

In Our Age

Living local history

Issue 39
Winter 2016



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Messing About in Boats

Doris Kershaw (nee Townsend) recalls meeting Sir Percy Hull, G.B. Shaw and Edward Elgar with her grandfather John Marshall. But above all she remembers holidays on the wonderful River Wye.

My mother, Gladys Ruby, brothers Norman and John and I lived with my grandparents, John and Rosetta Kate Marshall in St Nicholas Street after my father died. John, a piano tuner and church organist at St Peter's and St Paul's Tupsley, ran the family music shop next door with Uncle Ernest Marshall from Callow. Uncle Leslie, Aunt Alice and children, Gill, Jocelyn and Bill, lived in Windsor Street.

The Marshalls were members of Hereford Rowing Club for over 50 years and many hours were spent on the Wye. My friend Barbara Jordan (of Jordan Boats) and I spent lots of time messing about in boats and were brought up to respect the river's dangers.

The most memorable fortnight of the year was when my relations came from Bradford for their summer holiday. The G.W.R dray brought their trunk in advance and they followed by train.

Each day we packed an enormous picnic and rowed upstream in two of Mr Crissall's largest boats, The Comet and The Ran-dan. Grandma steered and we rowed sometimes as far as to Bridge Sollars and Mornington Falls, but more often to magical Breinton where, from the shingle beach below Belmont Abbey, we could moor the boats and swim.

On August Bank Holiday weekend the Windsor Street family would join us, making a party of sixteen. Wilson the grocer opposite our house delivered food, while Gardiners the fishmonger provided fruit, veg and fresh salad. I remember buying 17 loaves for sandwiches from Burton's Bakery in West Street! We were well-drilled: baskets were quickly packed with food, cutlery, crockery, milk in terracotta coolers and swimwear.

In Our Age

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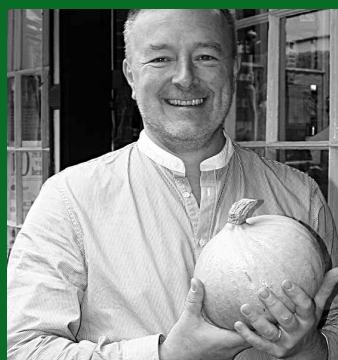
The outdoor life: family camping and swimming on the river Wye.

Once moored, we lit a driftwood fire and boiled a kettle for tea. Lunch was a major operation; my mother and aunts sitting in a row conveyor-belt style, slicing and buttering bread, adding salad, then meat. Grandfather always carved. Adults drank cider and we were treated to Corona.

Afterwards grandmother made daisy chains or balsam leaf hats trimmed with buttercups. There were nature walks to learn the names of the wild flowers. We gathered mushrooms and blackberries – I remember the maggots in both! After a game of cricket or rounders we returned to the boats and set off downstream, racing the expert Hammond family if we encountered them. A pennyworth of chips from Elcox rounded off an idyllic childhood Bank Holiday – with the tantalising possibility of a scoop of free batter bits.

Welcome to the new issue and recollections of wartime workers, telephonists, young farmers, old soldiers and a feast of readers' photos. Thanks to everyone who renewed their subscriptions and sent a donation. We can keep going for another year! Please subscribe if you can: details on the back. And remember: day centres and residential homes can take out a group subscription.

Chair: *Mark Hubbard*



Front cover: As plans are announced to build a better library in Hereford, librarians sort through the gifts during a book drive at Broad Street in 1943. (www.herefordshirehistory.org.uk) Have you had trouble finding your IOA? Check Herefordshire's other libraries, the Town Hall and Franklin House, Commercial Street. Or treat yourself to a subscription? Details on the back page.

Veteran awards

Marion Jones was awarded the Women's Land Army badge, **Reg Robins**, the Croix de Guerre for his part in France's liberation

Welsh woodlands

One winter evening in 1940, after Marion Jones (nee Moscrop, below) caught her bus back from work at the CWS bank in Balloon Street, Manchester; the Blitz began. "The bombs fell from 6.30pm until 7.25 the next morning, wave after wave dropping bombs." Two years later the city girl was surrounded by peaceful forests, working for the Timber Corps on a Welsh mountainside. "Leaving home for the first time in my life I arrived at Esgairgeiliog near Machynlleth after a six-hour train journey. I was amazed to hear Welsh spoken everywhere." She was to train with 12 other girls.



"A group of us would attend Y Capel Seisnig, the English Chapel at Machynlleth, then it was off in our overalls and heavy boots with supervisor Charlie 'Ty Put' for the three-quarter mile walk up Mynydd Fron-felen to separate cordwood from the brushwood with hand axes. Some days were spent sawing and loading pit props: "I saw my first snake under a pile of props. The work was hard and it sometimes poured with rain all day."

One time a forest fire broke out and burned for two days. "The timber girls were blamed and felt it very much although we were working under supervision and following all the rules."

After training, the city girl from Manchester was appointed clerical officer for the woodlands in Dovey Corris. "These forests were beautiful and different every day. I regret having played such a part in their destruction especially as, after the war they were replaced with softwoods. I know they grow much quicker: but where is the soul in them?" Marion met her husband-to-be in Wales and they settled there before moving to Hereford.



French firefight

Reg Robins was recently awarded the Croix de Guerre for his services in helping to relieve France. "I never thought when I signed up at 16 that I'd get a medal at 93," he says.

In 1938 Reg lied about his age (he was 16) to Recruiting Sergeant Bill Bullinger and joined the 159th Infantry Brigade at Friar Street barracks. Six years later his unit, which included his brother Edward followed the D-Day landings, tasked with fighting the German panzer tank units.

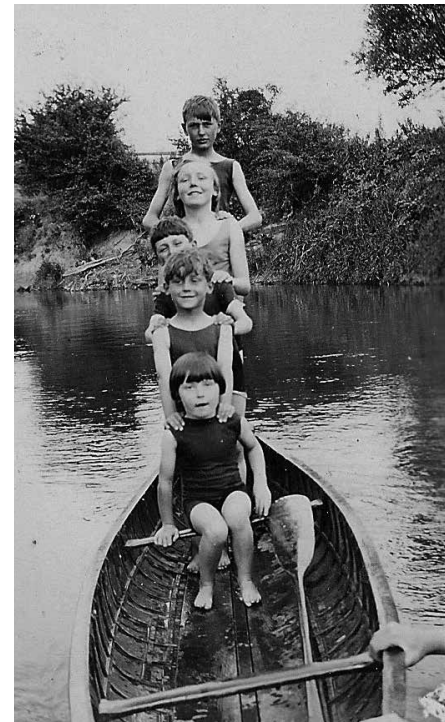
He soon encountered some German prisoners. "I signed to their officer to hand over his papers and he spat in my face." With his senior officer behind him Reg stayed calm although he admitted: "I was ready to land one on him!"

His brigade underwent tough training at the Duke of Argyll's Scottish Highland estate. "The Duke said 'I'll give you a pound for every fine day here' and it rained every bloody day for six weeks." But the men were now fit and fast, able to march at 3 mph in full kit, and ready for the battle for France.

Reg survived several near misses: his gun placement was blown up moments after he left it and later, his platoon was hit by a mortar which killed his best friend. In October Reg was hit by shrapnel and lost the use of his right arm for the rest of his life. A week later his other brother, Bill, was badly injured when their hideaway was given away to the Germans.

Invalided out Reg worked at Harcourt and then Thorns as he and Joyce from Leominster brought up their children Iris and Brenda. "To be honest my Croix de Guerre isn't for me, it's for the mates I lost," says Reg.

From My Album: Joan Clements, Jim Hardy, Lynden Haynes and Eddie Thompson share their photos



Above, Edith Griffith with her three sons Donald, Norman, Colin and friends, messing about in their home-built boat on the Lugg just below Dinedor. (Photo: Michael Griffith)

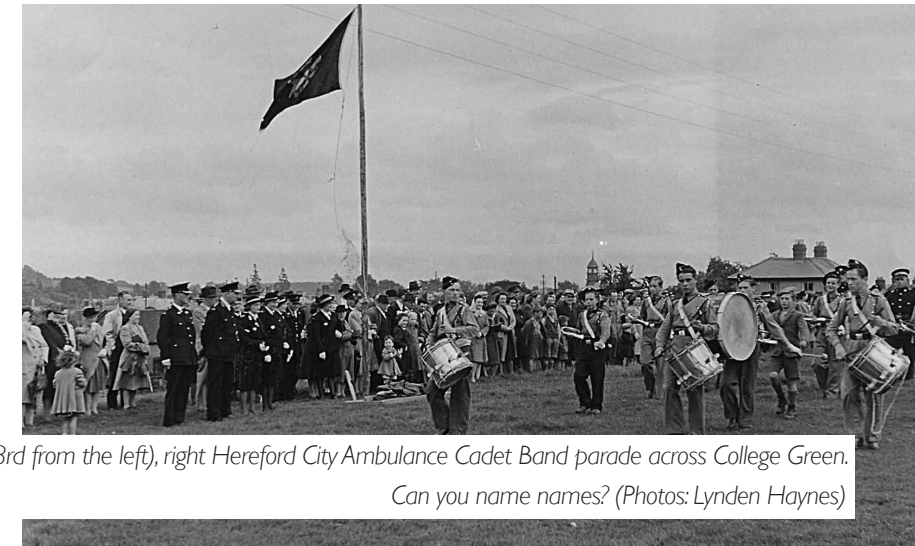


Left, Michael Young's postcard portrait of the Sydonia Bowling Green in Leominster. See Peter Halliday's comment on the back page.

The Russians are coming: Civil Defence was a big issue in the post-war years says **Joan Clements**, below second right. In 1954 she was lecturing on how to survive a Russian nuclear attack. "I'd lead people through fire, crawling along to keep out of the smoke, and practising with gas masks in a chamber on Burcott Road." The man in charge was Inspector Harris, formerly a police constable with the St John Ambulance.



Emergency measures: St John Ambulance in the 1950s with Frank Haynes (3rd from the left), right Hereford City Ambulance Cadet Band parade across College Green. Can you name names? (Photos: Lynden Haynes)

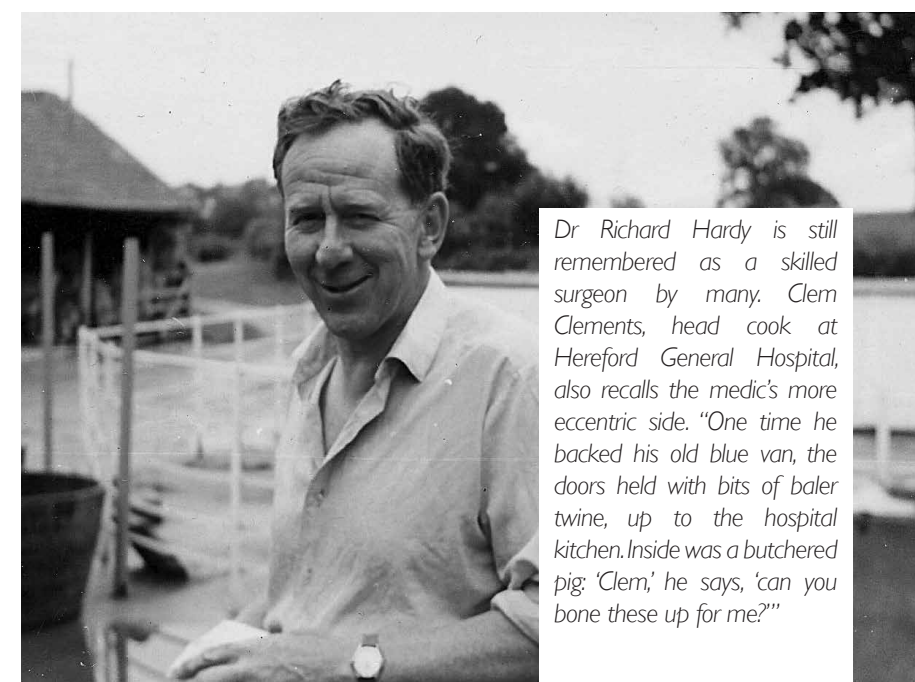


Number please: Carol Rawlings (fifth from right) starts on the Hereford switchboard. She joined aged 15 after a Post Office manager visited Bluecoat School and asked: 'Who wants to be a telephone operator?' 'My friends and I, Linda McLeland and Margaret Payne, put up our hands. We didn't have a clue what was involved!' Carol worked at Broad Street through the 1960s and the early 1970s.



Hereford telephonists enjoy a reunion: (right) supervisors June Pettit and Beryl Jones, (back row, left to right) Barbara James, Carol, Cynthia Hughes and Jocelyn Jackson.

Resting on Dinedor: The Gannet Cyclo-cross team takes a break in 1953. (From left) Ivor Stranward touring section leader, Dennis Price, Eddie Thompson (who loaned the photo), Roger Colcombe, Ken Olroyd, John Wathen. The Gannets introduced cyclo-cross racing to Herefordshire in 1952 with Eddie, of Mastercraft Cycles, as chairman for many years. Gannet ran cyclo-cross at Dinedor for 37 years.



Dr Richard Hardy is still remembered as a skilled surgeon by many. Clem Clements, head cook at Hereford General Hospital, also recalls the medic's more eccentric side. "One time he backed his old blue van, the doors held with bits of baler twine, up to the hospital kitchen. Inside was a butchered pig: 'Clem,' he says, 'can you bone these up for me?'"

Conscientious objectors

Two readers recall fathers who refused to fight in the First World War on grounds of their consciences

William Richardson is remembered by his son Norman from near Ross as a quiet, very determined man. Between the wars the father and son would cycle around the Herefordshire lanes enjoying earnest discussions, but William never shared his wartime experiences as a conscientious objector.

"I had a great respect for him," says Norman, himself a Quaker. "He was a nice man, but eventually we fell out over his thinking which was traditional, fundamental Christianity."

A Plymouth Brother, William lived at 11 Chandos Street, Hereford. He worked as a furniture salesman for Greenlands in Hereford. Ironically his boss, George Greenland, the Hereford mayor for much of the war, regularly sat on the tribunals that heard cases of conscientious objectors.

"William's approach was simply to interpret the words in the bible," explains Norman who believes his father's convictions led to him having a tough time.

Robert Moscrop was a conscientious objector in Cumbria. He lived at Barton on Erwell and was working as an insurance agent when war broke out. A staunch Christian, he too refused to fight. His daughter, Marion Jones from Hereford, takes up the story.

"Before he was called up he went into hiding with his sister and would spend his time painting devotional pictures. When he was called up he was made to go as a stretcher bearer."

Marion does not know what happened to him during the war except that he was injured. "Either he fell ill or was wounded, but he ended up in hospital where he met his wife-to-be, my mother."

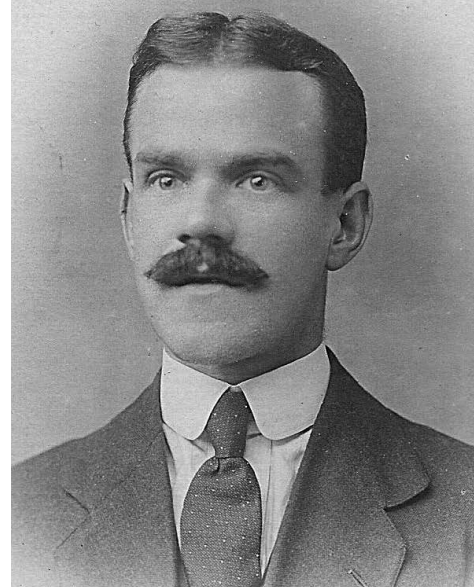
"When war finished he got £1 10s 3d. He'd had an awful time and he was truly a brave man. I've often thought: if I'd been a man would I have done it? Was I a strong enough Christian to do what he did?"

In Herefordshire more than a dozen men declared themselves conscientious

objectors. They included (Leominster) William Anderton, Henry Watkins Cooper (19) both of 19 Drapers Lane, Aubrey Ross of 12 Bridge Street, Henry Watkins and Arthur Alexander Clery of 94 South Street; (Hereford) Leonard Stewart Cox of Lingen Avenue, Ambrose Yates of St. Owen Gate, Edmund Greg Wilson, Edmund Jones of White Horse Street and Stanley George Powell of Widemarsh Street; (Ledbury) R.H. Wyatt (23) and Harold Mostyn Watkins (34) both from the Downs School; (South Herefordshire) Evan J.S. Watkins (19) Yew Tree Cottage, Gorsley and Thomas Davies, Little Dewchurch. All cited religious reasons except for Stanley George Powell (IOA 38) who told Hereford Tribunal: "I do not believe in deliberate slaughter in cold blood [of men] as a means of settling international dispute." He was sent to prison, but absconded in 1918. Nothing further is known about him.

Additional reporting: Elinor Kelly

Father and son: Norman Richardson with his father William



The Greenlands furniture salesman 30-year-old William Richardson (above) refused to fight in the First World War. He was sent to do farm work instead. This he also refused to do: "I could not willingly undertake work on the land, which would in principle, set free another man to do what I cannot," he told a city Tribunal.

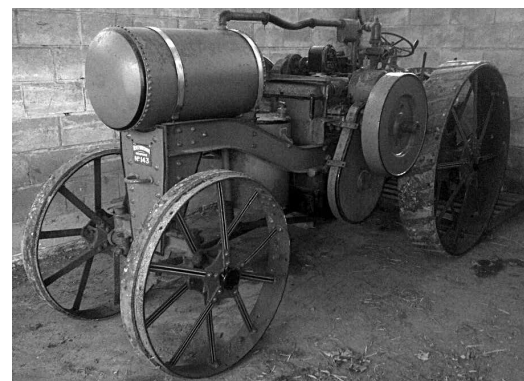
The Tribunal's military representative Major G.J. Caldwell put his Pacifism to the test: "Suppose I attacked you with a hatchet. Would you not hit back?"

"I may be tempted to do so, but according to the authorities of the Word of God I ought not to," he replied. Richardson was fined forty shillings and taken by military escort to be compulsorily enlisted. When he refused to put on his uniform he was, as a soldier, court-martialled and sent to do hard labour at Wormwood Scrubs. When a second tribunal judged him a "genuine case" he was moved to an open section of Dartmoor Prison where he remained until April 1919.

AROUND & ABOUT

Preston's Titans

Plough Monday, January 6, passed with reader **Richard Ford** wondering about his 1918 International Harvester Titan tractor No 143, acquired from a chap whose father found it "somewhere in Herefordshire". Curiously, writes Richard, the remains of a Titan were recently found in Preston-on-Wye with a similar serial number. Can you help Roger? (roger_c_ford@hotmail.com)



Many thanks

Many regular subscribers donated a little extra to IOA including Keith Taylor, M. Rees, Jeanette Bates, John Davies, Mary Wakefield Jones, Ian Maclean, Martin Coleman, Mike and Doreen Wood, Caroline Hawkins, Ann Allen, Patricia Gwynne, June Smith, Sara Stringer, J.H.C. Williams, John and Ann Harrison. Thank you!

St James

Judith Morgan provides some of the names featured on page 5 IOA 38: Barbara Jones in the wheelbarrow, Valerie, Judith and Susan Broad, Barbara's mother Mrs Dorothy Jones, Gillian Warren and Susan Williams. Dorothy Jones lived at The Lodge, Outfall Works, a house since demolished. Read more about St James and Bartonsham at www.bartonshamhistory.org.uk



The library van on the cover of IOA 38 is in Dorstone, write **Enok Sweetland, Stephen Gilling** and **Penny Platts**. (Stephen recalled the van visiting Kington Primary School with Peter Halliday at the wheel.) Penny is part of Dorstone History Society (www.dorstonehistorysociety.wordpress.com), which recently uncovered the 'Halls of the Dead' on Dorstone Hill. Excavations on this site, possibly older than Stonehenge, continue this year.

Do you belong to a local history group? The Hereford Local History Society meets at Hereford Records office (HARC), Rotherwas, Hereford, three times a year and circulates an email newsletter to over 50 county groups. Keep in touch: email margotmiller@live.co.uk

Alhambra theatre

Joan and Clem Clements remember the demolition of the Alhambra Theatre in Bridge Street, pulled down in the 1930s to make way for the Franklin Barnes building that became the Crystal Rooms.

Send us your memories

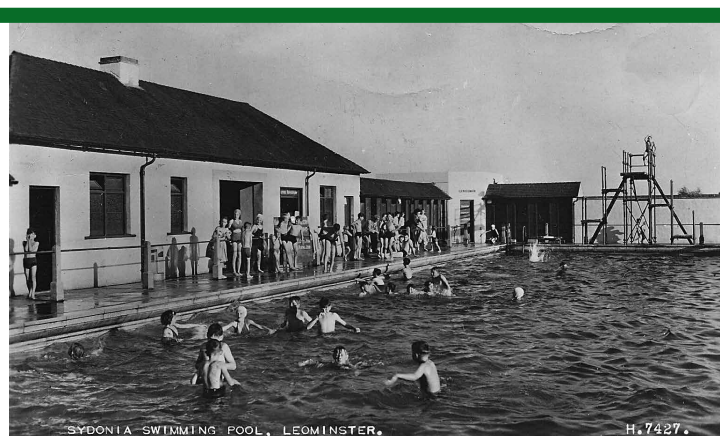
In Our Age relies on its readers for stories of living local history. Keep sending them in!

Front Line Duty

Former munitioneer Nancy Evans cuts a celebratory cake at **Rotherwas** in January for the start of Front Line Duty, a two year project to celebrate the work of our munitioneers in two world wars. You can email them at rotherwasrof@herefordshire.gov.uk. Remember, if you have a family member who worked on the munitions let the Munitions Group know. You can write to us or go direct to their website: www.rotherwasmunitionshereford.co.uk



Young Farmers and the Agricultural Workers' Union met up for a Harvest Thanksgiving at the Cathedral in the late 1950s. **Charles Green** recalls most of the names, but some are absent. Can you help? Front (from left) John Thomas, Charles Green, Bill Pritchard; (second row) June Price, Glyn Payne, Jean Hughes, Jean Farr, ?, Jill Davies (behind) J.P.L Thomas MP and Rev. Hedley Burrows, Dorothy Pritchard; (back) Jim Lawrence, Tom James Moore, David Whittall, Alan Pugh, Price, Idris Evans, Godfrey Havard.



The children's playing field and playground at The Grange, just off Corn Square, Leominster was opened in 1930 on land given by Stanley Holland, writes **Peter Halliday**. Judging from the ladies' costumes, this photograph may be from that day. Stanley was a local man who left Leominster after accusations of financial malpractice, emigrated to the U.S.A and there made his fortune, but never forgot his home town and became a great local benefactor. Leominster's first pool opened in the mid-1920s near the old ink mill on the river Kenwater in Lower Bridge Street. Filled with river water that was changed once a week it closed in the 1930s following a diphtheria scare and the new pool (pictured here) was opened in 1938 on the Sydonia Recreation Ground (named after Sydney Bridge, another local benefactor). Later roofed over, it has now been replaced by a new state-of-the-art pool and Leisure Centre opened in 2006.

(photos: Michael Young)

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