be looking to have another day out in the charabanc.

I must finish by saying that we will be distributing the 2021-22 Programme leaflets at the September meeting because the AGM, when we normally deliver them, will be in a different form again this year.

Please don't forget to pay your subs, as usual, to Ann Taylor (they are at a reduced level for the coming season and are good value, £5 individual, £7 a couple). In case you don't remember, she's at 17 St John's Road, Stourport on Severn, DY13 9DS.

See you soon.

Norman

STOURPORT POWER STATION -A SHORT HISTORY (Concluded)

Unlike the other new stations and extensions being planned at the time, the new station at Stourport would have operating pressure and temperatures far in excess of any other. In the first phase a 60,000KW alternator would receive steam at 1250lbs/sq. in and at 950°F (510°C), at these temperatures the turbine blades would glow red. Other new technology would see the alternator being cooled with Hydrogen and molten ash disposal from the boiler. B1 as the generator was known came into service in 1950 and was officially opened on 26th Sept of that year by the Admiral Sir William Tennant, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Worcestershire.

Work then started on the next phase, B2 Turbine was also a 60,000KW alternator and the operating pressures and temperatures would again increase. Steam would be supplied at 1500lbs/sq.in and at 1050°F (565°C). Everything about the station was a testing ground for new ideas and technology, pulverised coal would be fed into the boilers under pressure after first being heated thus increasing combustion efficiency, feed water heaters using waste steam would raise the temperature of boiler feed water before it was fed to the boiler.

All these new ideas and there were many would be carefully monitored by engineers and scientists over the next ten to 20



years and the knowledge gained used in the next generation of new super power stations being built in the Yorkshire coalfield and in the Trent Valley. An example was WestBurton A where steam pressures at the turbine stop valve were 2300lbs/sq. in and 566°C. when it opened in 1968.

B1 Turbine supplied by English Electric Pictured from the High-Pressure Steam End towards the alternator.

Age and running costs would finally seal the fate of the generators at Stourport; the original plant would be shut down in the 1960's and the boiler house sealed off because of the danger of asbestos. The second boiler house and generators would stop work in the mid 70's and the camouflaged stacks would be demolished not long after due to them becoming unstable. The B Station soldiered on mainly as a peak lopping station but finally ceased production on 23rd Mar 1984.

The whole site, including the beautiful riverside frontage, was demolished in the 80's and a housing estate built on the site. It has been said that nuggets of coal still surface in some of the gardens.

The author would like to point out that he spent 11 years at Stourport Power Station first as an apprentice from 1970 to 74 then as a Maintenance Fitter working on the Turbines, Boilers and auxiliary plant, and wishes now he had taken more notice of his surroundings and the stories he was told.

Stuart Parsons

Diary Date

Tuesday 28th September

We will be back in The Corn Exchange and will open the new season by asking **Mike Loftus** to tell us of the history of swimming baths in Kidderminster. His presentation, called “**Getting into the Swim**” will go back to the early days, way before Sports Centres were invented.

Tuesday October 26th

Max Keen will make a welcome return, this time in real life and tell us all about “**The History of Dudley Castle 1071-1933**”. It is guaranteed to be an entertaining hour or two, featuring a quick change from medieval to civil war costume and weapons during the talk!

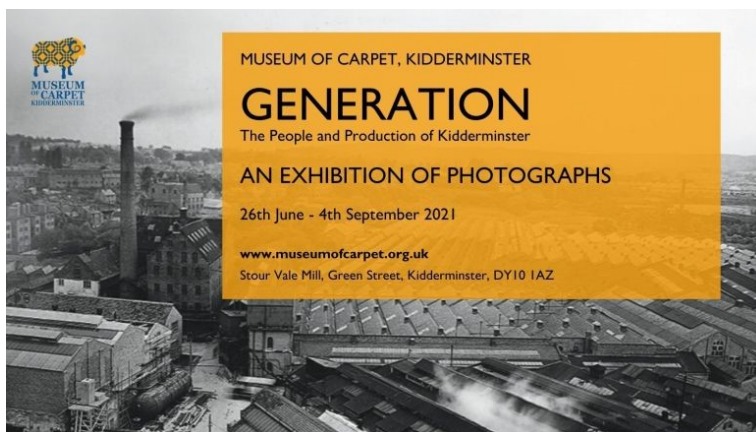
Tuesday November 23rd

Mary Bodfish, who also gave us a recent Zoom presentation, will return to The Corn Exchange to speak to us on what will be an approaching timely subject, “**Christmas Past and Present**”. Mary is a popular and accomplished speaker and will begin to put us in the right mood for the holiday season.

Please make sure to put these dates in your diaries!

The Museum of Carpet is putting on a most interesting exhibition, full of local interest. Most people locally will have some connection, past or present, with the carpet industry and are sure to find things here to bring back memories. Support your local museum and keep the history alive!

Discover stunning windows into the past at our 2021 Summer Exhibition.



Generation tells the story of a Kidderminster industry and community with photographs and objects from the Museum of Carpet archive. It explores connections and shared experiences between generations in Kidderminster who worked in the same carpet factories and lived in the town. We hope it will inspire intergenerational conversation and a sense of community and confidence in a time of seismic change. Our photographs are displayed alongside yours! The images which you submitted to our Photography Open Call will complete the story and continue the discussion of what Kidderminster means to us now.

Exhibition included in standard entry ticket to the museum.



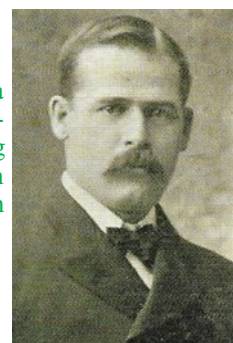
Robert LeRoy Parker, better known as **Butch Cassidy**, was born in 1866 in Beaver, Utah, the eldest of 13 children in a Mormon English immigrant family. He began a life of crime by stealing a pair of jeans, and quickly moved to larger-scale robberies. Around 1896, Butch formed the Wild Bunch along with a group of his friends. He would go on to recruit Harry Alonzo Longabaugh - the Sundance Kid. The gang enjoyed immense success with train robberies, until they came to the attention of the Pinkerton Agency. In 1901, Butch fled to South America with Sundance, travelling to Argentina and ultimately on to Chile and Bolivia. They led a relatively quiet life, probably punctuated by a couple of bank jobs, but both are believed to have been killed in a shootout with police in November 1908, after robbing a courier carrying the payroll for a silver mine. During his entire criminal career, Butch claimed never to have killed anyone.

[BBC History Revealed magazine](#)

The Sundance Kid

Born into a Baptist family in Pennsylvania in 1867, Harry Alonzo Longabaugh worked as a ranch hand and drover until he began a life of crime by stealing a horse. He took the name Sundance after the town where he was jailed for the crime – his only time behind bars. After joining Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch in 1896, his career took off with audacious robberies. Along with long-time partner, Etta Place, and Cassidy, he was pursued to South America by Pinkerton agents. He probably died alongside Cassidy in Bolivia in November 1906.

[BBC History Revealed magazine](#)



A POST BOX IN SUTTON ROAD



This was an original Victorian post box which was free-standing originally (correct term “on a pedestal”). However it was discontinued in 1879 as it was deemed too expensive to produce, So in the early 1900’s it was resurrected again but this time as a wall box as this was much cheaper to produce. By now we are in the reign of Edward VII. This post box in Sutton Road Kidderminster is still there today with the initials of ER VII on.

Pauline Carroll

Living in a Dolls House

The Doll’s Houses in Park Lane are a group of terraced houses with long thin gardens like so many others in Kidderminster, but unlike many others, they claim an interesting history.

The houses are in two groups of six, separated by a drive to allow access to the rear of the properties. The end houses of each block have a “tower room”, with windows on three sides giving excellent light in the room. The houses claim to have been built by and for the carpet industry. There is some dispute about whether or not the tower rooms were linked together by a passageway in the roof space. I can confirm that when we moved in 21 years ago we could see glimmers

of light through the doorway from our tower to the far end of the block through the roof spaces in between.

During our years here we have made some changes: old maps show a garage in the back garden which we replaced as it had disappeared and completed the installation of double glazing started by the previous occupants. There are still some original features including a marble fire surround and hand painted Victorian tiles. I suspect other features became casualties of the 1970s. The ceilings are high, making four lengths of wallpaper from a roll a mere dream and the stairs get steeper higher up the building.

Information about the houses is patchy but the Kidderminster Civic Society Building Project Report is very helpful. In the 1870s the land was owned by George Turton. His will dated 1879 left the land to his daughter, Susannah. By 1895 the land had passed to John Howard, a builder from Church Street. It is likely that John built the houses and that they were designed by Joseph Meredith.

The houses were all owned by the same person for many years, before eventually being sold off individually. The last one was sold for £11,500 in 1983. Compare this to the asking price of £340,000 for the latest sale in 2020.

The census records for 1901 and 1911 show that most of the occupants were involved with the carpet industry in some way and some of the same occupants were present for both sets of census records. In both of these records, the houses are numbered from 45 to 56 whereas now they are numbers 102-113. So far I’ve been unable to find out when or why the numbering was changed.

Another source of information about the houses is Facebook, in particular the Kidderminster Past and Kidderminster in Pictures groups. Various photos of the houses pop up on these groups at regular intervals bringing forth a variety of comments, sometimes amusing, sometimes completely off the wall and sometimes genuinely interesting. Some of these comments have alluded to our resident ghost, Vera, but I’m happy to report that, to date, she has been the perfect house guest.

One of the photos shows a herd of cows being driven along the road towards Caldwell Farm, now the site of Caldwell Crescent. Another refers to Sunnyvale, rather than Park Lane. Again information on this change is hard to find. Several photos from Brintons Park clearly show the houses visible instead of hidden by trees and show why Round Hill is called Round Hill.

Although there are pitfalls to living in an old house, we have enjoyed our time here and currently have no plans to move on. I’m interested in finding out more of the history of these properties and would welcome any comments or information from other WFHRG members.

Anne Budworth July 2021

Why aren’t Saxons in lists of English kings and Queens?

William I tops most monarch lists – no wonder he’s the Conqueror - as it is generally held that all those before him were petty monarchs, ruling minor kingdoms in Anglo-Saxon England. So no Alfred the Great, no Canute and no Edward the Confessor. And the tradition completely undermines how Aethelstan was first king of a united England from AD 927-39, more than a century before the Battle of Hastings.

Standardisation of monarch lists began with Henrys VII and VIII, who went to great lengths to establish their line of descent. Besides, it’s too late to change the list. To add all pre-Norman rulers in now would be to mess up the numbers as a few more Edwards would have to be added at least. [BBC History Revealed magazine](#)



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LIFE AS IT WAS

This is a History Society and, since my age puts me well into the octogenarian decade, I can talk about my schoolboy era as history.



At the age of five I started at Far Forest School, walking the three-quarter mile journey with my satchel, containing my lunch sandwiches, over one shoulder and my gas mask over the other. This was, of course, war-time. The “gas van” came twice during my time at Far Forest Lea Memorial School. Each time, we were invited into the van wearing our gas masks. When it was time to exit the van, we were asked to remove our masks. The gas in the van was tear gas and, although reasonably harmless, most of us came out with tears streaming down our cheeks, proving how good the gas masks were. The person in charge of the gas van was named Mr Oldnall, who was the administrator and rugby

teacher at King Charles I School and was affectionately known as “Oddsocks”. I never knew why.

Cooked meals never came until four years later. They were then cooked in Bewdley and brought to Far Forest in hot containers. Even then we had to walk half a mile to another building which we called “The Old Schools”. It was, in fact, the original school building until the present school was built in 1902 by the Reverend Josiah Lea.

Punishment was hard in those days. For the slightest misdemeanour, one could expect the cane or a good clip on the side of the ear. Should the teachers of today dish out that type of punishment, they would probably end up in front of the magistrates.

At the age of 11 years, a decision had to be made. One could stay on at Far Forest School until you reached the age of 14 or 15 years of age before leaving to start your working life in the Big Wide World. Alternatively, one could go to school in Kidderminster. This gave another decision to be made. Most pupils went to the Harry Cheshire school, but by taking a test, one could, if you passed, get to King Charles I school, if you were a boy, or the High School if you were a girl.

This was the route I chose and what a “shock to the system” that was. It meant catching the “Friendly Midland Red Bus” at 8.15am to reach school for 8.55am start. School finished at 4.05pm arriving home at 4.45pm. For the first three years, school finished at 12.30pm on a Wednesday. However, one could not go home but had to stay and play games all Wednesday afternoon – rugby in the winter and cricket in the summer. This meant that we had to go to school on a Saturday morning. School then finished at 12.30pm. Since we, in the country, had a bus to catch and were known as “Bus Boys” we could go home. For those unfortunately living in town, they had to stop and play games again on Saturday afternoon. Strangely, after all these years, I can still remember the four teaching periods for those Saturday mornings – French, Science, French, PT. On top of this, we were expected to do 1½ hours homework each weekday and 3 hours at the weekend. This probably meant more hours than many factory workers.



King Charles I. School, Kidderminster.

To add to all these problems, starting school in Kidderminster in September 1946, the winter of 1946/47 was one of the severest winters we have had, **but more on that next time!**

Raymond Blount

(to be continued)

This is all you need to find our website:

News, events, photographs, links and more!

wfhrg.org.uk