

in

OUR AGE

HEREFORDSHIRE LORE : LIVING LOCAL HISTORY

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Welcome

We are pleased to report that our plans for Hereford History Day at the Town Hall on Saturday September 23rd are progressing speedily. There is a lot to report. For more details and a run-down of the day's events please see the back page. We are grateful to Hereford City Council for awarding us funding to put on the event. We would also like to thank our sponsors from local businesses for supporting us, including Bill Jackson Property and Wye Valley Breweries, and the Family History Society. We will also be awarding the inaugural Herefordshire Young Historian Awards, in honour of Betty Webb, our much-missed committee member. There will be two awards – one for primary-aged children and the other for secondary. The deadline for all entries will be the end of the first week of the autumn term. We look forward to seeing as many of you on the day as possible. Please keep your eyes posted for updates on our Facebook page and on our website in the coming weeks.

Editor *Marsha O'Mahony*

Cover Story

As the hop picking season approaches we thought readers might enjoy the photo taken at Dormington in the 1950s. John Ridgway, 83, is a retired upholsterer from Hereford was one of hundreds, who, during the war years, who picked hops with his Mother at Dormington. A lorry picked them and other families up from the end of Hampton Dean Road. The lorry had some benches in the back if they were lucky, luckier still if there were straw bales. His aunt and uncle, however, travelled up from their South Wales' home:

'My uncle was a miner, and this was their holiday. They came up on his motorbike and sidecar. Back home he had to get it down a narrow passageway, so he unbolted it first. When he got it to the front of the house he joined it together again. Then he and his wife loaded the bike up ready for their journey to the hopyard at Dormington. When he was happy he hadn't forgotten anything, he put his foot down on the peddle, and shot off. It was some minutes later and some distance down the road before he noticed his wife was still in the side car - back home!'

(Photo credit: Derek Foxton/Tony Williams)



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 and Linda Ward.

The life and times of a Liverpool evacuee who never went back

George Disley was born in Liverpool in 1936. When the war started, the city was a major target for German bombers. He arrived in Herefordshire when he was 15 from Wales, where he was first evacuated.

George was evacuated from Liverpool to Wales in 1941, later moving to Herefordshire in 1951. He would never return to live in Liverpool again. He ended up on a hill farm, Crickadarn, Erwood up under the Epynt Mountains. He only saw his mother once a year for the duration of the war, and it would be a full ten years before he would visit her in Liverpool.

"I was still not too young to remember what bombs were doing. I can remember those doodlebugs and hear them coming over, then all of a sudden, when the engine would stop, and you used to think, 'Oh where's it going to go?' You'd hear a whoosh, and you'd count 1-2-3 – it wasn't far away.

"I remember once, we were in under the stairs, because we used to hide under the stairs sometimes. Where the gas meter was there was a little cubby hole. Grandad came through the front door and said, 'Get down the shelter, quick!', and as we were going through the kitchen to the backyard to go out down to the shelter, and he was behind us, there was this BOOM and all the windows of the house shattered and the front door came in. And when we went out next morning, four houses down from us, two each side had been blown clean out. They boarded up the windows, had the front door put back on, and we went on living there."

George was evacuated to Crickadarn. In October 1951 he was 'poached' and went to work as a farm labourer at Little Whitfield for Verdy Lloyd. "When I came down to Little Whitfield, I was going to be paid 25 shillings weekly – it was two and a half times more than what I was getting, and I had Saturday afternoons off! I was living in as well, so nothing came out of those 25 shillings, other than my income tax and National Insurance.

"Verdy rented Little Whitfield, in Wormbridge, from the clients of the Whitfield Estate. His brother Doug had the farm, Thrupton Court. His brother-in-law Arty Morgan farmed at Exchequer Court, which was almost like Thrupton Court. His other brother, Geoff, farmed New Barns Farm. Because there wasn't always work for me [at Little Whitfield], or they were busy, I used to go and help them out. I was 'contracted out'! I used to have to do my own work – Doug's chap went off sick one spring and I used to do the cattle at Little Whitfield and milk the cow and have breakfast and then get on my bike.

"I'd saved up and bought myself a brand-new bicycle by February from Lock's Garage, £15. If you had 25 shillings, I had 15 shillings I could put by anyway. You must remember in them days we didn't have a lot. Cinemas and the pubs were the only thing that were open on a Sunday. There were no buses on a Sunday much. When I bought the bike in February it cost me £15, and Mr Lock threw in the lights for me because I paid outright. 'Not many lads come in here and do that,' he said.

"In those three years I was at Little Whitfield, I used to go and help out Doug Lloyd at Thrupton Court. I also used to go and help his brother Geoff at New Barns Farm. I remember going to Doug's



George settled in Herefordshire when he was 15. He is seen here enjoying a drink at the Merton Hotel, Hereford. George is second from the left, in the front row.



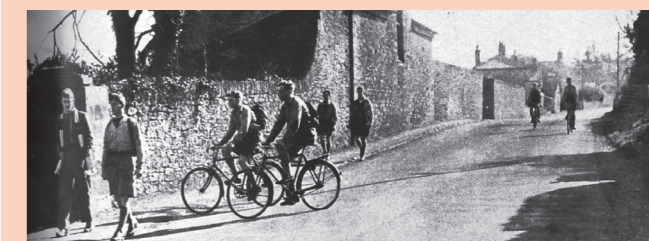
George enjoying retirement in Peterchurch.

twice – once when his man was off sick, I helped him in the spring to do some corn planting and look after the sheep and once in the autumn, when we were threshing. I went to Geoff at New Barns to help them to harvest their corn. They had it cut with a binder, and I went to help to pitch it and stack it. We had corn ricks in those days. I did other things besides just being at Little Whitfield. The first time we ever went to Bulmers was at Little Whitfield when we picked the cider apples and took them into Plough Lane. We had perry pears and we took them in – one went into Plough Lane, and one went into Ryland Street. That was my first experience of Bulmers. It was great to see all those pits where they had the apples and washed them and had to go over the weighing scales; it was an experience. I had the bike and if I had to go and work for Doug or New Barns I used to bike back and forth. But I always did my work at Little Whitfield first, went there, had dinner or tea wherever I was working and finished theirs off in the evening and then came back home and finished off what Verdy hadn't finished.

"I stayed with Verdy for 31 years [on two different farms], from November 1951 to the end of October 1982. When I first came down, he said to me, 'I'll give you a month's trial, see how we get on.' I never ever knew whether I'd passed that or not!"

We will feature more of George's memoir in the next edition. If you can't wait until then, his full memoir will soon be available to read at HARC.

School evacuated lock, stock and barrel



Felsted School pupils at Penraig early 1940s.

As the rumblings of WWII grew ever louder the teachers of Felsted School in Essex were making plans to evacuate. By 1939, they had moved lock, stock and barrel, seeking wartime refuge in Herefordshire thanks to the generosity of Mrs Trafford of Goodrich Court. She made her home, and Hill Court, handsome houses along the river, available to the school. Penraig Court was also requested by the school. Some 500 pupils continued their education in relative peace, among them Kenneth Kendall, the BBC broadcaster. This photograph was, we believe, taken at Penraig, featuring Felstedians, on their way to lessons at Goodrich. Can anyone identify exactly where?

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Hereford Sixth Form College opens 1973



Mr S. Hancorn was among the first cohort at the new Sixth Form College in 1973.

My first contact with HSFC was an induction interview with the deputy principal, Neil Arltee, in the summer of 1973. Neil proved to be a first-rate Economics tutor and rather set the tone for the rest of his colleagues. Beryl Haughton made an excellent job of teaching what can only be described as an eclectic English syllabus, while Ian Porter made a valiant effort to teach me Mathematics. Jack Hull, my personal tutor, was simply the kindest and most academically gifted person I have ever met.

Despite a profound gratitude to my teachers, my fondest memories of HSFC are of departures from the true path of academic knowledge. A long lunch break provided ample opportunity for extracurricular activities particularly when combined with a relatively short walk to the Swan or Whitehouse pubs. Lengthy debates combined with the small thrill of illegal beer punctuated more days than I care to remember.

Viewed through the prism of half a century the presence of female students provided something of a civilising influence. Perhaps the most striking feature of the 1973 college was the fact that its buildings were not completed until 1974. The first year of making do in temporary and borrowed accommodation forged a strong bond between the original staff and students while creating memories and friendships which endure to this day.

Former member of staff, Beryl Haughton, who founded the careers department 50 years ago, recalls the early days.

In 1973, sixth form colleges were still more of an experiment than a fixed part of the educational scene and it was courageous of Hereford to plan one.

A site was chosen alongside the Tech and Art colleges, so that some facilities could be shared, and a brand-new purpose-built sixth form college was commissioned. More importantly, the three most senior staff were appointed the previous year, bringing with them a wealth of experience but from very different backgrounds.

Dr Geoffrey Barnes as Principal had been headmaster of a grammar school; Neil Arltee as Director of Studies was previously vice principal of a college of further education, and Pat Phillips, deputy head of a well-respected

independent school. I am sure that their planning and liaison with our feeder schools, some of whom resented losing their pupils at such a critical stage of their education, did much to ensure our opening without acrimony in 1973.

On that day, the new building was not ready, in fact we did not get into it til September 1974. Our first year was therefore spent shoehorned into Broadlands. Pupils from all sorts of backgrounds collided with each other and with staff as they clattered up and down the narrow stairs to take classes. I think this enforced intimacy set the tone of staff-student friendship that endured when we moved into our new premises.

There were fears in some of our feeder schools that moving young people at 16 would deny them valuable sixth form responsibilities such as prefect, and also that in two years the staff would not get to know them as well as they should to provide references for their future. I do not think this turned out to be true.

Additionally, there were more palpable benefits of a break from school. Some young ladies and gentlemen had built up a formidable reputation in their earlier days, described to us as 'lazy', 'rogues', or 'time wasters' by their schools, but many of them seized the opportunity of a fresh start. Two of my tutor group in this bracket are just retiring, as a senior social worker. And there is no doubt that our intake widened horizons.

Coming from a strict Irish school, former pupil, Gillian Barlow says 'we were blessed'.

I'd never heard of the concept of sixth form college separate from secondary school. I warmed to it from the very first. For a start I didn't have to wear an unflattering school uniform. I could choose to wear my own clothes. This was a wonderful promotion from the junior ranks to near adulthood. I think those of us who were there at Broadlands were blessed as it bonded the staff and students in a way that successive cohorts never did. Living in such close and cramped quarters, squeezing past each other on the stairs and having dinner together, we all faced the difficulties of being there together.

Editor's note: Please do write in and share your memories and photos of Hereford's Sixth Form College.

Collapse of Strangford Viaduct in 1947



Massive engineering work entailed on the Strangford Viaduct in 1947 following its collapse.

Floods following the great thaw of the winter of 1947 undermined and washed away one of the stone piers of Strangford Viaduct, which spanned the River Wye between Fawley and Backney, allowing two sections of the bridge to fall into the river. On the night of 29 March 1947, the central pier of the viaduct collapsed under the pressure of a flood unprecedented in modern times. Two spans fell into the river. To maintain a service along the branch the GWR ran a bus service between Fawley and Ross; trains running between Hereford and Fawley and Gloucester and Ross. The Hereford to Fawley trains consisted of two or three coaches hauled by small tank engines provided by Hereford Barton shed.

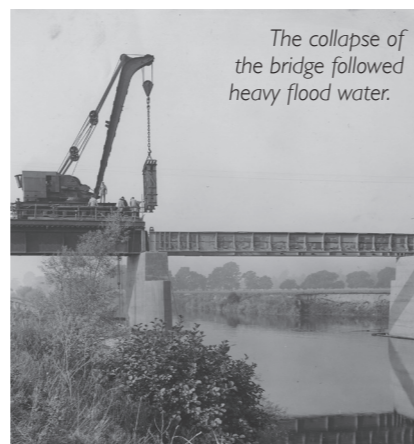
The GWR had a major civil engineering project to contend with; a redesign and rebuild of the viaduct with little chance of recovering the huge cost through revenue from the sparse freight and passenger services. The railway was reticent about announcing any resumption of through services

but an article in the Great Western Railway Magazine for November 1947 detailed a full description of the completed work. A date of sometime in October 1947 seems to have been likely for through running.

“One of the tank engines employed on the Hereford/Fawley/Hereford shuttle was number 1460. I have a brass cab side number plate from the loco purchased from an ex-Barton fireman who had the foresight to buy it from British Railways when the loco was withdrawn in February 1956. He paid its scrap value (peanuts). I bought it twenty years later as Railwayana!,” said subscriber Michael Young.

In the GWR Magazine August 1947 issue under Staff Commendations is the name of Mr NWJ Bowkett, Signalman, Fawley. He was commended and received a ‘gratuity’. “Without doubt he was the signalman on duty when the viaduct collapsed. He is mentioned elsewhere for his efficient actions in stopping traffic,” said Michael.

Editor’s note: With thanks to our resident railway aficionado and subscriber Michael Young of Rugby for the information.



The collapse of the bridge followed heavy flood water.

LETTERS



History Day Hereford Town Hall 1940s.

In your latest edition of In our Age on the back page you have a bit, Hereford History Day showing the RSGB stand in the Town Hall. The man, second from left was my father, Max Conu, who was in business in Hereford, Wheeler & Conu. I know one of the others was Peter Jones but can’t remember any other names. Peter was G3ESY and my father was G3ESY/A. Interesting edition, many thanks, Maggie Conu, Hereford.

Hereford Accredited Hatchery and Rockfield Road.

In the early days of more industrialised poultry production in Herefordshire and some 3 years before Sun Valley Poultry was formed, Hereford Hatchery in Rockfield Road was the main source of day-old broiler chicks for the JP Wood & Sons poultry business at The Grove, Craven Arms. I managed a hatchery in Shobdon (West Midland Broiler Hatchery) owned jointly by Corbett Farms, Shobdon and RH and RC Green, Lyonshall. Output was coordinated by Mr Donald Parsons at Hereford Hatchery and together we supplied most of the day-olds needed by the Wood’s broiler growers between 1959 and 1962. That arrangement might have lasted had it not been for the unwillingness of Woods to effectively integrate its business with the interests of breeders, growers and hatcheries and in so doing, to share the financial ups and downs of the rapidly growing poultry industry. That intransigence on Charlie Wood’s side led to a quite hasty establishment of Sun Valley Poultry’s factory in Grandstand Road, a renamed Sun Valley Hatchery at Shobdon and in due course, the Allensmore Feed Mill.

The financial weaknesses of a non-integrated poultry business had led to that break-up between the mainly agricultural side of the business and the processing stage. However, integration proved to be not enough and after a period of over-production and below cost market prices, both Sun Valley and Woods ran out of working capital. The Smithfield meat company, Union International, bought 50% of Sun Valley and Unilever took over JP Wood’s which became Midland Poultry Holdings and included Dale Turkeys. Andrew Gilliat BEM Breinton.

Editor’s note: apologies to Mr Gilliat for the late appearance of his letter, which arrived soon after the hatchery story but was overlooked by yours truly.

Bulmers’ accounts department

Thank you to Barbara Preedy, 91, for sending in this wonderful photo of the accounts department at Bulmers in Ryeland Street from 1947. Barbara, then known as Florence ‘Floss’ Headon, was just 15 when she joined straight from school, the Roman Catholic school in Berrington Street. She can be seen third from the back on the left of the photo. She stayed until she was 20 when she married Raymond Preedy.



Bulmers’ accounts department 1947.

1933 River Wye rescue results in Royal Humane Society award



Ronald Matthews served in both world wars.

Following a story in our last issue regarding a River Wye rescue, Julia Rose has written in with an account of another rescue mission. Her grandfather, Ronald Matthews, was in the centre of a river drama in July 1933, and she wonders if readers can shed any light on it.

Julia said: “My grandfather was born in 1897 and the family lived at 19 St Martins Street, Hereford. His father was Albert Matthews who was the coachman at St John Street, and he worked for Dr Henry Graves Bull the famous naturalist and physician. Ronald served both in WW1 and WW2 with the Herefordshire Regiment and saw service overseas in France.

“He also worked at the Hereford Munitions factory at Rotherwas and also at the livestock market in Hereford.

He married Ethel Mary Wozencraft from Presteigne in 1922 and they had a large family. My mother was one of their children. Her name was Beatrice Mary Matthews but she was fondly known as ‘Mary’. She married a soldier and spent time away from Hereford but returned when her husband retired from the Forces.

“After Ronald died I discovered a certificate from the Royal Humane Society dated 17th October 1933 which stated: *It was resolved unanimously that the honorary testimonial of this Society inscribed on parchment be hereby given to Ronald Ernest Matthews*

for having on 22nd July 1933 gone to the rescue of a boy who was in imminent danger of drowning in the River Wye at Hereford and whose life he gallantly saved thereafter assisting to restore him to consciousness.’

“Ninety years have passed but it would be lovely if any reader could shed some light on what happened on that day, or if they knew the person who was rescued from the river Wye.”

Editor’s note: If anyone can help, please do get in touch and we will pass any messages onto to Julia.

Commercial Youth Club hang out on Castle Green

These young people were members of the Commercial Youth Club, and the photo was taken on Castle Green in the 1950s. Dave Jones’ mother, Maybury Jones (née Hodges) is second from left on the bottom row. Can anyone identify the other young people in the photograph? Please do get in touch.



Hereford History Day – September 23rd, Town Hall

**FREE
admission**

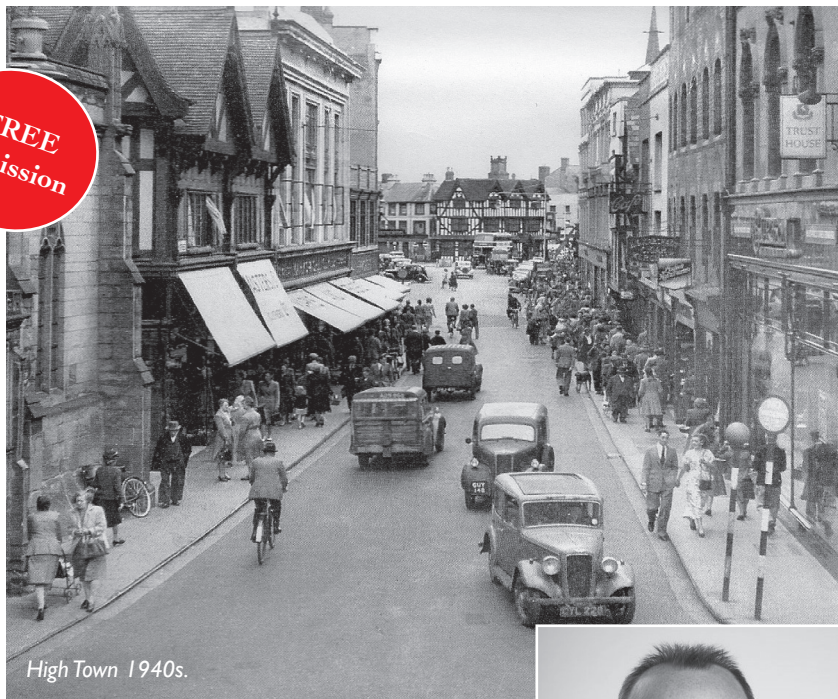
Special guest Nick Barrett, researcher and presenter from the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?' programme.

We have a full programme on the day. We are delighted to announce our guest speaker will be Nick Barrett, researcher and presenter from the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?' programme. Join him as he gives us a scoop of 'behind the scenes' on the popular show. Doors open at 11. FREE admission. The rest of our day includes:

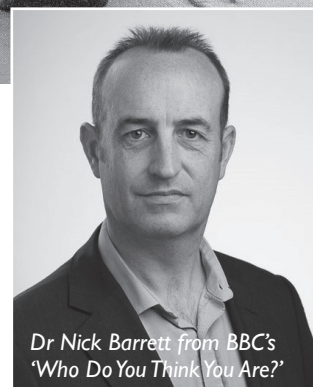
- Civic procession
- Formal opening by the Mayor
- Elizabethan history SLAM
- Hereford's 'Secret Museum'
- History supermarket
- Launch and award of Herefordshire's Young Historian Award
- Guided walks: Hereford's buildings through the ages
- Tours of the Mayor's Parlour

Plus much more!

Local history books on sale plus refreshments too.

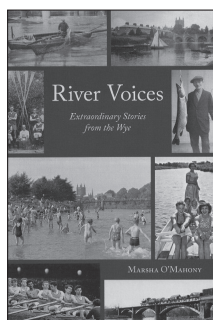


High Town 1940s.

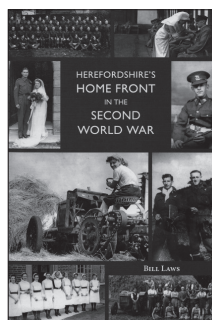


Dr Nick Barrett from BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?'

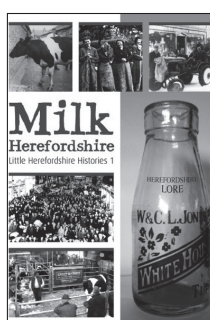
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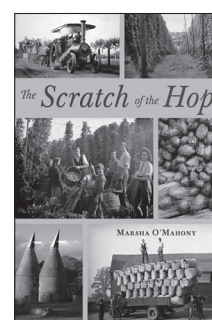
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