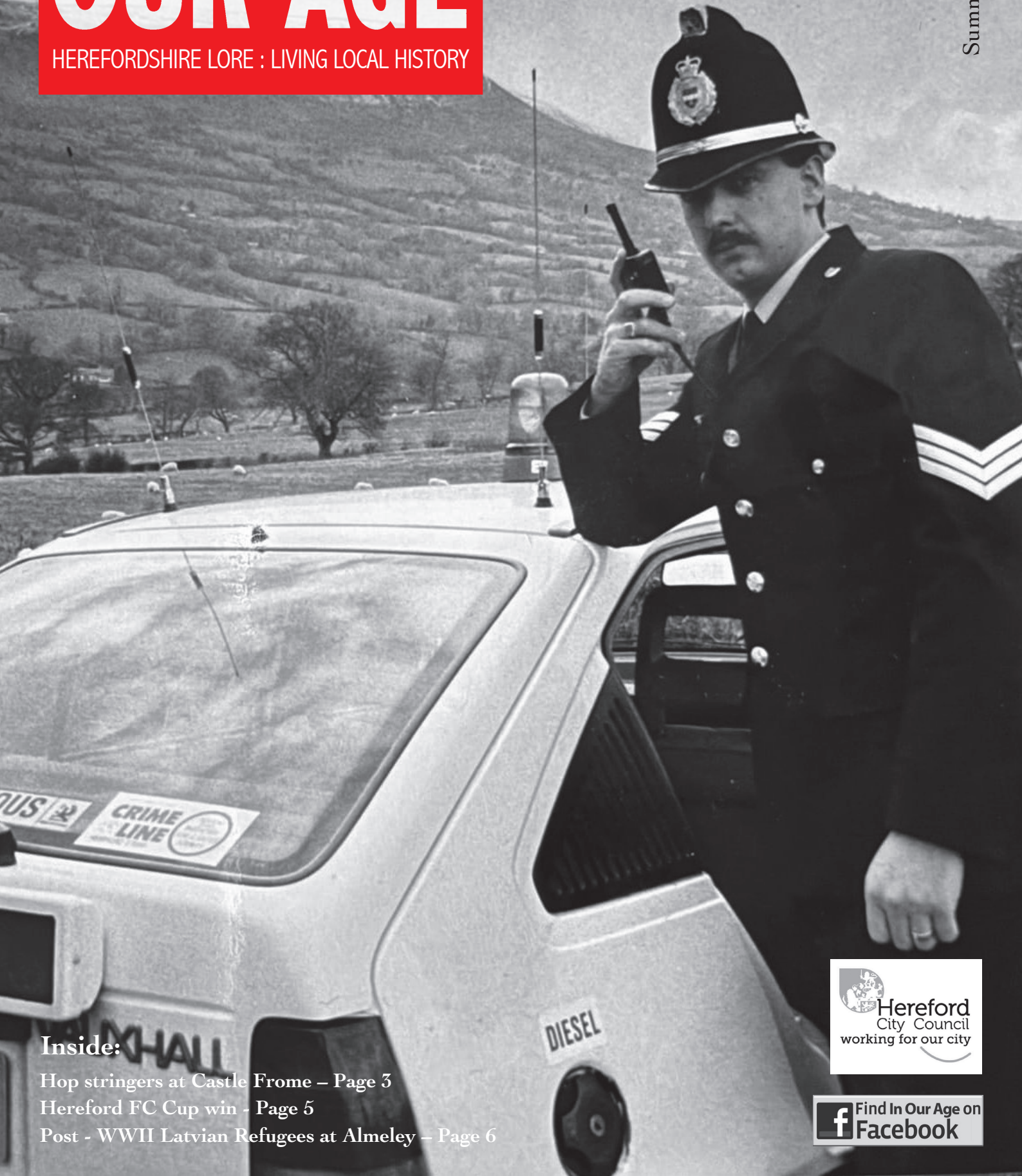


in

OUR AGE

HEREFORDSHIRE LORE : LIVING LOCAL HISTORY

Issue 72
Summer 2024



Inside:

- Hop stringers at Castle Frome – Page 3
- Hereford FC Cup win - Page 5
- Post - WWII Latvian Refugees at Almeley – Page 6



Welcome

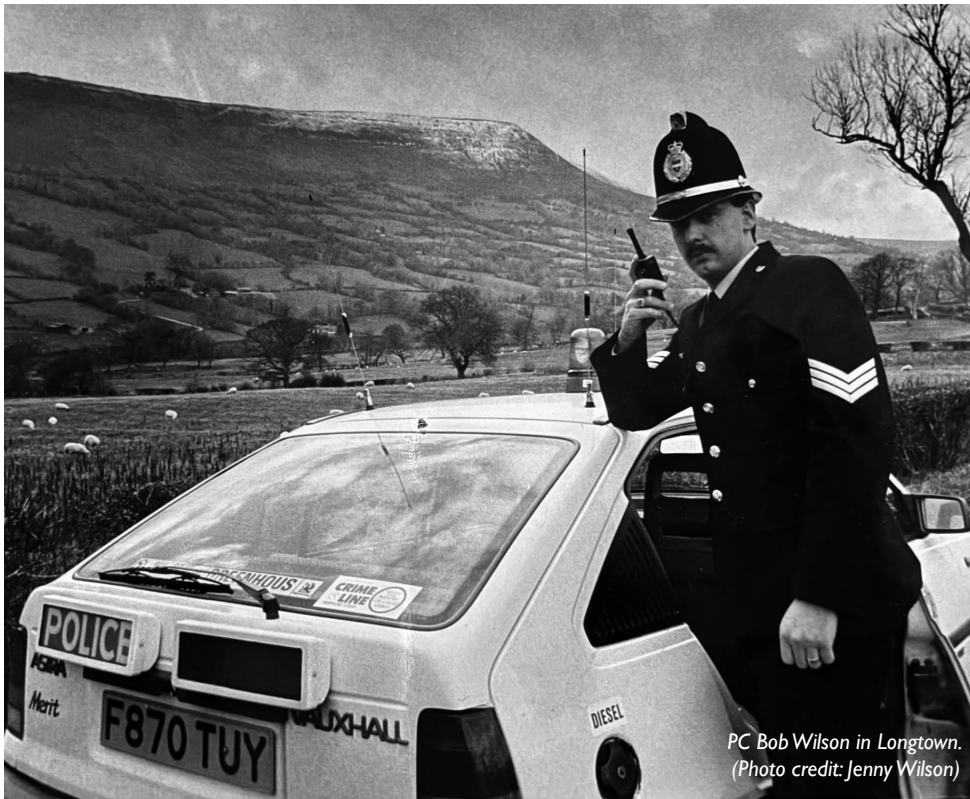
Herefordshire Lore's committee rarely gets a mention, and they jolly well should. They are a huge support and very little would get done without them. All of them are volunteers diligently working away in the background for every issue and event. Most have been with us for years and they are a group of people I know I can depend on every time. I value their contribution and consider them friends and colleagues. We were sad to lose one of our much-loved committee members, Pete Mayne, recently. Pete was cheeky, funny, knew everyone, and delivered hundreds of copies of In Our Age. He will be greatly missed by us all.

Marsha O'Mahony, Editor

Cover Story

Our cover story this week features PC Bob Wilson beside his panda car in Longtown. He was a serving police officer from the 1980s until 2003. He passed away at the young age of 46 from cancer. "He was a fabulous man," said his daughter Jenny Wilson. "Loved by everyone he met and was very respected." He policed all over Herefordshire. He started out as a cadet from the old police house in Kingsland, eventually reaching the rank of inspector. He was also a member of the Longtown Mountain Rescue Team and a qualified diver often assisting with search and rescue operations for the police. "He was passionate about his job and dedicated to old-fashioned policing. He was and still is a role model to many," said Jenny.

We would love to hear from any readers who remember PC Wilson. Please get in touch.



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.

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The stringers are coming



*Lil Hopkins picking hops into a crib
(Photo credit: George & Lil Hopkins)*



*George Hopkins stringing hop yards at Millend, Castle Frome
(Photo credit: George & Lil Hopkins)*

Come March into April, hopyards across Herefordshire are dotted with moving figures. These are the stringers and their work creates the canopy upon which hops grow. It's a skilled and tough job not yet taken over by mechanisation. The string (coir) is slung across the shoulders in a bag, and, using a long tool called a monkey, the coir is hooked onto the wirework above, and down to the ground around the pegs over many acres. George Hopkins worked in hops all his life, for many decades at Millend, Castle Frome. In 1958 he was awarded the title of champion stringer after a competition and still has his inscribed tankard. He and his wife Lil, who was a bracer, always worked together. "I taught myself to string, but I'd probably watched a fair few do it before. I used to do a bit more than most, three acres or 3,000 roots a day. If it was going well, I've managed to do four and that was a ten- or twelve-hour day. I'll tell you that bag of string got heavier as the day went on. But I took pride in it. You had to because how good a job you made of the stringing set the rest of the season. It's got to be tight enough not to be a nuisance, but if it's too tight then it's in danger of snapping off. Oh, but I enjoyed it. I used to look back at what I'd done with a sense of pride."

Lil was also a champion, but in bracing. "George did the stringing and I always braced behind him. The kids were small, and I had to go out to work, you had to in those days. We called it piecework. I could earn a day's money in half a day and then I could go home. I didn't like bracing behind anyone else other than George. They would do it too loose, see."



*Barbara and Graham Andrews
bracing at Townend, Bosbury
(Photo credit: Barbara Andrews)*

Holy Smoke!



Holy Trinity Church on fire

Fireman A.J. Thomas recalls dealing with a blaze at Holy Trinity Church in the 1950s.

“We were in Whitecross in minutes and, as we passed Ryeland Street, we were entering a white haze just like a fog. The crew was young, matured and ex-servicemen: keen and afraid of nothing. A quick ‘recce’ revealed flames six feet out of the vestry window, so Firemen Bill Bould and Dave Thomas got a hose line to work at the vestry end while Fireman Harry Evans and myself took another line through the front door. On our stomachs, we worked our way down the aisle. It was hot and smoky, and we could see flames approaching the organ. We hit them hard which produced clouds of vapour that filled the church.

“In 20 minutes, it was over. By now senior officers and the vicar, Reverend Snell, were there: I could see the Chief was pleased – Rev. Snell was also a councillor and he could see the ratepayers were getting good value for their money from the comparatively new Herefordshire Fire Brigade (previously the National Fire Service).

“On the way back, we were cock-a-hoop – we knew it was our crew who had been at the cutting edge that day and it would be something to talk about on the Station for days to come.

“What about the church? Well, the Rev. Snell could still preach on Sunday and the congregation could still sing to their organ. In twelve months, the church looked sparkling again.”

Thomas went on to become a Fire Chief in Pembrokeshire; Fireman Jim Harris became a Divisional Officer in Clwyd and Flint; Fireman Dave Thomas, Station Officer at Hereford along with Fireman Bill Bound. Fireman Harry Evans became an Industrial Fire Chief at Rotherwas.

The May Fair comes to Hereford



All the fun at the fair in this Derek Evans' photo of people enjoying Dodgem cars in 1962. Do you recognize yourselves? (Photo credit: HARC)

Herron's Skin Yard

Dave Warnes remembers the leather mill in part two of his interview with Andy Tatchell.

“The mill was where the BP station is. And all the way through from Commercial Road right back to Canal Road. And Monkmoor Street. And on the opposite side of there was the Monastery, the Coningsby Hospital in Widemarsh Street, that was the monastery and it stretched all the way. And then Canal Road broke it and then the other side of it was the monastery leather works where they produced skins and did dyeing of leather and everything. That's how the monks made their living.

“Everything was very old-fashioned they still had a horse and cart to move the bales around Hereford. The first job was fleshing the hides, they would take off the bits like ears, and legs and scrape all the fat off, then the shearers would have it and shear all the wool off, and then the hides would go into the tanks to be cured. I wasn't part of the leather side so I don't know much detail. But I remember sheets of bark placed on top of the skins when they went into the pits and then they put planks across with weights to keep all the skins underwater.

“There were huge pits where they soaked all the sheep skins, and the whole thing was driven by water, which flowed down the edge of the monastery. Yes, even when I got there. There was a millpond, a big one; sluice gates and the water ran over the sluice gates and drove the mill wheel that drove all the machines in the factory, in the leather part of the factory. We used to close the factory for two weeks in the summer and we used to go in and de-scale the boiler, we had to get inside the boiler with chisels and hammers and chip all the scale off. And that's when we found the underground passage. It went right under Commercial Road to the old prison which was the bus station. There were all cells there and everything. There was an ancient doorway, looked like it fitted in with the monastery and things. I wish I had some photographs. I only have one photograph in the factory. So we went through this old doorway and there were some ancient steps on the other side that went down and down and then we were on a level passage. We had a compass with us and we could see it was going directly under Commercial Road. And then there was a fall and it was all blocked with rubble and we didn't have the time or the energy to go any further with it. And now of course both ends are blocked off. There were big iron rings in the wall, that someone was manacled to at some time.”

Celebrations for Hereford United's Cup win



In these Cup celebration pictures, Joe Wade is seen second from right at the top right of the photo. He was Hereford United's player-manager in the late 1950s, when the club's reputation as FA Cup giant-killers began to take root. To his left is Fred Turner (Club Secretary) and to his right is Club Chairman Len Weston. The picture would have been taken at Edgar Street. Can readers provide any more details for this cup win?



The listening for the next round draw of the FA Cup would have been at Club Chairman's home at Weston's Cider Mill at Much Marcle. Joe Wade is seen on the extreme left with his wife and small children. Then left to right Mrs & Mr Fred Turner (Club Secretary) Chairman Len Weston, Mr Tommy Pugh, and his wife. (Photo credit: Derek Evans/HARC)

Goodbye to much-loved committee member

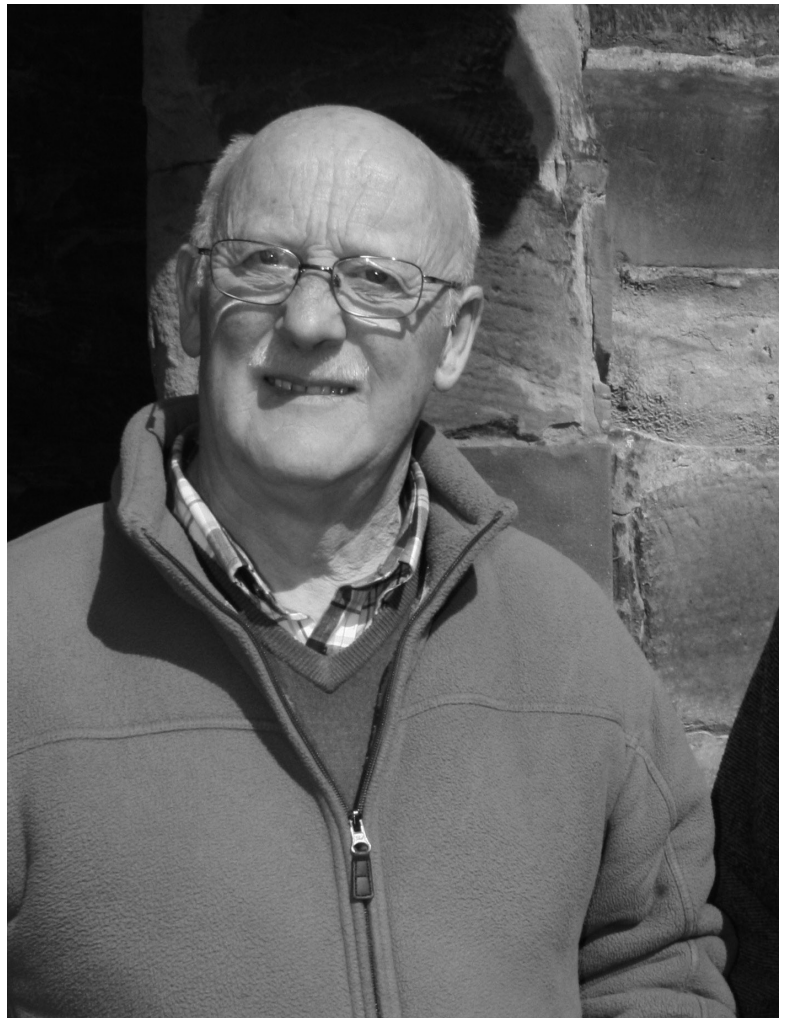
Peter Mayne, the Hereford postman who founded the city's unique GPO postal museum has died. The museum had its first public 'pop-up' at last year's Hereford History Day.

Peter started with the General Post Office aged 15. The ex-Scudamore and Whitecross boy would put in over 40 years of service with what became the Post Office. A loyal union man, Peter covered the Weobley district for most of that working life.

His mother Eileen worked on the munitions at Rotherwas during the Second World War. Peter was married to Jean whose mum, Marjorie Cotterell, had also worked there. The Rotherwas link led the couple to spend hours researching the names and backgrounds of munitioners whose names were missing from the munitions memorial on Rotherwas' Straight Mile.

Peter will also be fondly remembered for his work with Hereford Couriers running club, the Polish community at Foxley Camp, and ourselves: Peter and Jean were stalwart members of Herefordshire Lore's management group.

But Peter will be best remembered, aside from his legacy GPO museum, for raising a laugh in any situation, a gift that was recalled with many a wry smile by the dozens of posties who formed the cortege at his funeral. Peter is survived by Jean, Chris, Phil and Jon and their families. He will be greatly missed.



Latvia comes to Almeley

North Herefordshire village becomes home for refugees

Newport House in Almeley became a sanctuary for Latvian refugees fleeing Soviet persecution at the end of World War II. In the early part of the 20th century, it had been used as a TB hospital. But in the immediate aftermath of the war years, Great Britain provided refuge for many displaced people in Europe, including a sizable Latvian community. When the Latvian Society established a base in London they rented Newport House from the council in 1953, staying until 1997.

Children of school age enjoyed summer camps there to keep in contact with their Latvian heritage and culture. The property was known as the “Latvian Home” and Jānis Skujevics became the first manager, undertaking these duties up until 1976, with Marija Keņģe (long-term chair of the women’s section of the Latvian Welfare Fund and graduate of the Kaucminde College of Home Economics in Latvia) as housekeeper. She brought the soul of the Latvian homestead to the Latvian Home.



In time, the Home became a significant meeting place for Latvians including 50 permanent residents, who were war invalids, the elderly, and people unfit for work due to infirmity. In the 1980s the Latvian National Council eventually bought Newport House from the council. On 23rd April 1989, a celebratory event was organised called “The Latvian Home is ours”, which was even attended by a film crew from Riga. By 1997 the house’s outgoings proved untenable and it was sold. There is little sign of the Latvian community there today, though there are many graves at Almeley Churchyard that hark back to this unusual episode in this grand house’s history.

Letters from our readers

School days remembered

Dear Editor, the magazine is very interesting as usual. John Kinross’s letter about Felsted School reminds me of the 1940s and 1950s when my brother Robin and I would be put on the London train for Reading, where we would change stations to go down to Ascot to Wynyard school. He was ten and I was somewhat younger aged seven. In those days my parents were quite happy that we could go unaccompanied, there’s no way we would travel like that today.

John’s letter was about Felsted School moving to Herefordshire. Wynyard was based in Eardisley in the forties, moving to Binfield and finally to Ascot in Berkshire. Do any of your readers remember the school when it was in Eardisley? Our school colours were pink and grey, I can imagine a chuckle at the thought of little “Just Williams” travelling dressed in pink! Well, I didn’t like it either! I remember throwing my cap out of the train window somewhere between Hereford and Malvern. I don’t recollect my parents’ reaction especially as the school uniform had to be purchased from Harrods. Hugo Mason’s article brought back happy memories for he and I went to school by train, the main difference was that our journey was much longer but I’m sure we enjoyed much of the trip, and I guess we both got into the same sort of trouble.

I remember the winter of 1947 and we were out on a sports field during that freezing winter. Our school only had about 30 pupils, four of whom were Hungarian. They might have been children

of embassy officials, but not refugees. Our head John Hawkes Thompson was a member of the Leander rowing club. Their colours were pink, hence our awful pink caps. I remember seeing the Bristol Brabazon, a huge piston aircraft, fly over. It was a flop and didn’t fly often, never commercially. Our head used to take the school to Royal Ascot possibly to educate us but maybe to set some of us on the road to ruin – betting on the horses – not entirely joking because one boy named Handley at the ripe old age of seven or eight set up a book and would take pence off us for bets ... his dad was a ‘bookie’. Those were the days.

Tim Townsend, Hereford

Correction

Dear Editor, I just read an article from your Spring 2024 edition titled “A dip into Herefordshire Lore’s archives – 70 years ago”. It contains a few errors regarding Hunderton School that I’d hate to see go uncorrected. The headmistress was Miss A.M.H. Savage, not Savade, and she was in fact the original head of the school, it opened in May 1951. Mr. Webster, who arrived a few years later, became head of the junior school, while Miss Savage continued as head of the infant school. I was a pupil at Hunderton School from 1951 to 1955 and still have a small booklet of class photographs given to each of us to commemorate the Coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth.

Mick Price, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta, Canada

Long-lost pubs of Hereford



Who remembers the Barton Tavern?

The Barton Tavern faced the demolition ball in the mid-1960s as the new bridge and inner ring roads opened. We would love to hear from any readers who used to lean up the bar there. Please get in touch.



The Barton Tavern before and after it was scheduled for demolition. (Photo credit: Frank Kenward)

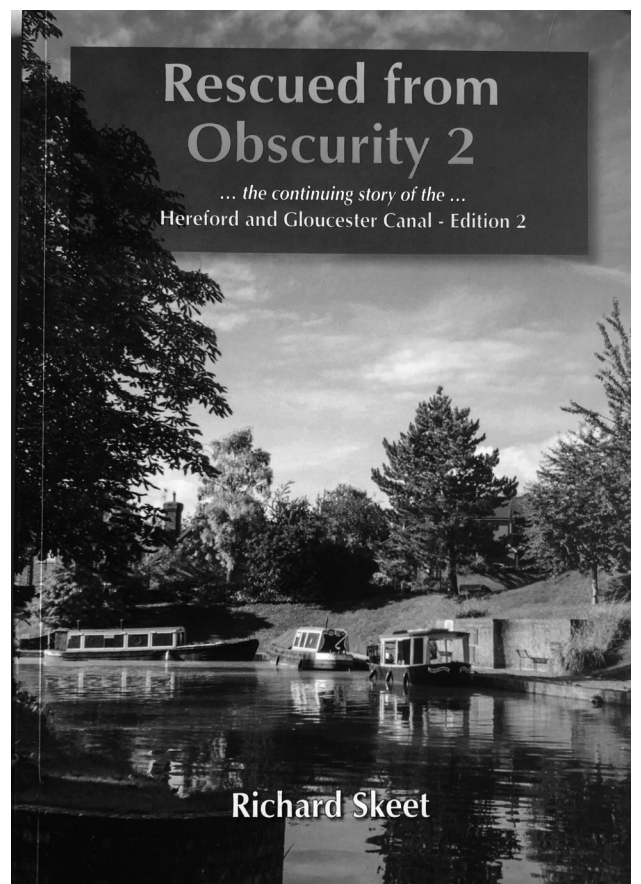
Book review

Rescued from Obscurity 2 - The continuing story of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal

The Hereford and Gloucester Canal has been described as 'more lost in obscurity' than any other major navigation in England. This book, by Richard Skeet, tells how much has changed in the last 44 years. This waterway, running through some of the most beautiful countryside in England, is now the subject of one of the leading canal restoration projects in Britain, spearheaded by the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Trust. The first edition of *Rescued from Obscurity* was published in 2014 and outlined the history of the lost canal from its earliest beginnings in the days of canal mania, to its closure with 28 days' notice in 1881. This new edition contains additional chapters, and the second part of the book updates the progress of restoration.

This book is £12 + £3 p&p available from Janet Moulton, who can be contacted on: jmoulton@tiscali.co.uk

It is also available via the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust website www.h-g-canal.org.uk



Hereford History Day returns

Keep the date in your diary – Saturday, 21st September, 10.30 - 4, Hereford Town Hall

This year's theme: Local heroes

Admission: Free

Programme:

History supermarket

History Slam

Heritage Walk

Mayor's Parlour

Hereford Young Historian Award

History Speakers

We are pleased to announce the speakers for this year's event are:

Nick Barratt, from BBC's Who Do You Think You Are: 'Family history in the digital age'

Clare Wichbold MBE: 'The hallmark of citizenship': the campaign for women's suffrage from a Hereford perspective'

Major David Seeney: 'The origins of the Regiment: SAS - Born in the desert'

All talks will take place in the Council chamber.

Young historians - who is your local hero?

Tell us their story and enter our Betty Webb Young Historian Award

Open to primary-aged children.

Prizes announced at Hereford History Day on September 21st.

First prize - £50

Second prize - £25

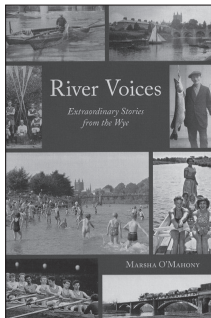
Third prize - £15

Heroes could be your grandmother who picked hops or worked in the munitions; or your grandfather who served in the Korean War or fished in the River Wye. Tell their story and be in with a chance of winning the Young Historian Cup and a cash prize to be presented on the day. Send your entries to: info@herefordshirelore.org

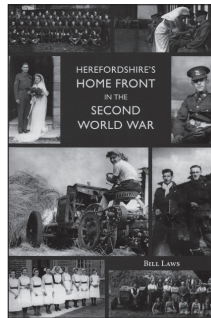
Last year's winner, Joseph Brown
(Photo credit: Chris Preece)



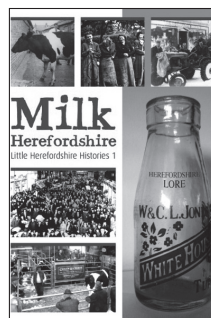
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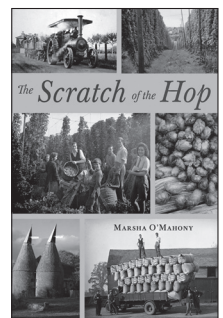
Herefordshire's Home Front in the Second World War
£10 + £3 p&p



Milk Herefordshire
£5 includes p&p



Health Herefordshire
£5 includes p&p



Scratch of the Hop
£15 + £2.50 p&p

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