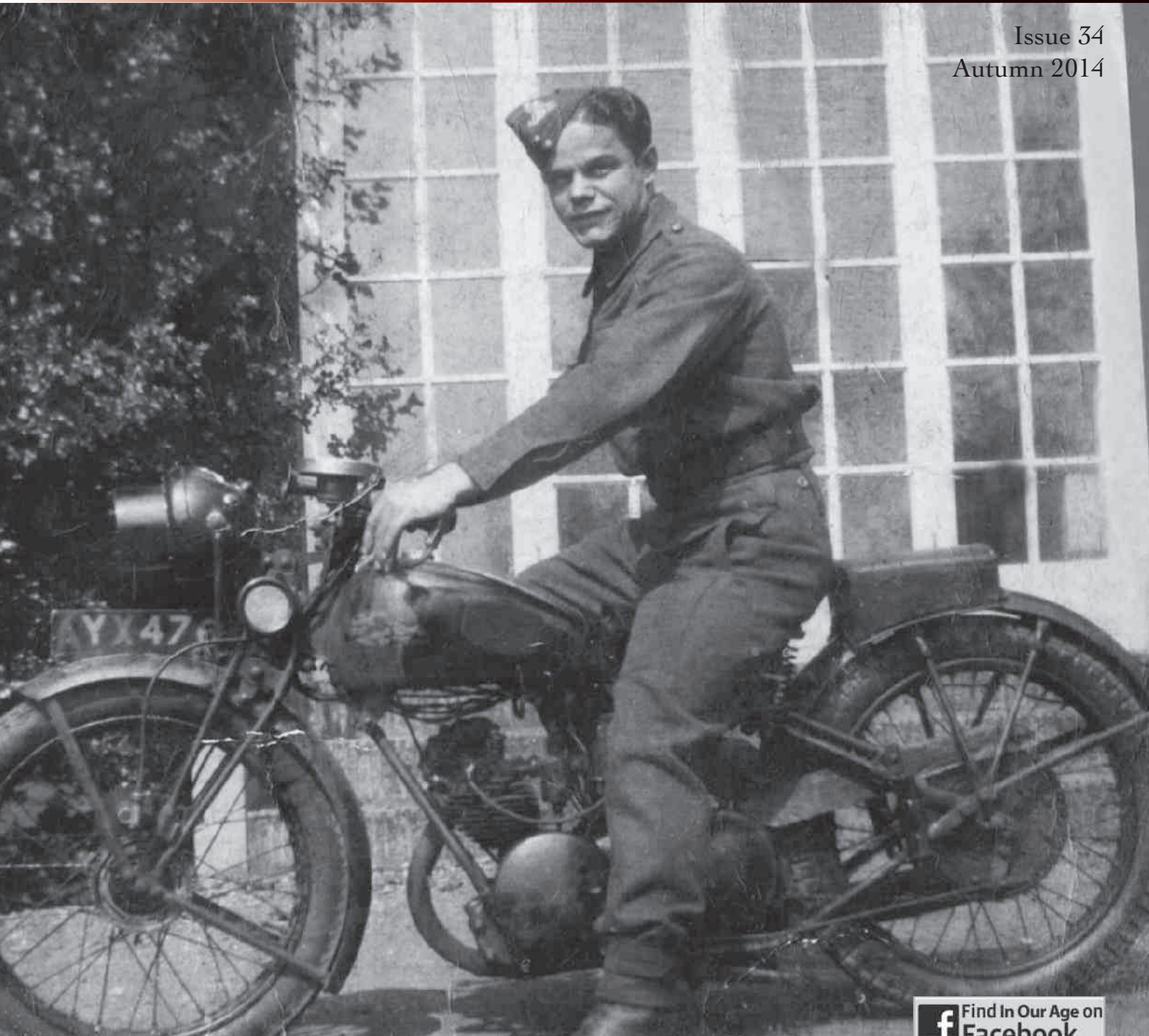


In Our Age

Living local history

Issue 34
Autumn 2014



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Convalescents at Woolhope
Page 3



Yeomans buses
Page 4



Ewyas Harold Brownies
Page 5

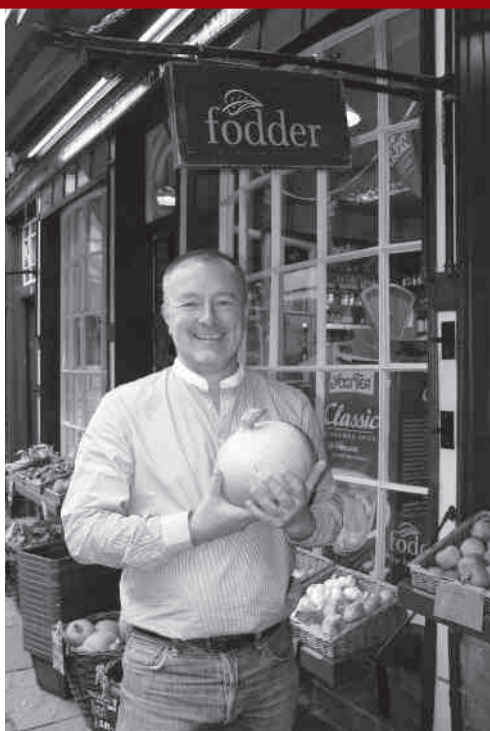
Join us for 2015

As a shopkeeper with many Herefordshire family and friends, I love In Our Age. We've published the best living, local history for 25 years. And we couldn't do it without you.

All our loyal Herefordshire Lore members are invited to renew their subscriptions. But if you collect your copy for free, consider joining for 2015. It's still only £12 for all four issues – fill in the slip on the back page.

We'll continue to distribute In Our Age free for those who find it hard to make ends meet. Without your support we may not be here in 2016!

Mark Hubbard, chair, Herefordshire Lore



Herefordshire Lore

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Women's work

Head in the flank, away to go!

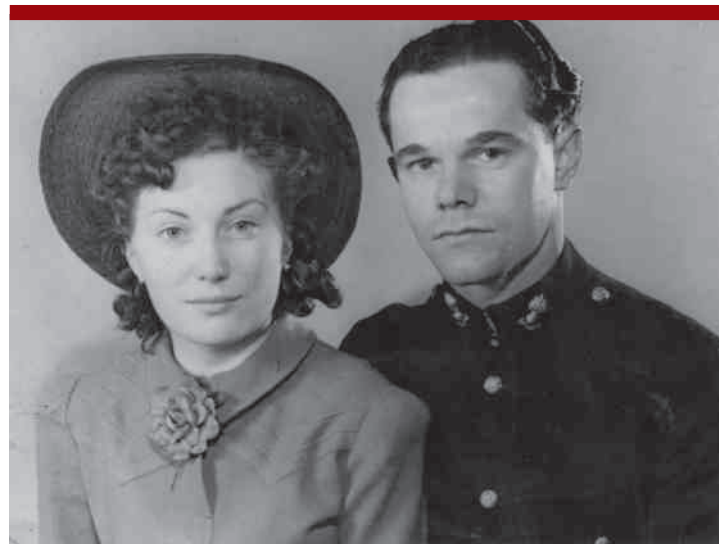
When the men went to fight, the women took over: **Doris Went** joined other Land Army girls to milk the cows at Bartonsham Dairy, Hereford: "We started at 6.00 a.m., hand milking, on the stool, head in the flank and away to go! Then we delivered the milk with the horse (he was called Tommy) and cart, then back to clean up." Like Betty Richards (below), Doris fibbed about her age: "I wanted to get in the Land Army, but you had to be 18 so I bumped my age up a bit. I was sent to work at Hay Lane Farm, Leominster, but when I met my future husband there, I came back to Hereford to work at Bartonsham."

Still in trousers

Jo Anscombe had no regrets about joining the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the women's branch of the British army. She served on a searchlight battery and an east coast radar station and nearly died when a V2 fell on Woolwich, London. "We sheltered under a washbasin and the rocket killed one of the other ATS girls." Despite the dangers, she says, war work broadened her horizons. "I was glad to serve; and I still can't get out of the habit of wearing trousers."

My secret birthday

"I joined the ATS when I was 16," says Walford's **Betty Richards**. Believing she was the legal age, 18, she was sent to the NAAFI (Navy, Army, Air Force Institute) serving the army at Ashchurch, Tewkesbury. But when she was posted to Cyprus her manager spotted a birthday card shortly before embarkation: "Happy 17th!" "The manager rumbled me and I couldn't go. But they did keep me on." The 17-year-old ran the NAAFI bar and so enjoyed the work that she served in several county pubs including the Cross Keys and the Prince of Wales after the war. "I wished I'd bought a pub after," she says.



When Betty bunked off

My aunt Betty Wood and grandmother Gwendoline Wood (below) lived at Ross Road, writes **Sue Pensom**. When war broke out they both went to work on the munitions at Rotherwas. On July 27 1942, three days before her nineteenth birthday, Betty was preparing for work when she heard stones being thrown at her window. It was her boyfriend, dispatch rider Norman Smith, and he persuaded her to bunk off and spend the day with him. It probably saved her life: that morning the factory was bombed and around 17 were killed and 24 injured. Betty (above with Norman) died in 2010 aged 87.



Front page: Dispatch rider Norman Smith, Betty's saviour.

Woolhope's convalescents

June Smith recalls her dad, Bill Jones, Wessington Court's head gardener.

Wessington Court, Woolhope, owned by Mr. Bond, director of Evans Cider Works at Widemarsh Common, and his wife was a convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers, mainly from the Scots Regiments in the last war. Bill Jones, writes daughter June, had been head gardener there since 1933, shortly before he married Winifred Lloyd.

Bill provided the injured men with fresh fruit and vegetables, mended shoes and cut their hair. "When the ambulance arrived father would help unload and settle the men in their wards before giving each a hair cut - they said it made them feel human again." Villagers also dropped in for a trim or shoe repairs: "It was all make do and mend," says June.

A couple of soldiers, "mostly 'Jock No. 2' and Sandy", would meet seven-year-old June as she returned from school. "One time Sandy picked some lilac flowers for me to take home. Next day Father told him off for picking them although, looking at him, I could see he was trying not to laugh."

Once a month the Mobile Picture Unit arrived to screen Pathé News, a comedy and the main film on a screen draped down the stair case. "There was a special chair in front for me, wheelchairs behind and and room for bedridden patients at the back.

"There were nervous moments when planes flew over at night - the greenhouses must have looked like water from above. Our dog knew the difference between ours and the enemy's planes, wagging his tail at ours' and growling at the Germans."

The soldiers often returned to battle although one, Jock, married a local girl and worked at Marks and Spencer. "I wonder how many of those boys came through the war. There was a Belgian, rescued on the beach at Dunkirk, who spoke no English when he arrived: he left fluent, but with a strong Scots accent. It was a tough time, sometimes sad, but it had its happy hours."



Above, Bill Jones and his beloved Atco mower. Below, young June Smith with playmate John Matthews, later head of Bartonsham Dairies.

Our dog knew the difference between ours and the enemy's planes, wagging his tail at ours' and growling at the Germans."



Banned!

Hereford's Edgar Street football ground has rarely witnessed a sporting dramas to rival that of Christmas Day 1917, writes **Julie Orton-Davies**. Rotherwas Munitions Factory sent two girls football teams, representing the Canteen and the Engineers, to battle it out in front of a record crowd. Having bought their kit with fund raising dances and whist drives, and learned the game playing against the young apprentices, the girls played a close contest with no score until the final minutes when Margaret Lucas scored for the Canteen.

The Football Association later banned women's football from their grounds for 50 years.

Julie will give her talk, Canaries to Poppies 1914 – 2014, about the Munition girls at The Pavilion, Castle Green, Hereford at Wednesday Novemembr 26 at 6.30 (www.bartonshamhistory.org.uk)

Grandson Tim Smith loaned this unique photo of his footballing grandmother, Sadie Smith from Almely (centre) at the National Filling Factory around 1917.



From My Album: *Michael and Maisie Griffith, Annie Lilwall and Ivy*



(Above) Thanks to reader **Mike Wilmont** who spotted this remarkable photograph of Food and Homes Minister Clement Attlee shaking hands with munition workers in July 1941. The image is from the Imperial War Museum (www.iwm.org.uk/collections) which also holds a copy of our *In The Munitions – Women at War in Herefordshire* (£10 + £2.50 p.&p. from Herefordshire Lore). **Maurice Joseph** recalls how his father Fred, an inspector at the factory, cycled in from Credenhill with special constable William Walton from Kenchester. A Hereford Times cutting from reader **Andy Taylor** reveals William's fate: "Two workers were killed and 33 injured as the

result of an explosion at a Royal Ordnance Factory in the west of England on Tuesday night. The dead were named as Frederick Smith Raper, 41, and William Constantine Walton, 50."



Handling the hounds: Thomas Billings (left) with Jim, Harry Jones and Ben with the North Hereford hounds around 1930. (**Ivy Manning** – read Ivy's account of the Billings boys page 6)





(Above) Staff at Fearis, which served Hereford's High Town shoppers for decades, take time out for their Christmas party and a formal photograph. The photo from Annie Lilwall, shows her mum, Sylvia Dykes, third from the right, sitting on the floor, and her husband Fred, third from right in the top right hand corner.

Next July will be the
**70th anniversary
of Victory in Europe**
(V.E. Day).

Send us your memories
and photos of the historic
V.E. Day.



(Above right) Brownies' blanket effort: Ewyas Harold Brownies when Michael and Maisie Griffith (see below) ran the village store.

(Right) Michael and Maisie Griffith ran their Ewyas Harold shop until 1995. Michael's father, chemist and city councillor Gordon (above left), ran two pharmacies: 13, St Peters Street and 4, High Street "with Marchants the grocers, Harry Rogers the greengrocers and Greenlands on one side, and Rogers confectioners, Dewhurst butchers, Marchants the tobacconists, Evans hairdressers" (see IOA 30) "and Burtons on the other," recalls Michael. Far left, a Yeomans Tour to the West Country, summer 1950 with Jim Bowen in the driving seat of his AEC Regal, GCJ 454. Left, Michael helps navigate a narrow bridge.



Herefordshire libraries launch historic new website

Right: Are YOU in this? Designed to shame the civilian into volunteering, this first world war poster is one of the many items at www.herefordshirehistory.org.uk

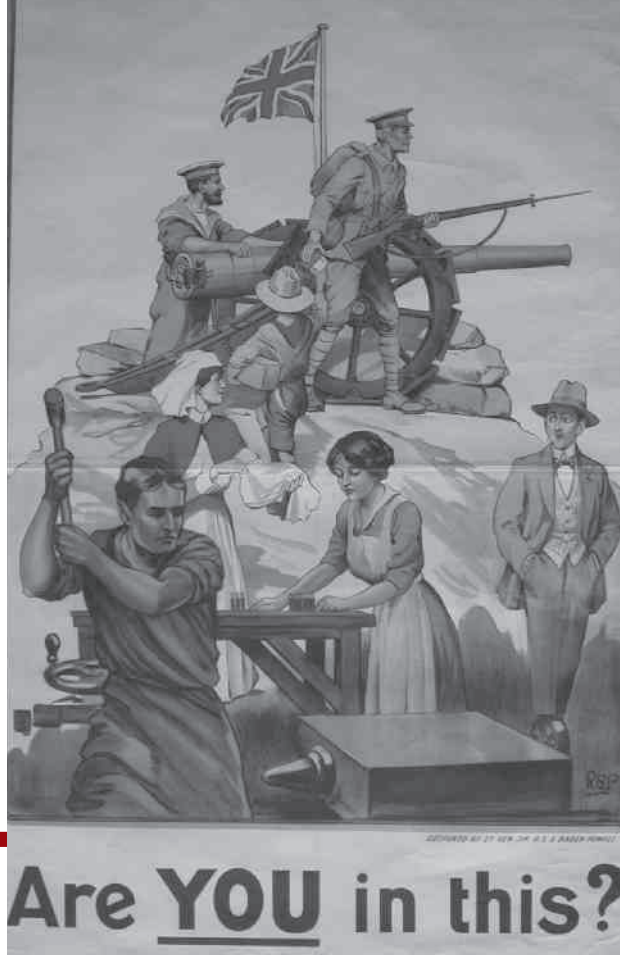
Wounded by war

Ivy Manning's story will be added to the new libraries website

Bodenham brothers Herbert and William Billings did many things together, writes **Ivy Manning** from Three Ashes. Both signed up for the First World War. (William, seated left below, rescued half dead from a trench, lost the use of his right arm). And both served as the village postmen.

Herbert, below right, rode a bike somewhat unsteadily: "I think he was shell shocked," explains Ivy. "He cycled to Dinmore Station to meet the mail train, morning and night. William, unable to cycle due to his injuries, instead walked miles delivering post to outlying areas including the Vern, the Manor and Hen House Farm.

In the evening William walked to England's Gate for a pint while Herbert occupied himself in the garden. He married, but following his wife's death from TB 12 months later, he rejoined William and their brother Thomas in their parent's home, where they were all looked after by their sister. The brothers continued working into the 1950s.



Watch out this autumn for a new local history website: www.herefordshirehistory.org.uk

Herefordshire Libraries's three-year long project brings together items held in the counties' libraries, archives and museum collections for the first time in a free online database.

Over 15,000 photographs, maps, posters, pamphlets, letters and diaries have been digitised and more are being added all the time. Some of the most poignant come from the Heritage Lottery funded project Herefordshire in the Great War, including municipal burial records and items donated by the relatives of local soldiers. Other fascinating items include local postcards and posters, and a burial certificate from 1688 which is the oldest item digitised so far.

The Herefordshire History website is available now.

You can get involved with Herefordshire History through donating images for digitisation, volunteering, or fundraising for the project at herefordshirehistory@herefordshire.gov.uk

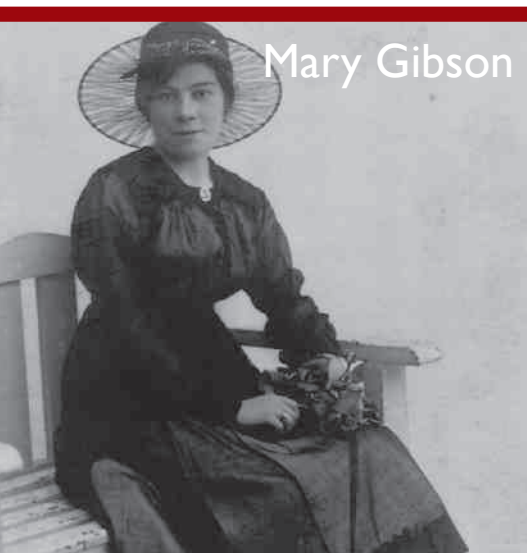
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Mary Gibson

"My Aunt Doll (Agnes Mary Nicholls) worked at ROF Rotherwas," emails **Michael Young** from Rugby. "She exchanged Christmas cards for many years with one of her work colleagues, the romantic novelist Catherine Cookson." Doll was born in 1902, Cookson in 1906.

Mary Elizabeth Gibson (above), born in 1894, worked here in the First War. In 1918 her brother died in action in Egypt while Mary went on to have a family of five, writes granddaughter **Pauline Martin** of Newcastle upon Tyne.

A bid to create a museum and memorial to women like Doll and Mary at Britain's last empty shell store, still standing in Rotherwas, has failed. Although the building faces an uncertain future, Herefordshire Lore is still campaigning for a proper memorial. "Send full details of former workers to In Our Age or follow the links on our website (www.rotherwasmunitionshereford.co.uk)," writes Barrie Mayne.

Frank Dale

The unusual art form, Five Years in the Fifties, was enjoyed by a capacity audience at Cawley Hall, Eye in August, writes reader **Philip Baldwin**. "The nostalgic film took us back over half a century of events and people in North Herefordshire. The collection of the late Frank Dale's cine films had been transferred to DVD by the Media Archive for Central England. This was then edited into a fascinating half hour of local film by the Rural Media Company with the North Herefordshire Film Group.

This was accompanied by performance poetry written and spoken by 'fire poet' Philip Wells and a fluid performance of live music composed by Kim Humphrey performed on flute, viola (Hereford-born Perdy Syers-Gibson) and double bass with recorded backing. The sumptuous combination of these talents resulted in an evening which will long be remembered!" The film, which features reviewer Philip's grandfather, Archer Baldwin, will be shown on Friday November 21 at 7.00 p.m. in the Market Theatre, Ledbury.

Letter from America

A photo of a Navy master carpenter, Ernest Morris, standing beside a dirigible in Italy during the First World War was a family mystery, writes grandson **David Robinson** from North Carolina, USA. "The photo hung in my grandparent's Ledbury Road home." Less of a mystery was the photo of David's mother and brother Philip published in a 1960 Hereford Times. You can see the photo on Facebook In Our Age) although, writes David, "the singular achievement of becoming 15,600th patient for a mobile x-ray is a mystery - or am I missing something?"

Hatton's horses

Brian Hatton was fascinated by horses, writes **Robin Thorndyke**. As a child he was intrigued by all types, even those delivering goods to the door of the family home at Hereford.

Away at school in Swansea he rode on the beaches and painted horses and then, at home, he adopted the farm, Warham Court where farmer James Powell bred shire horses. Here Brian drew and painted in farmyard and fields, horses ploughing, harrowing, carrying the harvest and hauling timber. His work encapsulates rural life in Edwardian Herefordshire. Credit to farmer Powell who allowed the youngster to wander, engrossed amongst the working horses filling his sketchbook with drawings.

War came in his mid twenties and Brian naturally enlisted in the cavalry: the Worcestershire Yeomanry. During training Brian illustrated camp life including officers

such as Colonel Lutley of Brockhampton Court. His drawing of the colonel's charger is a fitting tribute to Brian's equine artistry.

Brian was killed in action in the Sinai Desert on Easter Sunday morning, April 23 1916.



Brain teaser

Where was this north Herefordshire tea shop (photo: Michael Griffith)? It still stands today. **Mr. Harper** solved the mystery of our last teaser (IOA 33, page 5): "It's High Street, Hereford with the old bank building on the right and All Saints church on the left." Local author **Derek Foxton**, who is currently giving talks on Hereford in the First and Second World Wars, believes it was a Buffaloes or Masonic parade around 1910.

National Service

Rosemary Lilico found an old National Service Card for Kevin Pike at a market sale. "He may have been in the Home Guard," says Rosemary who wonders what became of Kevin.

Beryl's designer shoes

The late **Beryl Sadler** from St. James, Hereford worked at Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) Rotherwas' pay station during the war. When V.E. Day came, as she told Penny Jones, she was ready to party: "I'd made my own shoes with a high, wooden wedge heel to which I nailed strips of red, white and blue webbing. They were a picture." Proudly she sallied forth into High Town with her brother, home on leave from the RAF. But the shoes fell apart leaving Beryl walking on a bed of nails. "I had to surrender eventually, remove the offending footwear and get my brother to piggy back me home. He maintained he was never the same after. So much for designer shoes."

The Forgotten Forge

My grandfather, blacksmith George Davies, owned a forge in Bath Street (now Harrison Street, outside the Linden Villa flats, below), writes **Thelma Netherway** (delsnet@hotmail.co.uk). "Previously he took over the smith's in Old Eign Hill, Tupsley when owner George Snell died."



By strange coincidence Thelma met George Snell's grandson at a Hereford Family History Society meeting and she hopes to locate the site of the Tupsley smith. Her research suggests it was close to Tupsley post office where, according to the 1901 census, George Snell and his family lived at Vaga Cottage, above.

Phone girls



Hereford's Barton Road Cordless Exchange opened in the 1970s replacing the switchboard, one of the country's first automatic systems, behind the Broad Street post office. This, in its turn, replaced the old manual telephone system in East Street. The Exchange brochure illustrated hard working telephonists Chris Pugh (front), Rita, Doris the supervisor and Thelma in white according to Facebook followers (Facebook In Our Age).

Chris Martin worked in the locomotive shed on which the Exchange was built, "along with 112 drivers, 87 firemen plus fitters, steam raisers, boiler washers and coalers." Did you work in either place?



Herefordshire Lore – Join in

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