

in

OUR AGE

HEREFORDSHIRE LORE : LIVING LOCAL HISTORY

Issue 65
Autumn 2022

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Welcome

How quickly time flies. Already we are into the autumn edition. We hope the sun shines for a little bit longer for all of us. We do our best in In Our Age to cover all parts of the county. As ever, if you have a story to share, please do get in touch. We always love to hear from you. It's always sad, however, when we hear of the death of a regular subscriber, and so it was with Brian Willder of Kingsland. Brian settled here with his wife and family to manage a hop farm at Leighton Court near Yarkhill. He was a well-respected figure in the hop-growing community, a grower who expected nothing short of excellence. His knowledge around all things agricultural plus a keen interest in local history has been a huge help over the years. He will be missed. With him go many stories that will now go left untold. A lovely man. Stay in touch one and all. If you can support us and enable us to continue our work recording first-hand accounts of life in Herefordshire, please do consider taking out a subscription, only £15 a year.

Marsha O'Mahony Editor

Cover Story

Queen of the Works

Esme Fosbery, from Hereford, but formerly from Fulham, worked at British Wheel Studs



in Rockfield Road in the 1960s, Crystalware in Holmer Road and Sankeys in Rotherwas. Esme remembers Joyce Morris from Moor Farm once being elected queen. "Everyone went to Bilston to celebrate," said Esme, "and we had a crate of Cherry B in the back of the coach."

Editor's note: Can readers help locate where this photo is? We think it might be the hatchery on Rockfield Road. Thank you in anticipation.

Contact us

Address:

c/o The Pavilion, Castle Green,
Hereford, HR1 2NW

Email:

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Website:

www.herefordshirelore.org.uk

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/InOurAge

Subscription:

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Telephone: 07845 907891

EDITORIAL

Editor: Marsha O'Mahony

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Associate Editor: Bill Laws

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

DESIGN

Pink Sheep

PRINT

Orphans Press

WEBMASTER

Chris Preece

www.infinityunlimited.co.uk

ADVERTISING

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Herefordshire Lore

Herefordshire Lore launched in 1989 and has been collecting and publishing your memories ever since. We are: chair Julie Orton-Davies, secretary Eileen Klotz, treasurer Harvey Payne, webmaster Chris Preece, proofs Sandy Green, associate editor Bill Laws, editor Marsha O'Mahony, and committee: Joyce Chamberlain, Keith and Krystyna James, Rosemary Lillico, Jean and Peter Mayne, Chris and Irene Tomlinson, Linda Ward and Betty Webb. Design: Pink Sheep. Print: Orphans Press.

The kindness of teachers

In a touching response to a story about a Hereford College teacher, David Price from Brilley wrote in with his memories of Mr Thomas Hodgkinson:

I was very interested in the article of your spring edition 2022 (Issue 63) about Lynette Munoz's father, Mr Thomas Hodgkinson, who was a teacher at Hereford College of Further Education. When I applied for a course at the college, Mr Hodgkinson was the first person I met. However, since the age of six, I have been profoundly deaf. Life in an ordinary school was very difficult. Indeed, the teacher did not know how to treat a deaf child at times. I was badly treated due to my deafness and the school was a total waste of time. I was offered no help at all. Eventually, I went to a school for the deaf, which was a big improvement. On leaving school I applied to the college for a course in carpentry and joinery with a view to obtaining a City & Guilds certificate. On arriving at the college, I was wondering what sort of reception I would have due to my past treatment at school. But I had made up my mind should I be treated in the same manner I would stop going to college. However, I was put in the hands of Mr Hodgkinson and things could not have been better. I got on very well with him and was always grateful for his help in getting me started. When he left, I was disappointed that I was unable to thank him for his help. I would like to know what happened to him when he left. Mr Hill then took over. Mr Lomax carpentry and



A woodworking and joinery class at Hereford College of Further Education, where Mr Thomas Hodgkinson was a teacher in the 1950s.

joinery, Mr B Lane wood machining, Mr Colman brick laying and another man whose name I forget, plastering.

I hated school, but I can look back on college days with great enjoyment thanks to the aforementioned men. They were more than teachers. I loved working in the building trade, and I ran my own business for many years and was never short of work. I am 82 years old and crippled up badly, but I still carry out small jobs in the old workshop when I can. Perhaps you could post this letter on to Lynette Munoz so that I can tell her personally how grateful I am to her father.

Editor's note: we have passed on Mr Price's letter to Lynette.

Education for deaf children at Woolhope



Derek Evans captured life at the school in the early 1960s in a series of captivating photos. (Photo: Herefordshire History)

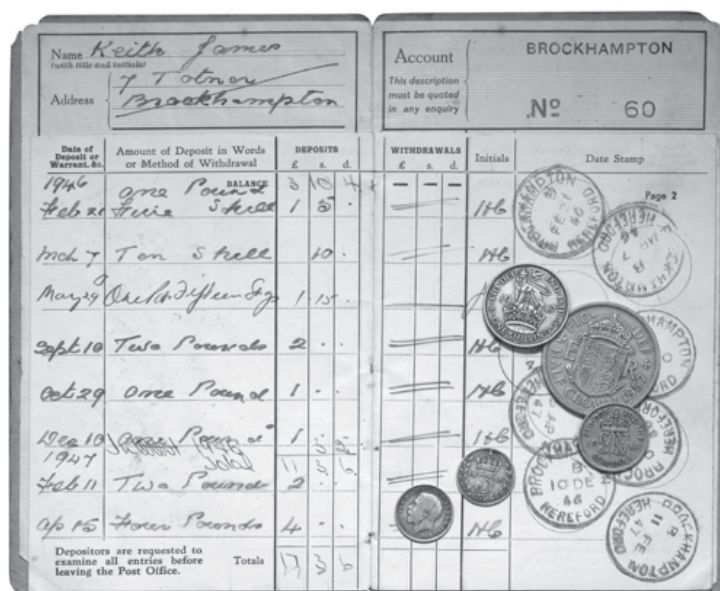
Wessington Court at Woolhope was a specialist school for deaf children, that closed in 1963. Children arrived there from a very young age, just three years old in some cases. Past pupils describe the regime as very strict. They were not allowed to use sign language. "If we were caught signing, we would have to write 100 lines."

Banking 1940s style

Keith James' savings book.

From my earliest years in post-war Britain, my grandmother Ada Hill of Totnor took it upon herself to find the weekly pocket money for my brother Alec and me. Each week she would make the long uphill walk to the village store and Post Office in Brockhampton. There she would ask for two silver threepenny bits in her change knowing the shiny coins would make her gift even more special. Her regular and gentle request was so well known by the Postmistress that at least two were put to one side during each week's trade. By the early fifties, because the coins had not been minted since 1944, the Postmistress was becoming more troubled each week as she struggled to find the two "thruppance" coins needed. The solution came when our pocket money was raised to sixpence, then a shilling and finally half-a-crown.

Saving and thrift was a way of life in post-war Britain and soon the brothers each had a Post Office savings account. Saving one pound a month was the target and the Savings Book would be stamped and initialled with each entry. In my account it seems £2 was deposited on 11th February 1947 but none again until the 15th of April, when presumably the notorious snow of 1947 closed all roads from the village. In today's world of easy credit, it might seem that the heavy hand of the state was upon a would-be saver. The little Savings Book was the real passport to any money saved but was heavy with warnings. "Keep this book in a safe place. Its loss may cause you trouble", was the message on the cover, whilst the frontispiece warned, "State security – strict secrecy observed". The back cover carried a crown emblem circled with the words "State security" and added, "This book is the property of the Postmaster-General".



No more than £500 could be deposited in any one calendar year and withdrawals could be made the same day up to £3. Larger sums could only be withdrawn after giving notice and the money issued the following day. My account was closed in July 1965 with the princely sum of forty pounds, five shillings and ten pence – no doubt depleted by the purchase of a Raleigh "Palm Beach" bicycle. The odd final sum being the beneficiary of the annual interest of two and a half per cent. This was awarded in December of each year when the savings book had to be taken to the Post Office and the new amount calculated and written in ink by hand.

Reader's Letters

Kingfisher Club

"Sydonia Swimming Pool, how I hated it. I was at Leominster Grammar School from 1966 until 1969. We only went to the swimming pool when we returned back from the Whitson half term, until we broke up for the long summer holiday (thank goodness). I was a small, skinny girl and felt the cold terribly, so this so-called swimming was a complete torture. I would do anything not to go in the water. One of the best swimmers in my year was Sandra Harris, who loved swimming. For the very keen, there was the Kingfisher Club run by Mrs Goode, whose daughter Cynthia was at the Grammar School. I never did learn to swim at Sydonia and I still cannot do it now aged 74 and still small and skinny."
- Mary Palmer, Bromyard

Swimming in the Arrow

"When I was in my final year at Kingsland School, my class had regular visits to the pool to gain badges for swimming the width and

lengths of the pool. In those days it was open and unheated and changing facilities were very basic. I had learned to swim in the river near my home in Eardisland, so was used to cold water, but I remember some pupils found the cold chlorinated water very difficult to deal with. I remember the female swimming instructor had a very bossy manner, and she made everyone get straight into the shallow end and immerse themselves without hesitating.

"I had learned to swim in River Arrow at Eardisland. I am looking back to the mid to late 1950s and most of us village children would go to a place called The Ford, half a mile outside the village on the back road to Pembridge. After school and at weekends and on warm days, it was the place to be. There was a fairly deep area of the river there and ideal for more experienced swimmers. There was also a shallow area with a shingle beach that was fine for beginners and those just wanting to paddle. I remember it was the time when transistor radios came into being and those who were fortunate to have one would

leave their radios on the beach playing the hit parade of the day, while we swam nearby. Picnics there were commonplace, and some people built rafts from oil drums and planks of wood and would sail down to the village. I don't think any of us were concerned or even thought about water pollution, we just got in the river and swam and splashed about. I look back on happy carefree days living in that rural community and comparing it with life today, I am just glad I grew up when I did."
- Robert Edwards, Hereford.

Fishy Gardners

"This issue of In Our Age is one of the most interesting yet – I think. I enjoyed the various stories. The pictures of the salmon just emphasise how the Wye has deteriorated – so sad. I well remember 'Fishy Gardners' shop in town. When I was a youth, it was full of salmon, now we eat farmed Scots' varieties! Keep up the good work. It's a great little magazine."
- Tim Townsend, Hereford.

Hops, hops, glorious hops

The Haulier



Geoff Godsell hauled hops all over the country. (Photo: Kevin Godsell)

The hop season is almost upon us. We've looked at the legions of pickers in previous editions, but there were far more people involved in getting a hop to a glass a beer. Geoff Godsell worked in hops all his life. If he wasn't putting hop yards up, he was hauling them. Over six feet tall, he was a handsome man. During the war he was with the Merchant Navy. Mid-way across the Atlantic, his boat was hit by a torpedo and he and many of his crewmates were jettisoned into the cold sea. Fortunately, they were

rescued and taken to New York to recover. On his return, he went back to the hop fields. He erected acres of hop yards over the years, including over 200 acres for Allied Breweries near Leominster. He worked on stilts, usually a pair of old scaffolding tubes with a pair of wellies nailed to the wooden cross bar. He often bought up a sandwich, flask of tea and a radio in a bag slung across his back. He was a very strong man; he would have needed to be when it came to hauling hop pockets. They were dead weights. A pair of customised hooks to get some purchase on these unyielding pockets and some brute strength was all that was needed. Geoff's skill and experience was later put to good use, teaching hop yard construction at Rosemaund.



Geoff also erected hundreds of acres of hop yards, often working on stilts. Some of his hop yards are still standing. (Photo: Kevin Godsell)

The Drier



Stanford Court, Bill Lewis aka the Colonel. (Photo: Robert Jones)

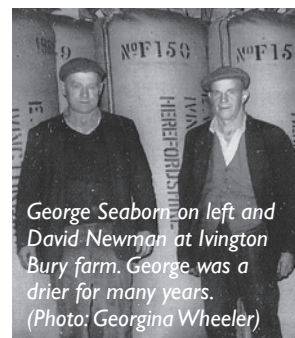
There is often an air of mystery that surrounds the goings-on inside a kiln on a hop farm. Ray Morris, Shropshire's only remaining hop grower, had some advice: "It is a wise hop grower who, in kiln, accepts it is the drier who is boss and not the owner." The head drier is a revered role, often a hereditary position, father passing the knowledge down to his son and so on down the generations. For the duration of the drying season there is little sleep, it is a marathon for the finishing line. So much can go wrong at the drying stage: too dry and the pockets can combust. Not dry enough they can go mouldy. Despite all the technology available, knowing when hops are ready to come off the kiln still comes down to touch, and instinct.

Sulphur used to be used in the drying process, causing some problems. Bill Morris has been up to his knees in hops since the 1950s, at Newhouse Farm. It was a coke-fired kiln in the early days, excellent for baking potatoes in the hot ashes, extracting when softened and slaving in farmhouse butter. Sulphur, though,

presented other problems that could only be resolved by someone with a head for heights, in this case, a fearless Bill Morris:

"Some farmers used to light the sulphur and go to the next farm and wait for the smell to go over. At Newhouse, when we got electric in the fifties, the sulphur used to go out through the fans and then get on the motor and that would make you cough and spit. So you would have to sandpaper it off, otherwise it would make the fan stop, and you needed the fan to keep the air circulating. So I had to get up a 40-foot ladder to the top of the kiln to scrape the sulphur off. Can you imagine? I had no choice. It had to be done."

Georgina Wheeler's father, George suffered more than most from the effects of sulphur: "He was washing his feet in Epsom salts because the sulphur was burning through his boots and he had big holes in his feet. After six weeks of drying he could hardly walk. There was no health and safety, just strong boots, no masks or goggles. You could hardly get your breath in there. During the drying he smelt to the high heavens. All he had time for was to swill his face in a bowl of Epsom salts. Mum would give him a hot drink and a cheese sandwich to see him through the night."



George Seaborn on left and David Newman at Ivington Bury farm. George was a drier for many years. (Photo: Georgina Wheeler)

News from the 'Queen' of Herefordshire Lore



The committee of Herefordshire Lore are absolutely delighted that our long-time, much-loved, Queen look-alike, and fellow committee member Betty Webb, has been awarded a BEM (British Empire Medal) in the Queen's Jubilee Awards. It is thoroughly deserved. "I am quite excited. It is an honour, isn't it?" she said. "I would like to say thanks to those who nominated me and wrote glowing reports. I think with the staying power that I have, and with all

the traumas I've experienced in my life, I think it's a medal for that really. It did take some sticking to at times, I'll tell you."

Born in Islington in 1927, Betty was evacuated with her school at the start of the war. Being bundled from house to house, some good, some not so good, food always in short supply, she begged to return home to London. Despite the threat of bombing, it was home and was where she wanted to be. Soon after returning to the capital, her mother, Rosina, was killed in a road accident, leaving Betty seriously hurt.

Her injuries were so severe, including extensive damage to her face, that she was in hospital for nearly a year, and wasn't told of her mother's death for several months. Betty found herself under the care of pioneering plastic surgeon Dr Archibald McIndoe, whose work with badly burnt and disfigured servicemen transformed their care and treatment, leading to better survival rates and reconstruction. "He did a lot of operations on me, and I think he felt sorry for me," said Betty, whose jaw had been broken in eight places, "so he bought me grapes." Too old to go in the children's ward, Betty found herself in with many of these terribly injured soldiers. "They were very kind to me," said Betty. "They used to take me into the town for cups of tea."

When she finally left the hospital, it wasn't to a loving home she returned to. Her father had meanwhile moved in with another woman, and neither wanted Betty back home, even though she was barely 15. "My father turned out to be a complete waste of space. They just didn't want me there. They were hardly ever there anyway, and I was often in the house on my own. I had got a good job when my father came one morning and told me I was going to be evacuated again to where my brother was stationed, and that was that, no discussion."

Betty's brother was based at Credenhill, Hereford, with the RAF, and this was what brought her to Hereford for the first time, and she never left. She never saw her father again, or ever returned to her Islington home. She had a tough time in Hereford, alone and lonely, struggling to find digs. She eventually found some semblance of a family when she found work at Barronia Metals, an aircraft factory.

"There was a war on, and it was a very lonely time. But the people I worked with were very kind, I think they knew I was all on my own, and the canteen always used to make me a roll and a cup of tea in the morning." Her BEM medal acknowledges her many years as a volunteer with the British Heart Foundation. Betty is a testament, at her great age, to fortitude, survival, and lack of self-pity. The award is well deserved. Congratulations.

Who remembers the little boy lost in Peterchurch?



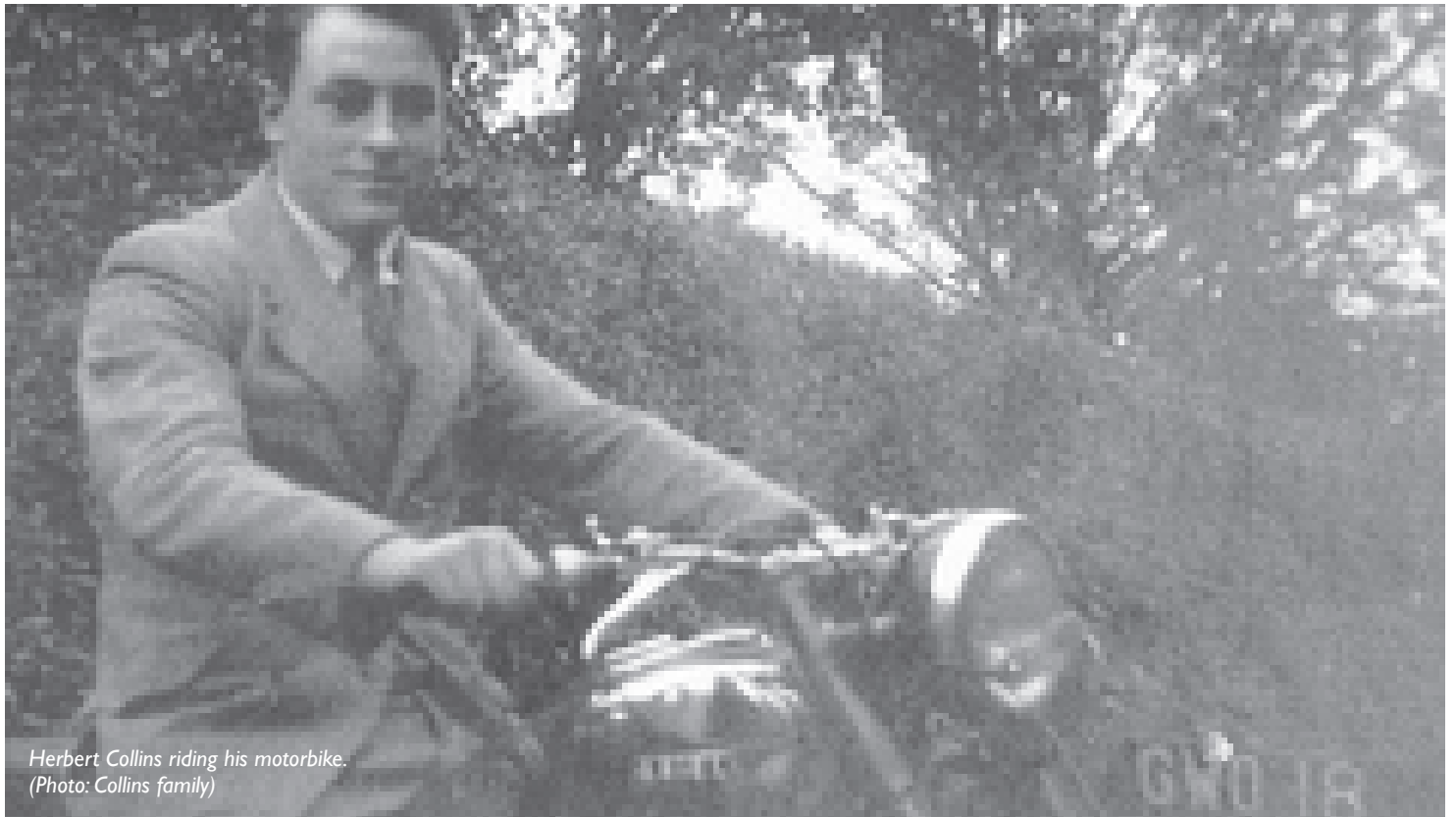
On an autumn day in October 1951, a three-year-old boy went missing from Peterchurch. Herefordshire Lore catches up the Michael Jones, over 70 years later.

Michael Jones was just a toddler when he went missing from a farm at Peterchurch. Michael, the son Mr and Mrs Jones of Kingstone, disappeared while his mother was potato picking. At the time all he was wearing was a jersey, a pair of short flannel trousers and Wellington boots. His frantic mother raised the alarm when she realised he was missing, prompting a full-scale search throughout the rest of the day, all through the night and into the following morning. Hope was fading until just before midday on the Wednesday, a full 24 hours after going missing, Michael was found by a post office driver, a Mr B Wood of Vaughan Street in Hereford. He had heard about the search and was driving towards Peterchurch when he saw Michael standing in a field about a mile from where he went missing. Apart from being wet, dirty and suffering a few scratches, he was unscathed. Mr Wood wrapped the toddler in a coat and drove him to the farm from where he had gone missing to be reunited with his parents. Local news reports at the time described Michael as 'little the worse for his experience'.

Michael was with his mother potato picking at Wilmastone Farm when he went missing. He was last seen going through the gate of the potato field with another six-year-old. The elder boy was later seen returning alone. The farmer, Mr Yeomans, organised a search with the aid of his farmworkers and potato pickers and the police were quickly called, soon amounting to over 150 people searching for the 3-year-old. Trained dogs were even called in from Gloucester and Abergavenny and police drained a pool and searched outbuildings and an area of 700 acres of woodlands and fields. His mother's relief when her son was found is written all over her face. Today, Michael is a little older and has suffered no long-term effects from his ordeal! "Life just carried on as normal after that," he said.

Thank you to Herefordshire Lore committee members, Pete and Jean Mayne, who helped track Michael down.

Grassroots motorsports takes off in the Golden Valley



Herbert Collins riding his motorbike.
(Photo: Collins family)

Love of motorsports leads to formation of Pontrilas & District Jalopy Club in 1959.

Before the age of television, grasstrack racing, jalopy racing, and motorsport attracted hundreds of spectators to different parts of the county. Herbert Collins, who died last year, was an original mover and shaker in Pontrilas & District Jalopy Club. His son Philip, who continues the family business started by his father, shares the thrills and spills of his dad's life.

He married and moved to Rowlestone in 1948. He worked on the WarAg helping to feed the nation during and after WW2, then got a job at Ravenhills as a mechanic. He travelled to work by motorbike and soon became noticed for riding it at unreasonable speed. He went to Silverstone to see some motor racing and soon developed a passion for all forms of motorsport. In 1959 Bill Layton from Pontapinna in Vowchurch asked Herbert if he thought they could liven up Peterchurch show with some car racing. So, he persuaded a few local mates including Percy Powell, to find six old cars and organised some races. The following thrills and spills was the birth of Jalopy Racing, soon to become Autograss racing. A number of clubs were soon formed including Hereford and it spread like wildfire. When Herbie stopped racing, he became the Murray Walker of Autograss Racing and entertained crowds far and wide.

Herbert Henry Collins was born on 23rd July 1927 on a farm at Bryn Deri to Henry and Liz Collins, followed by sister Nancy and brother Jim. He went to Bryn Deri primary school then on to King Henry High School, Abergavenny with his gas mask over his shoulder as the war was starting. It was a memorable time for this little country boy, being the only one to move on to the high school. As he grew up, he spent most of his weekends and holidays learning to plough with horses.

His first job was on the WarAg, driving a caterpillar. During the terrible winter of 1947, he used it to take food up the Llanthony Valley to feed people who had been completely cut off in the

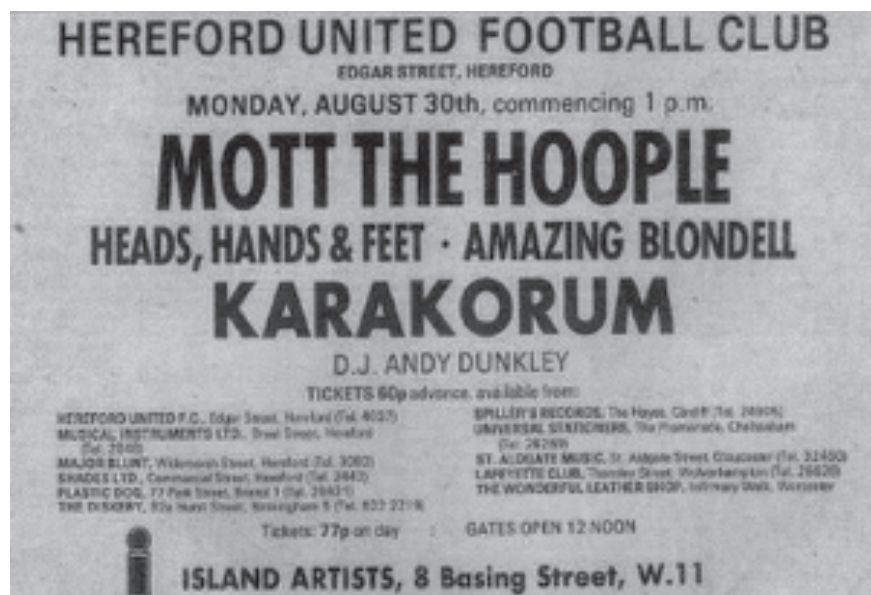
snowiest winter of modern times. The snow was higher than the hedges in many places and he was cutting a route by memory.

He started courting Doris Williams from Rowlestone and they were married on Christmas Eve in 1947. On his way to the wedding with cousin Albany driving an old car the steering arm fell off and they went straight in the ditch. Luckily Dad's skills as a mechanic came to the fore and he lay underneath it, managed to get the track rod reconnected but no nut in sight so he tied it up with his handkerchief to get to the church on time.

Soon after he got a job as an agricultural mechanic at Ravenhills. He had a motorbike by then, but he struggled to afford the fuel, so rode his bike to the bus stop in Ewyas Harold to save money. Their rent was 4/6 = 22.5p per week, but he couldn't afford to pay it without some support from catching and selling rabbits in Abergavenny market. His forte was fixing balers and he became the go-to man. Anybody who could fix a baler as the storm clouds were gathering would be pretty popular with the farming community. By 1949 he had bought a sidecar for his motorbike to transport his wife and new son. I wasn't very old when a wheel came off the sidecar and we ended up upside down in a ditch by The Bilboa one night – mother and child were shaken but intact and the wheel was soon reattached. To supplement the fuel cost, he used to give a ride in the sidecar to another guy in the same workshop. He was always riding it too fast so one morning he was haring up Broad Street – from the Cathedral towards East Street – right outside Barclays Bank. His passenger was so scared he slid down into the footwell and completely unbalanced the combination and as he turned into East St the whole shebang went upside down in the middle of the street. Christ there was fuss – all the cleaners came out of the buildings all around and the old man was gathering up bits of plastic and trying to get Bill to take his seat and get from there before the police arrived.

Collins Services and Collins Design and Build continues to thrive today.

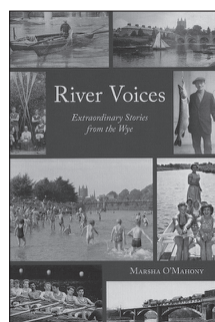
All the young dudes



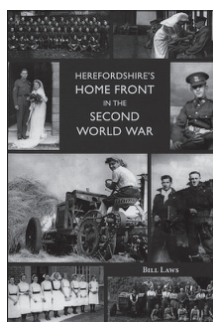
Were you there? In your flares, cheesecloth shirts and flowers in your hair. Monday August 30, 1971, and local band Mott the Hoople were top of the bill for this concert at Hereford United's Edgar Street ground. Mott were not quite at the pinnacle of their career. Their David Bowie penned hit, All the Young Dudes, would not be released until 1972. Nonetheless, there was enough appetite for a crowd of over 3000 to cram into the football ground for the warm bank holiday concert. There was another local band also playing that day, Karakorum. One of their members would go on to experience international success. Martin Chambers found fame with The Pretenders.

Editor's note: Herefordshire has a rich musical history. We are really interested in chatting to readers who either played in bands or watched them. If you have any photos, then even better.

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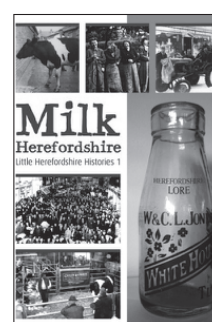
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