



Mystery tour: A bevy of men and boys await departure aboard Yeoman's Radio Luxury tourer. But who they are and where they are going we don't know! Can you help?

# In Our Age

Living local history

Summer 2010  
Issue 17

## Where in the world?

A poser for our readers: where in Hereford might this be? Email, phone or write to us. Contact details at the bottom of the page.



## Austin 7



Members of the newly formed Austin 7 Club at a recent exhibition in High Town, Hereford. They are always looking for new members – call Stuart Howard on 01432 353100.

Meanwhile, Mr A.B. Demaus from Leominster writes: "Your photograph in Issue 16 (Boys' toys; page 5) shows cars and spectators at the RAC Small Car Trials of 1905. Cars were based in Hereford for a week and each day took part in tests, hill-climbs, for example up Dinmore Hill. The event had been held in 1904 previously." And, he adds, the traction engines on the same page pre-date 1904. Why? Because they lack a registration number.



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Anxious times

WAAF Hilda Hatcher at Shobdon – Page 2



Forgotten army

Photos from Ivor Williams' album – Page 4



Railway recollections

From Hoarwithy's Elizabeth Cutcliffe – Page 6

"I love your magazine, especially the wonderful photos. I've only lived here for a decade but love Hereford and, of course, our beautiful countryside. Keep up the good work." Deb Long

Check out [www.herefordshirelore.org.uk](http://www.herefordshirelore.org.uk) for your back issues of IOA

## Wartime stories from RAF Shobdon



Shobdon-trained glider pilot Len Pember

### Anxious days at RAF Shobdon

Wartime glider pilot **Len Pember** was Station Sergeant with the Glider Pilot Regiment at (then) RAF Shobdon, home of the 5 Glider Training School. He trained on Hotspur gliders at Shobdon before being sent on the disastrous Arnhem operation. Five hundred gliders and 1,500 aircraft landed allied troops behind the German lines near Arnhem in a bid to capture the river and canal crossings

and hasten the end of the war. Len had left behind former Hilda Hatcher, now Hilda Pember and was expecting their first child. Hilda had joined the Womens Auxiliary Air Force, where, after being posted to RAF Shobdon in 1943 she met and married Len.

It was an anxious time for Hilda as news of the doomed mission came back. The allied force was defeated by the Germans: 1,500 men were killed and 6,500 taken prisoner. Len, however, was lucky. He landed safely and escaped across the Rhine and back to Britain.

Their grandson, **Douglas Reed** from Solihull, also sent us a photo of the Hereford Cathedral School O.T.C. in 1937 which you can see at [www.herefordshirelore.org.uk](http://www.herefordshirelore.org.uk) under News. Len had been awarded a free place at the School in 1932. Douglas would like to hear from anyone who can add anything to his story: [dougreesda@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dougreesda@yahoo.co.uk)



WAAF Hilda posted to RAF Shobdon

### Brian Davies' time as a tug pilot

RAF Shobdon was a training school for glider pilots during World War 2. The job of hauling the trainee glider pilots aloft fell to tug pilots like Tupsley's **Brian Davies**.

Preparations for D-Day were underway and Winston Churchill needed glider pilots, so many that they nicknamed the training programme 'The Sausage Machine'.

Brian towed gliders from '42 to '43, flying Lysanders and Master Mark IIs, the Masters having four inches lopped off the bottom of the rudder to take the tow rope. Hence a sign on the instrumental panel: 'This aircraft is not suitable for aerobatics.'

"We had no radio. An airman hooked on the tow rope, pulled hard to ensure it was locked in, then jumped on the wing to tell you what was required: 'Cross country for an hour'; or 'Remote release, over Kington'. So you'd fly out up to 10,000 ft (as high as you could go without oxygen), the glider pilot cast off and you returned to Shobdon trailing 150 feet of rope behind you."

Glider were airborne before the tug and in the air rode behind the tug, over or below the tug's slipstream. It was a matter of honour among tug pilots not to cast off a glider unless there was an emergency when he'd forewarn the glider pilot by wagging his wings violently. "The glider pilot had to cast off and fend for himself: once off tow the only way was down. A 'Queen Mary' recovery vehicle would be sent out to dismantle the crashed glider and bring it home.

Madley aerodrome was used on one occasion for a mass drop, but the rendezvous of tugs and gliders coincided with a training exercise by Madley's Proctor and Dominie aircraft: it ended in whirling evasive tactics and unheard abuse. "Further exercises at Madley were abandoned."

## Bridge over the River Wye

As plans are revealed for a new footbridge over the Wye, we look back at the opening of Greyfriars Bridge, Hereford.

Shortly before the official opening of Greyfriars Bridge, Councillor Ivor Williams, chair of the Council's Roads and Bridges Committee was asked to ceremonially 'test its strength' by being the first to drive across. But he ran out of petrol and, with some civic embarrassment, was reduced to filling up (below) to complete this historic journey. Little did he know his wife Dorothy had used the car earlier and emptied the tank. (See more photos from Ivor's album on page 4.) **Front Cover:** January 1967 and Hereford Mayor Peter Carter shakes hands with Ivor Williams before crossing the bridge with Vic Ellis, owner of Cathedral Cars in Friars Street and this 1907 Renault.



During one night flight the tug crashed into Shobdon Hill and caught fire. The glider pilot and instructor had cast off and landed nearby in an unsuccessful bid to rescue the tug pilots. An enquiry later blamed instrument failure for the men's deaths.

Before Brian left for Bomber Command, WAAFS including Hilda Pember arrived at Shobdon for retraining. "Feminine, yes, but

with an inner toughness which came to the fore if any young pilot sought to impress them. One Canadian thought he could outdrink one of these lassies. She delivered him back to his billet!"

Brian's and other members of the Hereford and Marches Aircrew Association's memories are published in *Forever Aircrew* (ISBN 0 9527371 1 6)

## Reunion time

### Phyllis calls for Foxley meet up

It's time for a get together for everyone who was at Foxley, writes **Phyllis Edwards** from Hereford. "We enjoy the magazine very much, especially the articles about Foxley where I lived for seven, very happy years. The children in your picture (IOA 16, page 8) were all immediate neighbours of ours.



Phyllis Edwards today and (right) when she was in the NAFFI: "It's time we got back together." (Photo: Bobbie Blackwell)



Foxley, built as an American and Canadian hospital camp near Mansell Lacy in the last war, became a camp for 'displaced persons' in 1946. Home to many Polish

people who had nowhere else to go (parts of Poland simply disappeared in the post-war settlement between Russia and the West), Foxley was later used by families experiencing the post-war housing shortage.

**Don Walker** recently visited Foxley, but, he says, there's virtually nothing there any more. And Christine Galpin (née Davies) emailed us at [info@herefordshirelore.org.uk](mailto:info@herefordshirelore.org.uk) to say she lived there too. "I had to laugh when you suggested the photo was taken just after the war! Gillian was born in 1951, Cynthia in 1953, Ronald the same year I think, Frances in 1952 whilst Jenny and Geraldine were a bit older than Gill.

"I think the photo was taken during the winter of 1957 or 1958 as we all left Foxley in 1959 to live on the new Greenlanes estate – my family (Davies), Tozer and Fox family to Emlyn Avenue and the Jenkins to Tennyson Close."

What do readers think of Phyllis' idea for a reunion? Call us with your thoughts.

## Bomber Command

'When he was young he went to war  
And flew a Halifax'  
The opening lines of Brian's poem, Remembering.

Brian, back row, second from right at 23: "I was a young man growing older by the week. It was a tradition that, when you finished your tour, you were photographed with your crew and ground crew, a tour being, theoretically, 30 bombing trips. The theory was the French targets were easier than the German targets so they introduced a points system so you got 2 points for France and 3 for German. But if your trip was aborted that did not count."

# Photo story: Ivor Williams opens his family photo album

Major Ivor Williams from Hunderton, Hereford, seen below with his wife Dorothy when he was on Movement Control in Southampton in 1945, is a Burma Star veteran and a former Hereford mayor.



Born at Tonypany in 1915, he later served with the Royal Engineers and in 1942 was posted to Kirkee near Poona, India. He fought against the Japanese in Burma alongside Indian tribes people including the formidable Gurkhas. In 1957 Ivor became manager of Watts Tyres in Berrington Street and, in 1963, the Conservative councillor in St Nicholas Ward.

Slim's visit: (right) Field Marshall 'Old Bill' Slim who led the 14th 'Forgotten' Army during the Burma campaign. Ivor brought Slim to Hereford in 1968 on behalf of the Burma Star Association.



Gurkha gathering: (below) in the late 1970s Royal Gurkha Engineers, training with the SAS, met with Ivor at the British Oak (now the Nell Gwynne) in Monkmoor Street.



Formal scene: Captain Williams with the 98th Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners just before their posting to Burma.



Street scenes: (above and below) In 1942 Ivor and friends explore the local shops in Kirkee.



## World Cup Memories



Jim Finney was one of the referees for the 1966 World Cup where he sent off two players during the quarter final between Uruguay and West Germany. He gave up refereeing after a road accident. Jim, seen here during a trip with Hereford Bowling Club, died at Hereford in 2008. (See the whole picture: go to [www.herefordshirelore.org.uk](http://www.herefordshirelore.org.uk) for the photo of the bowling team.

## Spinning reels

### When a night at the movies went wrong

One of my first jobs after leaving the Cathedral School as head chorister in 1949 was as a projectionist at the Odeon cinema in High Town, working with those monster machines with blinding arc lights, writes **Griff Lloyd** from Devon.

Main feature films in those days were contained in four large, 35 mm reels of film which had to be rewound by hand and checked carefully for any joins or splices after each screening.

On the day I left the job, saying my fond farewells, suddenly a weak join came unstuck in the projector gate spewing film all over the floor. Instead of shutting down the system the chief projectionist scrambled around to grab the loose end of the film, writhing

like a headless snake. But he managed to get hold of it and fed it back onto the take up spool, spinning it with all his might until all the loose film was taken up and back as it should be, thus not disrupting the enjoyment of the unsuspecting audience. Guess who signed for the rewinding and checking of that errant reel!



A 1930s cinema audience in the Cotswolds. (Photo: Huntley Film archive)

## Any old film?

Rewind, a new project from Flicks in the Sticks, is working on archive film for a screening at the Borderlines Film Festival next spring. Rewind is collaborating with the Huntley Film Archive, based in Ewyas Harold, which contains thousands of old films, but few from Herefordshire.

Do you have any old home movies you'd like to share? Let us know at 07845 907 891 or [info@herefordshirelore.org.uk](mailto:info@herefordshirelore.org.uk)



Check out [www.herefordshirelore.org.uk](http://www.herefordshirelore.org.uk) for archives of all past In Our Age publications

## Family photos?

Call us at In Our Age if you have some photos to share

## Railway recollections

In *All Our Yesterdays* Elizabeth Cutcliffe from Hoarwithy recalls life at Fawley Station.

Tom Chamberlain from Kings Cuple joined the railway as a porter in 1950, cycling daily to Holme Lacy. At the station (and later at Fawley) he kept the station clean, lit the fires in the Waiting Rooms and Ticket Office, whitened the platform edge, weeded the flower beds, issued tickets and carried baggage. He cleaned, filled the paraffin lamps that lit the station on wintry mornings and nights, and on Tuesdays climbed the gantries to renew the signal lights.



Elizabeth, in the back of the car, with her parents outside *The Harp* at Hoarwithy.

Goods and parcels were weighed, labelled and dispatched on the right train and received for collection, including a fish frail sent every week to Lady Cockburn who collected it in her chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce, with a two shilling tip for the porter.

At Fawley Mr Whiting the postman met the early train and delivered the mail on his bike to Hoarwithy and Little Dewchurch post offices. After a rest he set off to empty the post boxes and deliver the mail to Fawley for the Gloucester and Hereford trains.

Sugar beet went by train to Kidderminster and milk to Cadbury's at Leominster while coal, building materials, cattle, sheep and timber added to the weight of freight that travelled by along the old Hereford to Ross line.

The line was single track with a passing place at Fawley. A signal system involving train drivers collecting and carrying a big key along the single-track sections ensured that two trains never met head on.

*All Our Yesterdays* A History of Hoarwithy by Elizabeth Drayson Cutcliffe costs around £6 and is available at most local bookshops and Tourist Information Centres



The old Hoarwithy shop.

## The final ride

Another country memory from John Thacker.

I was 11 when my Dad bought me my first bike, a Raleigh Sports costing £6. 5s. And it was for me to cycle to Luton Grammar School, three miles there and back. Of course those were the days of the blackout and if you were cycling home at night you had to have your lights covered so they just showed two, tiny slits.

You had more freedom in those days: I used to cycle to Bedford, the railway to see the Coronation Scott go by near where the Great train Robbery would happen later, near Bletchley. I remember going up Barton Cutting talking to an old tramp: what would people think today?

When I came to the farm near Bromyard, September 1942 I brought my bike. I rode to Luton Station, put it in the guards van there, then into London. Rode across to Paddington Station, into the Guards Van again to Worcester, change to Bromyard then rode into the farm.

Your bike was your friend then: you could not go anywhere unless you got your bike.

One friend, John Yarnold was courting a girl called Molly Smith at Stoke Lacy and he used to ride all the way over there, then back to Tenbury Broad Heath ready to start work at the War Ag. At seven in the morning.

Shirley and I would bike to dances and come back in the middle of the night. The last time we rode our bikes was after riding to a dance at John Moore's hop farm at Shelsley Beauchamp. Coming back Shirley got a puncture and I had to push the two bikes seven miles home! We decided after that we'd never bike again and we bought our first car, a 1932 Austin 7 for £70. It was 1947.





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# NEWS AND VIEWS

## Plane building

Unlike old Lancaster or Halifax bombers, there are no Stirlings left intact, writes **Bruce Clark** from Hereford (see IOA 16, page 6, Final Flight of Short Stirling Mark 1 EF352). However there is a Stirling Project based RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire. There are more details at: [www.stirlingproject.co.uk](http://www.stirlingproject.co.uk)

## Home Guard

"That's my mother's father, Frank Howells, second from the right on the front row," writes **Jackie Jones** from Bobblestock, Hereford. And that's Mr Cornford in the back row on the right. I enjoy your magazine - wish there could be more of them!" There's another photo from Jackie on our website [www.herefordshirelore.org.uk](http://www.herefordshirelore.org.uk) of girl guides, photographed at the Baptist Church in Commercial Street, Hereford.



## Hole in The allotments

"I grew up in Church Road Tupsley and remember the Tupsley Huts," recalls **John Slatford** from Surrey. "The old brickworks closed just as the war broke out and the land was requisitioned by the army. The huts were built around 1940 and various units used them until the US army started arriving in '42 or '43."

John also remembers The Knoll next to the camp. "My father had an allotment in the garden and in early 1944 a Percival Proctor from RAF Madley crashed there on a Sunday morning. I was there minutes after to find a huge, smoking hole."

## Family matters

We've heard back from a reader responding to the IOA contributor wanting to learn more about their adoption, and asking for news of a former superintendent at ROF Rotherwas (Family matters: IOA 16). The lady who phoned did not leave her number. If she would like to get in touch we may be able to help. Call us on 07845 907 891.

## Searching for my aunts

"My aunts, Henrietta and Evelyn Stanton with their sister Rita Ethel Lamerton ran a ladies' clothes shop in Hereford, but left for Malvern after the flood of 1946. Can anyone remember them or the whereabouts of their shop?" asks **Ken Stanton** [kentstanton@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:kentstanton@tiscali.co.uk)

## Over the hill?

The dubiously titled *Over the Hill?* nevertheless promises to highlight the challenges faced by older people in country areas and highlight some of the better ideas for solving them. It's run by the Rural Media Company's Jan Bailey with Age UK, ACRE and the BBC English Regions. Contact Jan to get involved: [janb@ruralmedia.co.uk](mailto:janb@ruralmedia.co.uk) or 01432 3444039.

## French connections

The new Mortimer History Society, devoted to studying the medieval Mortimers is holding its autumn conference at Ludlow Assembly Rooms on September 18. Ralph Mortimer, from the Mortimers of Normandy was granted Wigmore Castle after the Battle of Hastings and the family's story presents a microcosm of English and Welsh medieval history. [www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.mortimerhistorysociety.org.uk) or contact Jason 01432 352753.

We are saddened to note the death of our committee member David Benjamin.

## Mott the Hoople?

Read about the scandalous time when P.J.Proby played the Wormelow ballroom, in our next issue due out in October. Do you have any musical recollections? Did you play - or go partying - with a band? Call our ever-friendly Eileen on 07845 907891, write to us (address on back page) or email [info@herefordshirelore.org.uk](mailto:info@herefordshirelore.org.uk)

## Travelling times

Broomy Hill Fair, 1911 reads the caption on this photo taken from *Romany Relics*, a new book by John Barker and Peter Ingram (details from John at [jbaker700@btinternet.com](mailto:jbaker700@btinternet.com)) and featuring the Jones family.



## Ghostly dog



"Baiting stables. Horse and trap on hire. All kinds of hauling done" promises the sign on the side of this Ewyas Harold barn. The old postcard comes from **Barry Ray** who noticed the ghost of a dog on the right of the boy that must have moved as the photo was taken.

## Send us your memories

Call us (07845 907891).