

In Our Age

Living local history

Winter 2011
Issue 19



Pomagne bound for New York - Page 5



G.I.s in Leominster
Page 2



Hereford's Skylon
Page 3



Ledbury's nursing mystery
Page 5

"IOA . . . taking a genuine interest in our past." Paul Cobbold

www.herefordshirelore.org.uk

All the best for 2011

In this issue **Lance Richardson** wonders what happened to Vivians' photography, **Ruby Fox** remembers Painters and the building of Skylon (these pages), **Steve Bunce** shares his fascinating photos of Baynams and Bulmers, (page 5) and **Clohilda Dickinson** describes her scrape with death at ROF Rotherwas (page 6). Check out our Company Archive on page 8.

Reader **Bryan Skyrme** wonders why we have to squash his subscription copy into such small envelopes. Sorry, Bryan, but folding is the only way we can send out 2nd class. We have to keep our £6,000 a year costs as low as possible. A big thank you to everyone who contributed to IOA funds with a calendar. Thanks too to **Helena McArdle** for mailing them and to Hereford Archive Office and **Bruce Budge** at BOSS for sponsoring it. We've still a few left – call Eileen 07845 907891 for your copy. Finally: did you make a New Year's resolution? How about a subscription to IOA? Every little helps.

Barons' Cross U.S. Army Hospital

Martin and Fran Collins want to find out more about the U.S. hospital based at Barons Cross, Leominster in the last War, for a book they are writing.

The hospital was set up to take casualties from combat in Europe. When the 76th U.S. General Hospital arrived in March 1944 medics were shocked to find how much work needed to be done make the site fit for purpose. Doctors nurses and medical staff knuckled down to ready the hospital for its first patients, paratroopers wounded during the Normandy invasion.



US G.I.s at
Leominster Station

From D-Day onwards the hospital was stretched to capacity.

In July the 76th left to set up a hospital on the continent and the 135th U.S. General Hospital took over duties at Barons Cross until the War's end. "We would like to hear from anyone with photos or memories of the camp, the personnel who worked there or the patients that were treated there," write Martin and Fran Collins, 3, Ipswich Crescent, Great Barr, Birmingham B42 1LY

Camp Foxley

Martin and Fran are the authors of *Camp Foxley*, a book about the camp on the site of Foxley Manor House near Mansel Lacy which served as a base for Canadian soldiers in the early part of World War 2. It later became a staging camp for various American units awaiting D-Day and transferral to the Continent. From 1944 it was the site of two U.S. hospitals taking patients from combat on the continent. Post-war, as many readers remember, Foxley was home to displaced Polish people and to Herefordshire families suffering from the post-war housing shortage.

Special offer: *Camp Foxley* £9, + £1.50 p+ p . from the authors.

Welcome return

Several IOA readers recall the preparations made for returning soldiers after the last War - **Phyllis Yapp** remembered hanging a Welcome Home sign in the window of the Builders Arms at Bearwood, Pembridge for her husband.



David Williams has come across this remarkable Welcome Home poster hand-painted by **Ray Bevan**, and sponsored by the Hereford and County Kennel Society. Call you can shed any light on this?



Where are our photos?

Does anyone know what happened to Vivian's photographic archive? asks **Lance Richardson**. "I'm a retired old RAF Boy Entrant who trained at RAF Hereford (Credenhill) from January '62 till July '63. When we graduated, group photographs were taken by Vivian of Hereford."

Vivian, above Mansfields Shoe Shop and next door to Lloyds Bank in High Town, Hereford, was started by Ada and Gertrude Durrant when RAF Credenhill opened. In IOA 10 Vivian worker **Thelma Holland** from Ledbury remembered photographer **Marjorie White** printing her photographs there.

Lance would like to see the old photos added to the RAF Boys Entrants website: www.rafbea.org.

(Read back issues at www.herefordshirelore.org.uk)

Films in spring

From memories of Hereford Cathedral to Made In Hereford and the stage life of Mott the Hoople, there's lots of local links at this year's Borderlines Film Festival.

Cathedral Close on film

The Cathedral's Close In Living Memory film will premier at The Courtyard during Borderlines Film Festival.

With recollections from **John Ellis** about the Close buildings, **John Ockey** on his wartime exploits as a Cathedral fire warden, and **Lara Latcham** on her attachment to a certain busker, In Living Memory promises to be a sell-out success. Two short film produced by youngsters from St James and Scudamore schools will also be screened: one concerns The Close in World War 2, the other about the day when Queen Elizabeth

dropped by to open the Mappa Mundi exhibition in May 1996.

Made by Catcher Media with In Our Age, and funded by the Heritage Lottery, the films mark eighteen months of memory gathering.

Cathedral Close In Living Memory: **6.15 March 31 The Courtyard** (01432 340555). Copies of the films on DVD are available from the Cathedral: 01432 374212



Above: 1935 as houses fronting the Close are demolished.

Right: The Queen at the Cathedral Close in 1996.



Archive Film Nights

Hereford May Fair in 1910, Tommies march out of the City in 1914, Kington Carnival in the 1920s, cider making in the 1930s, the cattle market in the

1940s and Leominster Three Counties Fair in the 1950s: these are just some of the cinematic delights to be screened as REWIND. Screenings continue through to the Borderlines Festival with showings at Moccas and Eye. (There's a full list at www.herefordshirelore.org.uk)



Made in Hereford

Sixty years ago, workers at Painters Brothers were finishing off the centerpiece of the 1951 Festival of Britain: Skylon.

Pictured right in this photo loaned by **Mrs Ibott**, Skylon was mounted on the Thames embankment beside the Festival Hall.

Not to be outdone Herefordshire held its own Festival of Britain celebrations: there was the 30 foot high imitation of the Skylon at the Home and Garden Show of Upper Colwall and The Wyche, a county picnic and WI pageant at Garnons, a Floral Fete at Merton Meadow and a special Cathedral service.



Hereford County Theatre ran a Festival of British Cinema with the Odeon and the Ritz showing different films every week too.

Were you there? Did you help out? Do you have any photos?

Borderlines Film Festival will mark the Festival of Britain with its own Skylon event. And the Festival's Jo Comino would love to hear from you on 01547 530615 jo.comino@borderlinesfilmfestival.co.uk.

Constructing Skylon

Ruby Fox remembers the construction of Skylon – she was one of the few women crane drivers at Painters.

"The shunter used to bring the steel at the top of Painters and unload it. Then it would go into the machine shop and then the acid tanks for galvanising." (Ruby's father, Harry Fox was head 'potman' there). "Then after it had all been tested it went off by road. Painters paid for a train for us to go down and see it: it was first time I'd been to London. On the way back we did a collection for the driver and fireman.

They wrote to thank us after: it was the first time such a thing had ever happened to them!"



Photo story: In Our Age celebrates more living, local history



Off to Wedgewood's: Bulmers staff on an outing to the Wedgewood factory at Stoke-on-Trent in July 1966 and (above) a train load of Pomagne leaving for America. (Photos" Steve Bunce)



Swainshill gardens: George Baynham, second from the left, front, was head gardener at Swainshill Nursery (left). The nursery staff set off on a charabanc outing (below) with George second from the left on board the coach. (Photos: Steve Bunce)



Another coach trip, destination unknown. Get in touch if you think you know who these day trippers are.



Young RAF recruits - but was this RAF Credenhill (see Where are our photos, page 2)? (Photo: Joan Hiles)



A team from Midland Red buses taken around 1949/50. (Steve Bunce)



March past (left): Hereford's High Town shortly after the War. Can you identify anyone in the picture?

A Ledbury nursing mystery

A reader contacted IOA after finding an old suitcase buried under a pile of rubble at the old Wyelands Caravan site next to the Wye about ten years ago. The site was later built over by ASDA.

Inside the suitcase were a little tea pot, shawls, shoes, nurses' aprons and caps, several framed family photographs and letters and cards from the 1960s and '70s.

The nurse pictured may have been Elizabeth or Betty Steffen, a nurse who had worked at Belle Orchard in Ledbury before going to live at the Caravan Park. Where is she now? Are there any surviving relatives who could be reunited with her personal photos?

Call us at IOA if you can help.



Turn of the Year

Back by popular demand

In Our Age's
lunchtime recital of
Herefordshire's
music and memories

With Branch Line singers
and readers Shona Warnes, Lyn Rushbrooke,
Richard Mitchley and Lindsey Garner



Turn of the Year

NEW DATE: Saturday April 30

2pm - 4pm

St Peter's Hall, St Peter's Square

Tickets on the door: £3

"Your last Music & Memories event was brilliant!"



Clohilda's sixth sense



Narrow escape for 'Canary Girl'

Clohilda Dickinson (right) was one of the 5,000 'munitioners' at the Royal Ordnance Factory Rotherwas, Hereford.

She emigrated to Australia in 1950 and was living in Thornlie, Perth until her death, aged 93, last summer. She shared her life story with daughter Sandra Watson.

Clohilda was gifted with a sixth sense. "Often as a child a sudden flash of intuition would warn me of something about to happen, but it was not easy to convince my elders of such impending incidents."

On a day out to Blackpool with her sister and Mum she demanded her mother's purse, convinced that it was going to be lost. Minutes later the purse had disappeared . . . along with their train tickets home.

Clohilda was one of a family of ten Foresters living at Christchurch, Coleford. When war broke out Clohilda, working at Lyons Bakery, London determined to do her bit for the war effort: she returned to the Forest of Dean and volunteered for munitions work.

"I was given a strict medical examination and pronounced fit and ready to start work. Working with high explosives, we worked alternate shifts of days and afternoon and nights. My day shift would start as I boarded the bus at 5 a.m. for the thirty-mile ride to the factory. As we entered the gates special police carried out random searches - woe betide anyone entering those gates with a match on their person.

"In the changing rooms we donned coat, overalls with our identification number sprawled across our backs, little pillbox hats made of the same non-flammable material and special shoes without nails."

Clohilda was sent to Unit 2 on the South Side, the most dangerous section of the factory where the shells were filled with explosives. The toxic chemicals turned women's skin and hair yellow, despite free baths and milk to counter its effects, earning them the nickname Canary Girls

"Even wearing masks it was impossible to avoid absorbing the deadly TNT and it began to take its toll." One day she felt too ill to work: "Taking a book I sat on a grassy slope in the countryside where I could breath the sweet fresh air. But her readings were interrupted by an explosion in the factory.

Three people were killed and several injured in an explosion in the mill where she should have been working.

In the next issue Clohilda faces another narrow escape. (Read Clohilda's story in her own words at www.herefordshirelore.org.uk)

John Thacker will be back with another country tale in the next issue of IOA

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Brilley Voices

**Brilley Living Archive Group,
edited Judith Gardner
Logaston Press £10.00**



Brilley and Michaelchurch are adjoining villages that lie either side of the Welsh border with Offa's Dyke running between them. The Brilley Living Archive Group have done a wonderful job in collecting the personal memories of people who live there, many of them farmers.

They are still very proud of their ancestors who farmed with little or no machinery. One remembers their first tractor, another (Joan Bufton) recalls a Rayburn cooker being installed in 1958 while others remember the wonders of electricity and water in the house.

They tell of good and bad weather and of how the winters of 1947 and 1962 brought life almost to a standstill.

The editor Judith Gardner has shown throughout the book the loyalty towards neighbours and a community spirit still going strong.

The images on the front cover made me want to find out who these people were: I was enthralled right to the end and enjoyed the glossary (explaining local words for the 'towneys' long forgotten but used in everyday language by the old timers. Congratulations to everyone who contributed.

Reviewer: Rosemary Lillico

**Do you have a local history
or a memoir for review?**

Send a copy to Herefordshire Lore,
PO Box 9, Hereford HR1 9BX

Rock on

Paul Cobbold writes: "In Issue 11 'The Pretenders' (a bit late now, I know) **Peter Chambers** was the father of Martin Chambers, not the reverse. I played with Martin in the Hereford group Karakorum from 1969 – 1972 during which time we gigged all over Britain often supporting major acts including Mott The Hoople who, of course, we knew very well. We also toured with Alexis Korner.

"And in Issue 18 **Brian Higgins** is mentioned ('Where is this?' Back page).

"My grandfather, **Sidney Higgins**, was the owner of Higgins the Pork Butchers in Widemarsh Street (it occupied the left part of The Mansion House, now Paperway). He ran the business until his daughter (my mother) **Mary Cobbold** took over the reins. Uncle Brian worked for many years as a loyal employee of my grandfather."

Historic Sollars

They're planning a parish history exhibition at Bridge Sollars this Easter. Can you help out? "We're looking at Bridge Sollars, Bishopstone, Byford, Mansel Gamage and Kenchester," says **Nancy Malins** on 01981590601 (nandgatbs-church@yahoo.co.uk

River rescue

Hereford Rowing Club member **John Slatford** recalls the fateful day in October 1952 when their brand new, £300 boat was swept broadside against the Wye Bridge.

"The river was flowing about five feet higher than normal and within seconds the boat broke into three pieces and each was swept through the arches with most of us clinging on for dear life – it was very cold! Robin Hammond and I were in the central section and we landed on the bank opposite the Cathedral. Back at the

club we were given large brandies.

In another section, cox Tommy Dawes was in difficulty because of his heavy clothing and the stroke, 16-year-old Jim Snead, had to support him. The rest of the crew were stranded up to their waists in water on the apron of one of the bridge pillars. They were rescued by boat and the broken sections were towed back to the landing stage.

"I wonder where are my fellow crew members today? I have some



of the names: Micky Bolt, Grahame Doody, Alan Blake, Robin Hammond and Jim Snead."

Tupsley huts

"I also lived at Quarry Walk, Tupsley in the early 1950s and have been trying to find a map showing the huts (Issues 14 & 15, News & Views), but it seems they are not on any map. Do any photos exist of the huts?" asks **Reg South**.

China shop?

Was there a G.C.Bromfield China Rooms in Hereford? asks **Colin Rennison**. "I've a porcelain jug with a black bat- printed impression of Hereford Cathedral on the front and Bromfield's printed on the base. The mug could be 80 to 100 years old." Email: colinastrong@yahoo.com

ROF Rotherwas

Efforts to preserve historic buildings at the former ROF Rotherwas, have failed. Local groups asked English Heritage to list the buildings. But English Heritage blamed the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS): "We can confirm that the DCMS decided not to list the majority of the site of the former Rotherwas munitions plant in September 2010." One building, a "piric

Keeping faith With the Fallen

Researching the human stories behind the names inscribed on cold stone war memorials can be very rewarding.

The British Legion in Hay have published a book on the service men whose names are inscribed on Hay and Cusop war memorials, To The Fallen. Meanwhile at St James, Hereford, **Faith Ford** carried out her own one-woman crusade on the names inscribed on the parish church memorials.

One story concerned Portfield Street's 29-year-old W. **Jack Grisman** murdered in Poland in April 1944. The son of William and Gertrude, and a St James schoolboy, Jack



married Marie Marchant whose parents ran Marchants in High Town (renowned for its smell of fresh, ground coffee).

Their daughter, Judy Maidment from Australia, revealed that Jack had been captured by the Germans after bailing out of his aeroplane. Imprisoned in the notorious Stalaf Luft III, which featured in The Great Escape. One of the 50 escapees, Jack was recaptured and on Hitler's direct orders, summarily executed. Faith's researches are online at homepage.mac.com/teejayeff/iblog/jaba

To the Fallen is available from local booksellers and proceeds go to the Legion's welfare work.

Send us your memories

Call us (07845 907891),
email us (info@herefordshirelore.org.uk)
or send us a letter

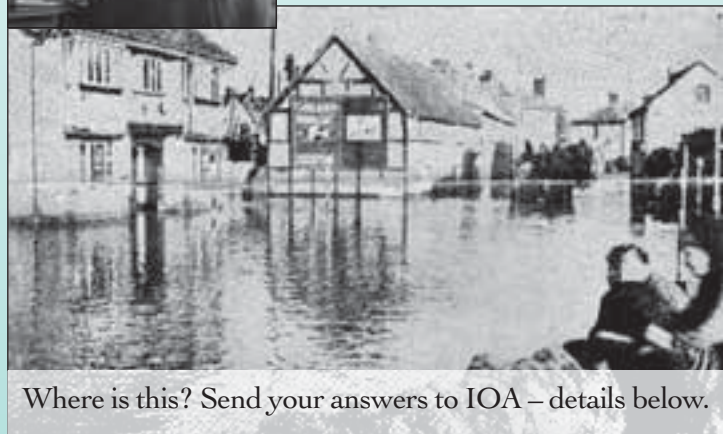
No. 6 Bridge Street

A host of readers recognised Bridge Street, Hereford in IOA 18 including **Paul Cobbold, Roger Carney, Brian Skyrme, Ann Morgan, Mr Thornley, Shirely Hiron, Ron Shoosmith** and **Mark Edwards** (who even sent in a modern photo). **Victor Herbert**, however, remembered every detail of the house with the balcony, No 6. "I was born there," he explained.

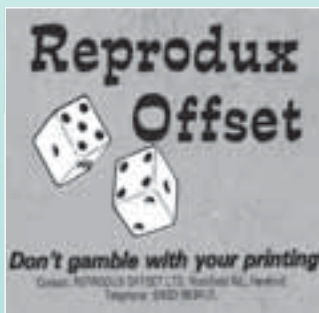
"In 1938 the Howe family turned it into a lodging house and family home." Victor remembered the front passage with the lodgers' breakfast room and a public café on one side, the cellar door on another and a third door through to the family living room and kitchen equipped with a single, cold-water tap. "Outside was the back yard with the toilet, the wash house with a gas copper, and an air raid shelter." Victor remembered walking from the house towards Wye bridge past "the church then the famous Wye Café, Franklin Barns and Mead and Tomkinson."



Number 6, Bridge Street with (left) resident Mrs Howe "my grandmother who was strict, but firm," writes Victor Herbert.



Where is this? Send your answers to IOA – details below.



Company Archive

In this, the first of our occasional glimpse into local company archives, we look at Reprodux, IOA's own printer for over twenty years.

"1966 was the year of the world cup and the year Reprodux was established in Rockfield Road opposite Rockfield DIY," writes Reprodux's **Alison Holmes**.

An early commercial break came when they were comissioned to print the Muppet Show stickers for TV.

"We moved to the Station Approach industrial estate in 1980 becoming one of the county's first lithographic printers. By 1989 we were embracing the new technology,

getting away from 'cut and paste' and investing in the new Apple Mac computers."

In 1995 Reprodux replaced their oil-based inks with vegetable-based inks, a move that helped them become runners up for Hereford and Worcester Chamber of Commerce's Green Awards in 2008.

Do you have a company archive you'd like to share? Call IOA - details below.

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