

In Our Age

Living local history

Issue 37
Summer 2015



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Out of Barton Yard

Eighteen years on a fireman's shovel

Johnny 'Breck' Davies (right) joined the Great Western Railway in 1942 as a 14-year-old lad porter, doing jobs such as keeping his 26 oil signal lamps charged and clean, and knocking up, waking the railwaymen during the early morning blackout. After 18 years as a fireman ("18 years on the shovel"), he drove both steam locomotives and diesel engines for the rest of his working life. ("Diesels were good: they needed so much less maintenance, but you were on your own; you lost all the camaraderie.")

He started out at Tallylyn Junction, Brecon and after a spell in Bristol ("a massive depot, bomb damaged like the town centre") came to Hereford in 1946. Aside from a spell as a driver at Oxford, Hereford and Barton Yard became home.

He passed as a driver in 1959 – "it was a lot to learn: you had to know things like how a steam engine works and testing for faults" – and moved to diesels shortly before the Beeching axe slashed the county's railway network.

Mainly self-educated, thanks to railwaymen like Hereford's Jack Cormes, who organized twice weekly informal adult education classes, John became deeply involved in the labour and union movements.

As he prepares to donate his papers to the new Hereford Archive and Records Centre, John reflects on the contribution Herefordshire's railway workers made to the county (below).



Flying the flag: the Hereford National Union of Railwaymen banner in High Town with John, far right.

The railway church

At one time there were around 400 employees working in the Barton Yard area (now the site of Sainsbury's), writes **John Davies**. Locomotive men had to live within a mile of their depot due to the calling-up system and Whitecross, close as it was to Barton Yard, attracted many. (Driver John Phillips, who conveyed Queen Victoria aboard the first train from Shrewsbury to Hereford in 1854, lived at 34 Ryelands Street until his death in 1914.) Not surprisingly Holy Trinity was regarded as the railwaymen's church.

The Great Western Railway encouraged employees to be active in the community. Many served as councillors and there were seven city mayors and seven justices of the peace including Fred Oldman, Phil Elliott, Walter Pearson, Angus Brymer, Bill Parker and Frank Wall. Railwaymen were involved in the Trades Council,



education, war pensions and the hospitals and they were especially generous with the Victoria Eye Hospital in Eign Street: steam locomotion resulted in many accidental eye injuries.



Rosemary Lillico welcomed visitors to the Herefordshire Lore stand at Hereford's Historic Day in July.

In Our Age

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Front cover: Beryl Farr joined Hereford telephone exchange after a spell at Rotherwas munitions factory during the last war. Beryl, who lived with husband Eric Taylor at 31 College Road, the house she had moved to aged 10, also served with the Home Guard and was dinner lady at the former All Saints School in Widemarsh Street.

Aussie migrants fall at Gallipoli

Fate of former Hereford men in 1915

The battle of Gallipoli, the fight to wrest control of the strategically important straits from the Turkish army in the Dardanelles in 1915, involved men from Herefordshire, Australia and New Zealand. Tragically it cost the lives of two former Hereford boys who had emigrated.

Postman William Charles was one of four sons of police constable William Charles and his wife Hannah of 3 DeLacy Street, Hereford. He emigrated after reading an article in the parish magazine about 'the happy useful life' that Australia promised.

The 20-year-old (pictured above right, centre, in Egypt) was working on cattle stations when war broke out, writes **Judith Morgan**. He joined the Australian Imperial Force in April 1915, but died at Gallipoli alongside many of his former Herefordshire mates that August.

In July another Herefordshire man, Neil Wells, was injured during the landings. The former Bromyard boy from Melbourne joined the 6th Battalion Australian Field Force. He wrote to his father at The Tan House, Bromyard: 'I got hit in the left arm, shrapnel, and both the upper arms. It knocked me out.' He died shortly after.

Judith adds a sad footnote to William Charles' story. William's older brother, Jim, enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery five months after his brother was killed. He survived fighting in France and the influenza epidemic of 1919. In 1923 Jim (far left, middle row), who was engaged to one Nellie Davies, was killed decommissioning a faulty shell at Credenhill. According to the inquest his was the second death at the munitions stores.



Kedgeree and cereals

Two readers recall their teenage years in service

Ann Basford was a between maid, a 'tweeny', at Combermere Abbey, the home of Manchester motoring magnate, Sir Kenneth Crossley. She was 17 and one of 14 servants. "I loved it: we had our food in the servants' hall – that's where I first tried kedgeree."

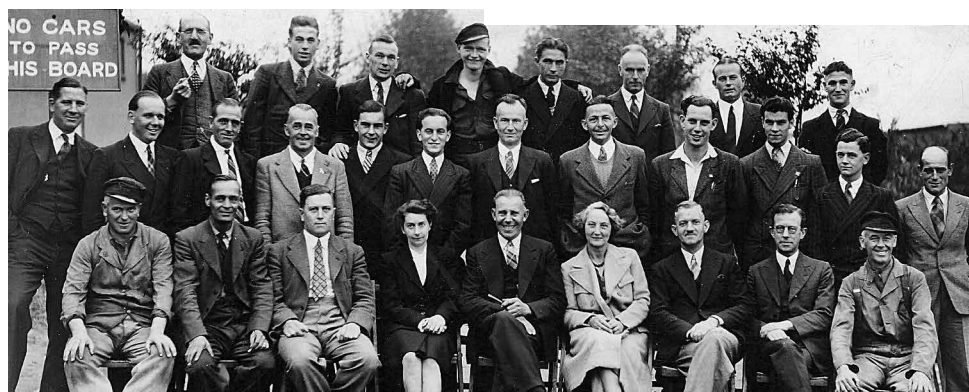
Joyce Bains lived at Grange Farm, Bosbury, working as a maid at The Grange owned by the Hellyers. "The Grange was only next door but I lived in. I'd wear a brown dress in the morning, a cap and apron over in the afternoon and evening to serve dinner.

"I had the top room in the house, always boiling in summer. I wasn't much good at getting up and Mrs Hellyer used to pull the servants' bell like mad to wake me. I'd get 2/6d a week and I'd never had 'cereals' before. We had them with cream!"



Harriet Oakes (left, marked x) in a donkey a trap around 1910. Harriet was in service at Wythall, Walford. Her mum, Mary Ann, who came from Weobley, was also in service as a 19-year-old at the Eating House at 1 St Peters Street, Hereford, run by a North American called Jane Maclean from Fredericktown south of St Louis, Missouri. (Photo: John Martin)

Redhill Hostel, Hereford 1947 and the Hereford railwaymen billeted there pose for a formal photo. Railwayman John Davies (middle row) recalls almost all: (Back, left to right): Les Twissle, Derick Davies, Dilwyn Davis, Jimmy Talbot, John 'the Pole', Sid Ead, Morris Jones, Bomber Roberts. Centre: Walter Lake, Edgar Jones, Walter Donovan, Alan Bowden, Alan Evans, John Davies, Dai Lewis, Sam Wilby, Alan Roberts, unknown, Bill Yoxal, Glyn Roberts. Front: Maldwyn Davies, Stan East, Reg Hodges, Miss Reynolds (hostel), Horace Broad, Miss Bartlett (hostel), Ron Preece, unknown and Norman Crokorn.





Queen of the Works: **Esme Fosbery** from Fulham worked at British Wheel Studs in Rockfield Road, Crystalware in Holmer Road and Sankeys in Rotherwas. Sankeys, she recalls, used to elect a Queen of the Works at each plant. Sankeys, Hereford voted in Joyce Morris from Moor Farm and everyone went by coach to Bilston to celebrate ... with a crate of Cherry B in the back.

Esme also worked at Bulmers' pectin plant, left, recalled by reader **Pat Gwynne**. This same group was pictured on page 5 in IOA 25 (see it at www.herefordshirelore.org.uk)



Joan Davies at The Commercial in Commercial Road, Hereford. Joan ran the pub with husband Jack for 24 years. Previously they were at The Chase, in Bishops Cleeve.



Centre stage: **Jean Rees**, who featured on our last cover (IOA 36), sings at a 1965 charity gig in Windhoek, Namibia where she and her husband lived after her days on the Hereford jazz scene.



Drama in St Martins: Annie Jones and husband Charles and guests view floods outside 19 (formerly 7) St Martins Street, Hereford in 1947. The couple ran their house as a theatrical guest house (Charles was also a railway porter). They must have welcomed cyclists too. (Photo: Lorretta Jones)



Leominster revels: **Joyce Robbins** (then Joyce Fuller) was 14 when Bridge Street, Leominster celebrated VE Day (below). Born at Hamnish, Joyce joined in the fun in front of Mrs Meyrick's shop dressed as a soldier (Photo: Iris Wooles). It reminded **Jeanette Bates** of playing in Stonebow Road "in my green dress. When I went home my mother was standing at the top of the stairs crying. 'What's the matter?' I asked her. 'War just broke out,' she said. And then I remember, when I was six, dancing in the street on VE Day."



Eggs and bacon

Continuing our series, **Anne Milne** from Edinburgh remembers pigs and hens at Brockhampton Court.

As you know folk were encouraged to keep one pig at a time during the war, but had to give up their family's bacon ration coupons. My father, Jim Lewis, head gardener at Brockhampton Court, near Ross, duly obliged and a succession of white pigs was installed in one of the vacant pigsties on the estate. Nearby was a copper that was used to boil up cabbage stumps, outer leaves, potato peelings and other tasty vegetable cast-offs. The resultant 'broth' was mixed with bran and the pig was fed royally on the mixture. Each pig thrived and one year a pig weighed 20 score – i.e. 25 years of the family's bacon ration! (A score was 20lbs, so in today's terms that one was 181.5kg.)

Each Christmas the pig was slaughtered and my mother kept busy rendering down the fat to make lard for cooking, brawn from the pig's head, pig's trotter soup and faggots. It meant we had a nice joint of pork for Christmas Day.

Some meat was given to farmer Williams at Maythorn Farm who dry cured the sides of bacon for us, which were then hung, covered in muslin to keep out the flies, in our old-fashioned larder. Nothing was wasted.

A new young pig then arrived and the cycle began again. When the Williamses killed their pig we were given some meat.

Making the best faggots

Mary Wakefield Jones took issue with our faggots recipe (IOA 36): "Mother's were made with pure pig's liver," she writes.

"Our mother made the most delicious faggots. She never used lights and lungs, which are the same thing, and definitely not the gall bladder – the dog had those as a treat.

"Mother put only pig's liver through the mincer. Sage, onions, some flour and an egg were added in before the mixture was made into balls, wrapped in veiling (this was the layer of fine fat laid down when the pig reached a certain size) to hold them together. The faggots were then cooked."

Mary also recalls the proper way to prepare "my hobby horse": pork scratchings. "They were definitely not made from the pig's skin. There is quite a lot of fat found around the middle area on a bacon pig. My mother would cut this into cubes about one inch square and put them loosely in a skillet on a low heat. They would slowly dissolve, the liquid was poured off and a bit of salt added before it was put into a steen (a large crock) where it solidified into lard.

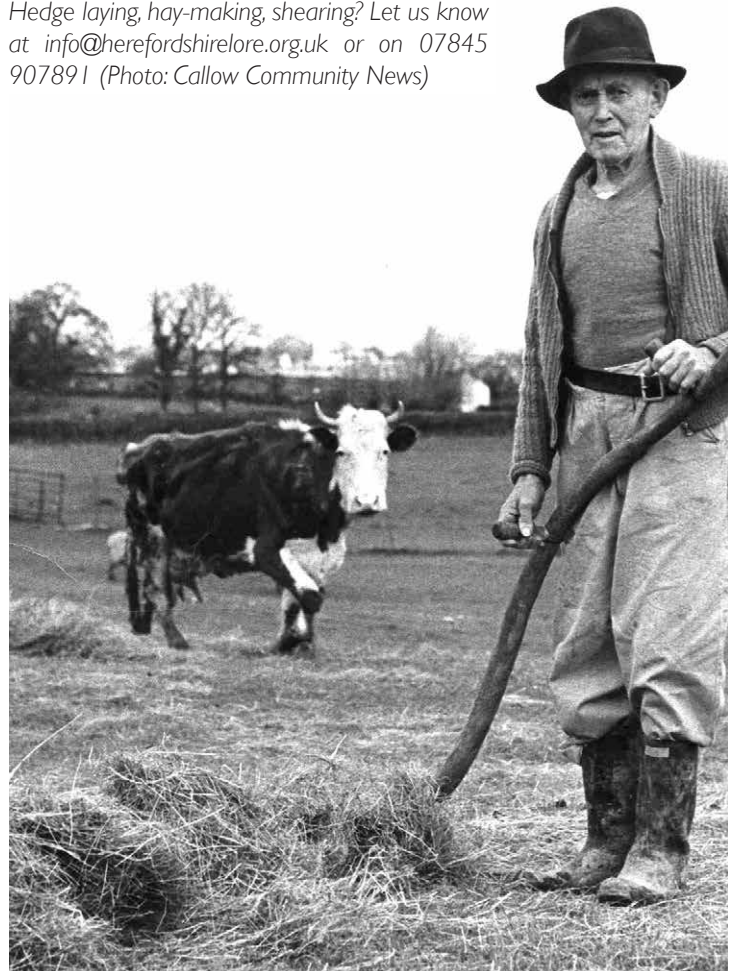
"The steen was sealed with a lid or a piece of greaseproof paper to be used during the next year for any cooking. The fibrous part of the fat that was left shrank down into little nibbles. Salt was sprinkled on them and they were allowed to cool. Now they were proper pork scratchings, not the teeth breakers you buy by the packet in pubs."

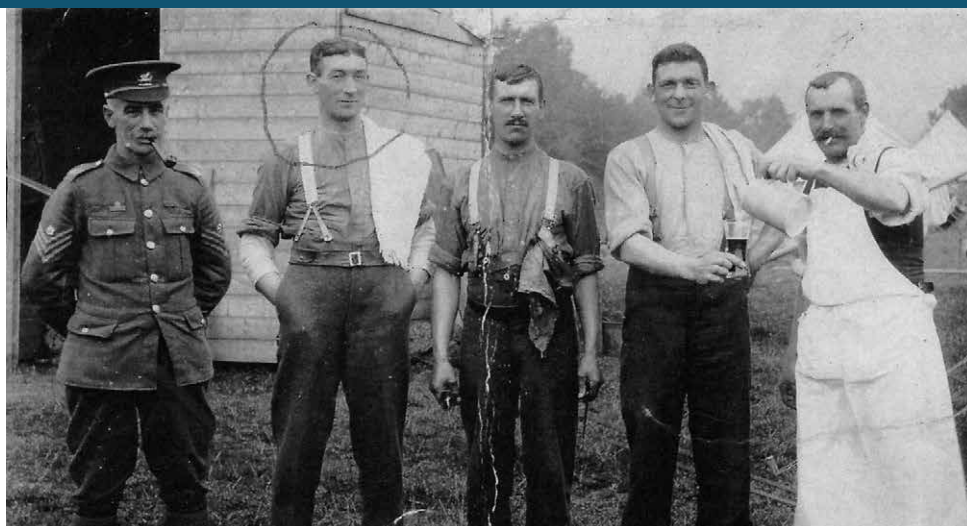


Pork cuts: Mr Mailes prepares the meat at the shop in Widemarsh Street, Hereford in the 1950s. (Photo: Mailes/A Slap of the Hand)

Father also kept hens and I helped feed them with corn. When a hen stopped laying it was turned into roast chicken and another obtained. In Hereford, near the Old House before it was moved, was the farm supply shop, Wilsons, where father bought his grain and feed. No doubt there was some under-the-counter exchange involving my father's delicious fruit and vegetables.

Tom Eynon from the Callow, Hereford handling an old fashioned English scythe. Do you have photos of family members handling traditional tools? Hedge laying, hay-making, shearing? Let us know at info@herefordshirelore.org.uk or on 07845 907891 (Photo: Callow Community News)





What happened to Fred's grave?

Diana Walker from Spalding hopes to solve the mystery over the whereabouts of her grandfather Fred Mole's grave. "As a family we'd like to erect a headstone especially as he now has a great-great-grandson named Freddie." Sgt Alfred 'Fred' John Mole (ringed, above), holder of the Mons Star, was wounded in 1915 at Ypres with the 3rd Monmouthshire Regiment. Discharged in 1917, Fred worked as a policeman at Rotherwas munitions factory and lived at Pleasant Place, Clehonger. He died, aged 52, at Hereford Hospital on 13 September 1933 and his funeral was held at Clehonger. "It's been suggested that he committed suicide," writes Diana, wondering if that is why they cannot trace his grave.

Nuttall and Budgies

Former Hereford Art School student **Madeleine Went** remembers Jeff Nuttall, (front cover IOA 36). The 14-year-old Madeleine attended Hereford Art School, then at The Pavilion at Castle Green under the principal Mr Milligan. Jeff, whose father was headmaster of Holmer School, was a fellow student before becoming a lecturer there and marrying fellow lecturer Jane Louch. "I heard a BBC programme once and, although he never appeared, I knew it was him talking by that laugh of his."

Madeleine specialised in ceramics, encouraged by her parents, John and Hilda Williams. "John worked on the lorries at Morgan and Friends in Edgar Street eventually becoming their sign writer."

John was also a keen canary breeder and show judge thanks to the long arm of the law. He had won the top prize of a canary at the May Fair, but the showman refused to part with the bird, offering him £1 instead. A passing policeman persuaded the showman to play fair and the bird formed the first of John's breeding stock.

Isolation hospital

Joyce Densham has more memories of her father, ambulance man Harold Vaughan, at the Isolation Hospital in Tupsley. "I was three when we moved there. He was invalided out of the war after serving as a submariner aboard the American built H12. His wife, Sarah, was from Hope-under-Dinmore. He had a horse and a brown ambulance, and a larger van to collect clothes and bedding from infected houses which he brought up to the hospital and disinfected. There was a typhoid hospital too, stood a couple of fields away."

Beautiful Hereford

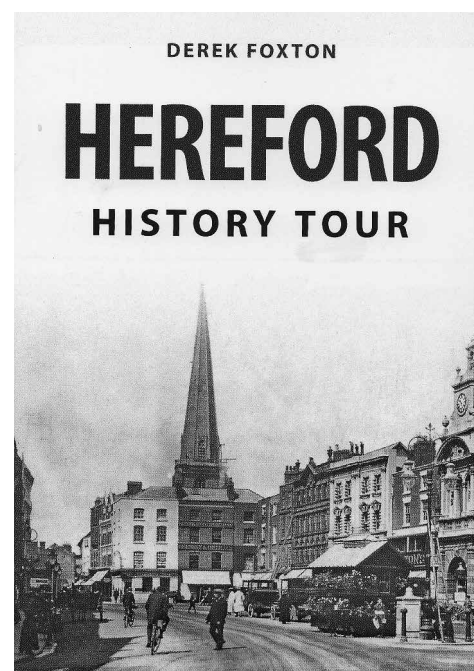
In his recently published *History Tour* (Amberley Publishing, £6.99) Derek Foxton once again takes us through our beautiful city of Hereford, writes **Rosemary Lillico**. With images of old buildings and places of interest, brought up to the present day with first-class photographs, this book makes us old Herefordians proud to remember the city and be part of its past.

Runner Bob Cole

Flax hacker Jane ('Jenny') Clifford left her family home near Cork, Ireland in 1918 to work at Rotherwas Ordnance factory. Grandson **Ron Jones** (snowball136@gmail.com) wants to find out more about his grandmother Jenny who later met and married William Collins. **Steve Herington**, meanwhile, is researching the life of local long distance runner Robert ('Bob') Cole from Peterchurch. Born in 1891, Bob who later moved to St Margarets, died in 1960. Was he a conscientious objector in World War One? asks Steve. "He may have been arrested and held at a military detention barracks in Rotherwas."



Jenny Clifford, munitions worker





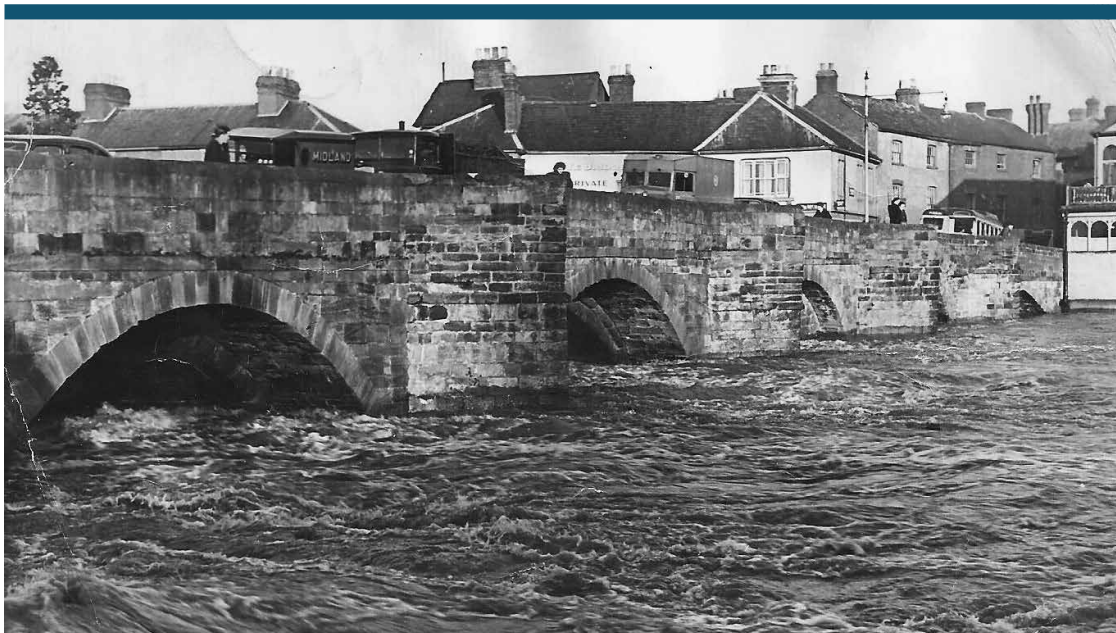
Saluting Grandfather

"Here's a fine view of Dinmore's Jubilee Café in contrast to the dismal view in IOA 35," writes **Michael Young** from Rugby. "We frequently travelled to Leominster on Midland Red service 432 passing the café and the RAC box opposite, always immaculate with its bedding plants and white-painted stones. Occasionally patrolman Mr Spicer, who lived next door to Granny and Grandad Exall in Caswell Road, Leominster, would be good for a wave as we passed.

"Grandad was night baker at Sid Tucks in South Street. He'd

set off at 10 p.m. and reappear next morning with a bottle of scrumpy, thick, cloudy stuff as it should be from, I think, the Bell in Etnam Street. He would sit down for a light meal and, if I was good, offer me a drop of the nectar despite the protestations of Granny and my mother:

"On our way home to Hereford and in season I remember children boarding the bus at Dinmore with arms full of wilting bluebells, pulled from the bulb rather than picked. I'm sure my mother was right in condemning the practice."



When was this?

The Wye rages through the county almost spilling over the old bridge. But in what year was the photograph taken? (Photo: Lorretta Jones)

Congratulations to Reg South for correctly spotting the Foley Arms at Tarrington in the last IOA. The second photo was of the Hereford Boys Brigade, loaned by the late Derrick Blake.

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