


# In Our Age

Living local history

Issue 42  
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# Serving with the ATS

## Eleanor Bishop at Garnstone Castle

In the spring of 1940, as Allied troops prepared for the Battle for France, women at home in Herefordshire prepared for their own war. They included 22-year-old Eleanor Gilbert pictured on our front cover at home in Bishopstone.

She would shortly join the Auxiliary Territorial Service and make life-long friends with the other ATS girls featured in IOA 41: Marjorie Bird, Betty Reihold, Eva Price, Stella Griffiths and Mary Millichamp. They remained 'old comrades' for life.

Eleanor served at Garnstone Castle, which had been turned into a nursing home, near Weobley between November 1941 and January 1944. The Castle was demolished after the war; the gates from the north drive now gracing the Olympic Plaza in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. During the war Canadian troops were stationed briefly at Garnons. As the photo (right) shows, they occasionally visited Garnstone for tea.



Eleanor, far left (top), at Garnstone Castle and, far right (above), with some visiting Canadian soldiers. (Photos: Susannah Garland).

## Labour's Past

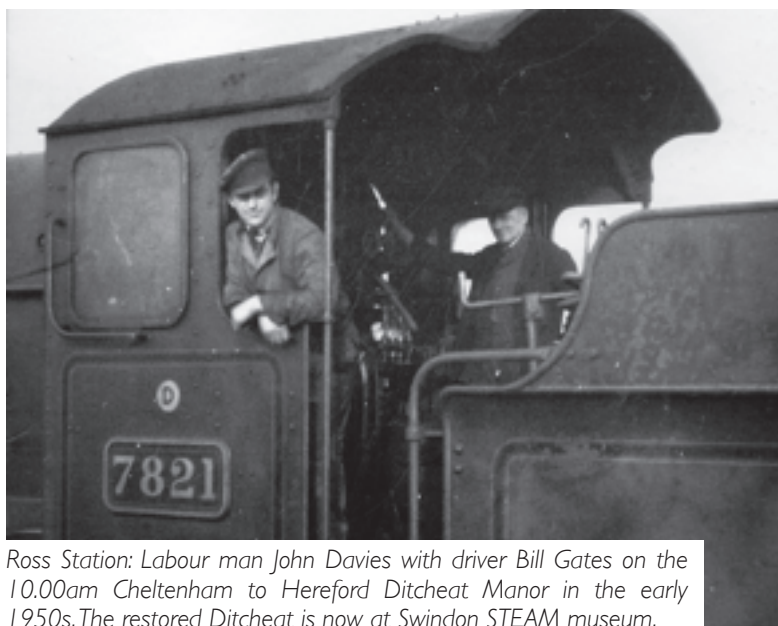
As Herefordshire's Labour party prepares for its centenary year in 2017, railwayman **John Davies** has passed his paper archive on to the Party. "It's time for a clear out," says John, a member of the Trades Council for 45 years and a leading light in the rail union, ASLEF.

He recalls how the fruit and vegetable merchant Sid Wright, a city councillor and a pacifist in the First World War, originally loaned Labour £1000 to buy two cottages on Edgar Street. They were demolished to make way for what is now the Richmond Club.

John recalls another Labour councillor, Tom Powell: "In 1924 as ASLEF prepared to strike, Tom received a package containing a toy train and a note that read: 'You should be ashamed of yourself when you should be driving this.' Tom raffled the toy at the next branch meeting and raised 12s 6d for the strike fund."

As the rail force diminished, farmers cut their labour force and businesses such as Thorn Lighting closed, membership of the Trades Council declined. In 2008 it was wound up and its funds, £1,242, were presented to the Hospice.

Do you have important archives? The Hereford Archives and Records Centre (01432 260750) may be interested.



Ross Station: Labour man John Davies with driver Bill Gates on the 10.00am Cheltenham to Hereford Ditchat Manor in the early 1950s. The restored Ditchat is now at Swindon STEAM museum.

## Calling all subscribers

We hope you will subscribe again. Existing subscribers should fill in the enclosed slip and return it with a cheque for £14.00 made out to Herefordshire Lore. New subscriber? Just fill in the form on the back page.

Regrettably we're increasing subscriptions (from £12 to £14 or an additional 50p per copy) for the first time in five years. Herefordshire Lore depends entirely on you, its subscribers and your donations. A special thanks to the anonymous reader for their £500 gift.

A Happy New Year to you all.

Chair: Mark Hubbard



**Front cover:** Eleanor Gilbert (later Eleanor English) on her bike (see ATS above.) The bicycle is still ridden by daughter Harriet who reports that it was made in a Worcester factory before the business was requisitioned to make ammunition.



## Famed for our fruits

It's over a century since novelist Rider Haggard (below) applauded the county's fruit industries. IOA readers look back at our fruitful harvest.

Herefordshire has a long tradition of providing some of the country's best apples, pears, strawberries and blackcurrants.

Bridstow's Charles Green was brought up at Lulham Court near Madley in the 1930s. "The family grew blackcurrants for Hartleys [the jam factory] at Kingstone as well as peas for Birds Eye, also processed at Hartleys and at Roberts' farm, Bromleys at Much Birch."

In the 1950s **John** and **Megan Bennett** were among the first to plant blackcurrants again after the war. Farming at Kings Acre House, close to the famous Cranston House Nurseries in Breinton they also grew apples, pears, gooseberries and raspberries.

"There were espalier Daronda pears and a big pear, the Pitmaston Duchess and several old varieties of dessert apple including a long keeper, the Kings Acre pippin. We'd use picking bags and then deliver the fruit in trays. Some went to Baldwins of Pershore, but Sid Wright [the fruit merchant] had most of our stuff although the blackcurrants went to Beeches on Three Elms."

Families earned useful cash in the picking season. The late wartime land girl **Prinia Prior** recalled heading out from Redhill hostel to earn £1.2s.6d a day picking Worcester Pearmain apples and plums at the CWS at Marden. Then there was a seven-mile cycle ride to clear away blackcurrant pruning debris at Tillington and the occasional 'couple of wet days' at British Cannery in Bewell Street. "As we canned damsons the noise of empty tins coming down the conveyor belts plus Music While You Work was awful. All the bad fruit, dead wasps, leaves and our spat-out stones were collected in a container beside us and later decanted



*Fruit pickers: Di Ingram loaned this photo of cropping the family fruit tree while John Barnett from Hampton Dene confessed to being a poor cherry picker. "At Woodend near Little Tarrington we grew cherries – there wasn't many places that did. But I was never much of a cherry picker. You got to pick them with stalks on. If you pulled them without the stalks they'd say you were 'plumming' them. My problem was I used to eat them, especially if you've had rain and they've split: they're so sweet!"*

into the jam making vats and turned into 'Damson Jam – Full Fruit Standard'! Earnings were poor: I recorded in my diary 7/2d (36p) for one day."

As well as Sid and Bert Wright's caning factory in Widemarsh Street there was Horace Sullivan's fruit store and Mrs Twynning's Station Fruit Stores on Commercial Road.

In the 1970s farmers started persuading the public to pick their own. Charles Green had moved to Ash Farm near Bridstow. "We started with strawberries, raspberries, but there were also broad beans and new potatoes. We'd park a caravan in the field and families used to come out at the weekend to pick."

The strawberry season was short. "One time, after Powells of Weobley had 'strawed' the strawberries for us, I remember we had five wet Sundays in a row: in the end I had to plough the lot under!"

*Fruity memories? Send us your recollections.*

## Putley's Strawberries

In 1902 the adventure writer and author of *She*, Rider Haggard, focused on the county for his book, *Rural England*. "Herefordshire has always been famous for its fruit, and of late the culture of strawberries has been added to its industries," he writes. He singles out "the prettiest and best cultivated fruit farm in the neighbourhood of Ledbury, that of Mr Riley of Putley Court", visits cattle breeders Richard Green and Stephen Robinson at Lyonshall, cider maker Radcliffe Cooke, Winforton clergyman Revd H.J. Marshall, Hope schoolmaster Mr Noakes, auctioneer Henry Russell and even Leominster sanitary inspector Mr Stephens. Haggard was entertained by gentry (Arkwright of Hampton Court and Lord Coventry of Croome Court) and worker: Ledbury farm labourer Mr Somerville was reportedly happy to have quit his £2 a week collier's job for 15s a week and a shilling in lieu of cider.





## From My Album: *Elaine and*



Moor Street, May 1937, and families gather beneath the gas lamp for King George VI's coronation. Eddie Barrington (2nd left, back) and Edith (3rd along front (6th from right)). The Barringtons moved to Springfield and then Belmont avenues and led busy lives. Len, a senior officer with St Johns Ambulance, received Edith, 2nd right, front row (below right), when not working as a dinner lady, pursued a passion for old time dancing, making her costumes and running classes in Greenlands in High Town, Hereford, became an accomplished pianist. (Photos: Elaine and Allan Brewer)





## and Allan Brewer and Lynn Tutman



ing from Eddie) are pictured along with their daughter Vera, kneeling on her chair in  
ceived a medal for his "courageous behaviour" at the Rotherwas munitions factory.  
ises at the community hut off Springfield Avenue. Vera (left bottom), who worked at



GPO boy messenger Roy Foster delivers a telegram to The Barrels  
Inn in Eign Gate in the mid 1930s. (The recipient was actually his  
grandmother, Liz Hopwood, and her pub at No 12, burned down  
in 1942.) (Photo: Lynn Tutman)



# Life on the Black Mountains

Milwyn Lloyd has, by his own account, lived a rich life. "From a shy young man born in the Black Mountains in 1929 to a Hereford businessman," as he puts it. While Milwyn opened one of Hereford's early launderettes, now the Beer In Hand on Whitecross Road, his early days were spent on farms in the Black Mountains.

Where do I start? With my mother, I suppose. She was born Ethel Margaret Lloyd to my grandmother who may have been a single unmarried girl. Some years later my grandmother met and married a Mr Lowe.

She went on to have three children with him: a daughter, Agnes, who married Victor Price of The Cwm, Clyro; Angie who never married and

went to work in the house at Lower Loiney, Clyro; and George who also never married and went to Lower Loiney. When owners Miss Jones and her brother died, they left the 350-acre farm to Angie and George. Angie was only small, yet she could throw bales around like a man. She kept a good garden and you always came away with an armful of vegetables. George, around five foot seven and just as wide, was also as strong as a horse.

## Runaway Mum

When grandmother married, my mother Ethel did not take to her stepfather. She ran away, staying out all night and sleeping in a field behind two rolls of netting before being taken in by an auntie and uncle, the Griffiths at The North, Bryngwyn between Painscastle and Newchurch. She stayed there until she was 12, old enough to go into service.

The family for whom she went into service treated her more like a slave than a servant. Life was hard. Monday was washing day and Mum had to carry the water from the well. It would slop and wet her clothes so she would wrap brown greaseproof paper round her waist for protection.

Mum never went to school. She could not read or write and eventually met a local boy and got pregnant. But this was 1914 and the boy was called up. They were to have been married on his first leave, but he was killed in the war leaving Mum to bring up the baby, Dolly, on her own.

Mum came to live with another auntie at the Upper Island under the Black

Mountain while Dolly went to live with Mr and Mrs Price who lived nearby at Wernfach. Because they only had a son and wanted a girl they took Dolly on condition that Mum clothed her daughter, which she did until Dolly was 14.

Mum went on to keep house for Arthur James Morgan who was living at Blaendigeddi with his mother, who was old and blind, his two brothers, Bill and Tom, and sister Annie. A 42-acre farm, it encompassed a smaller farm, Cabanol, on which the farmhouse had fallen down. Arthur and Ethel were married and had my sister Edith and I.

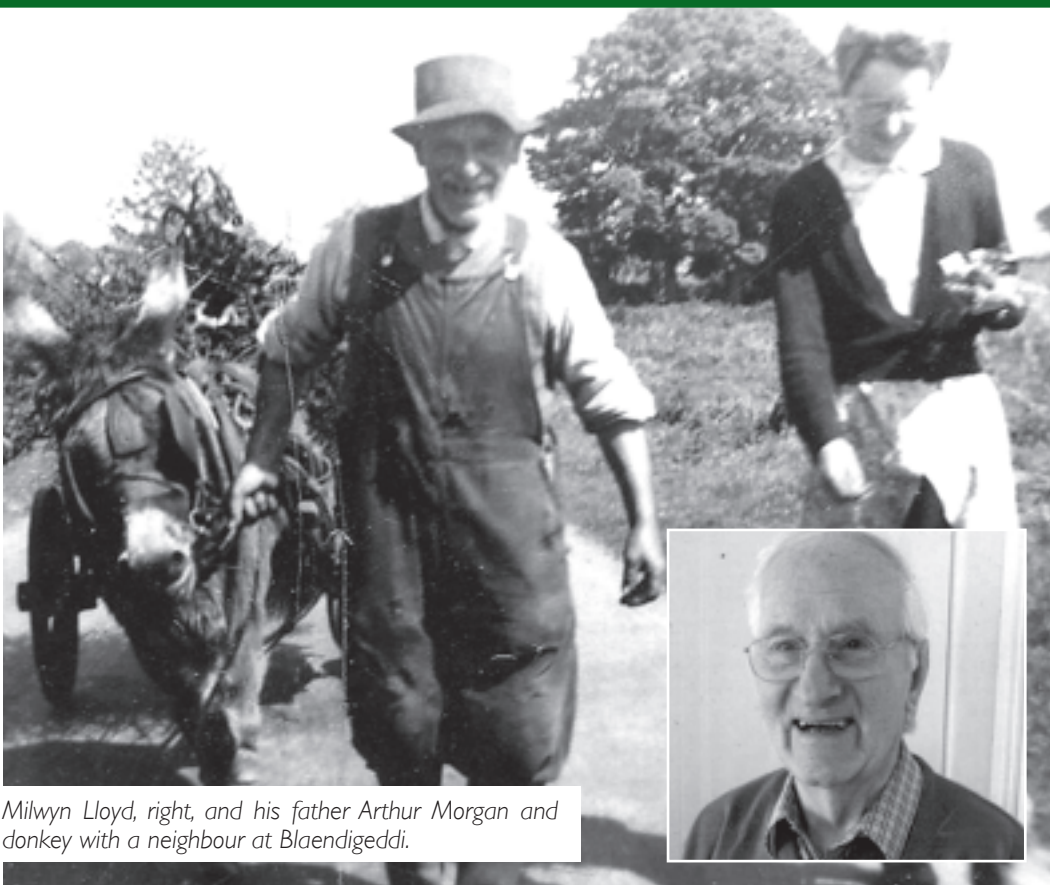
In the end the family split the farm, Bill taking Home Farm, Maesatorgluyld and Tom, Wernfach. But Tom had an accident with a threshing machine: an engine flew to pieces and he was hit by a lump of metal. He came home to recover and never left. His farm was sold off.

Annie married Septie Lloyd of Cwmcaenant, Llanigon and had six children. They all went their way, but Auntie, suffering from post-natal depression, hanged herself just after

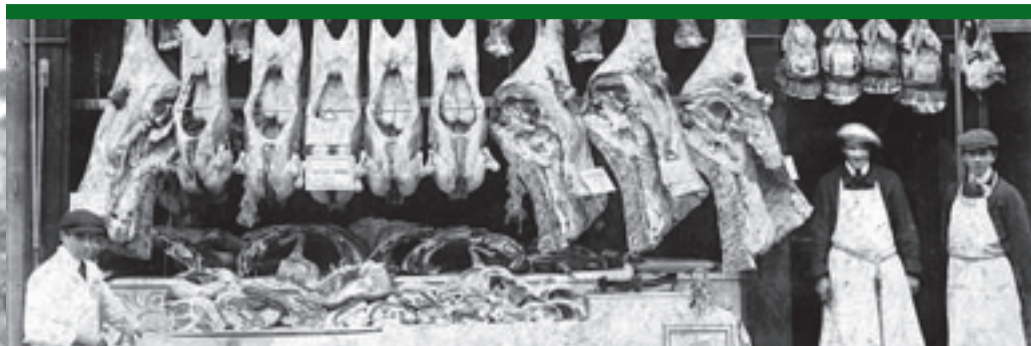
her last boy was born. Septie never recovered: in 1947 he hanged himself in the same barn from the same beam. It was almost 40 years later.

Since we lived three miles over rough ground from Llanigon School my sister Edith and I lodged with a Mrs Watkins during the week. Her husband, a roadman, wouldn't have us in the living room when he was there so we played outside once we'd had our bit of food. When I was 12 I went to Hay School, but I was probably there no more than six weeks before I turned 14: I was often unfit, I think because I was undernourished. When I reached 14 I found work at Wholehouse Farm, Talgarth. My first job was to wash cat muck off the apples that were heaped up near the back door before we made them into cider; some of the best cider I ever tasted.

*From farmhand to launderette owner: read Milwyn Lloyd's next episode in February's IOA.*



Milwyn Lloyd, right, and his father Arthur Morgan and donkey with a neighbour at Blaendigeddi.



## Ross's first lady butcher

"What a lovely surprise to open IOA 41 and find Granddad Ted Powell smiling out at me," writes **Mary Sinclair Powell**. "He was a well-known Ross butcher from the 1920s to 1970 and my brother John and I would 'help' him and Granny Eva in the back of the shop making sausages, pressing brawn and hams and stirring Granny's well-loved faggot mix. Born in 1900 and too young for war service, he started work at 14 as butcher's boy (above left) to Mr Parry at 52 Broad Street and progressed from there to his own shop at 42 Broad Street, living above the shop with our dad Ron and his sister Geraldine.

"During that second world war Eva became the first lady butcher in Herefordshire and used to visit ladies' groups, showing them how to get the best from their rations. Ted built The Orchard at Bridstow and they lived there until 1985 when they died on the same day."

## Ghostly Goings On

In February 1917 a Liverpoolian soldier, Pte Thomas Breen, walked into Wilson's fish and chip shop next to the Fleece in St Owen Street and ordered chips. As staff prepared his order he drew a carbine from under his coat and shot 26-year-old Freda Wilson at point-blank range. Freda died three hours later and the soldier surrendered to the police. It transpired that the soldier had developed an obsession for Freda, to which she did not respond, when he was billeted on the family. "There's still a ghostly presence here," say Sam and Vince Wood who run Cobblers and Keys at the old fish shop premises.

## River Swimming

The photo of the boys jumping off the bridge (IOA 41) brings to mind brother Brian Thompson of Moreton on Lugg who learned to swim in the river; writes **Eddie Thompson** from Allensmore.

## Bartonsham Dairy

As an errand boy with Hereford Co-op in the late 1930s **Cecil 'Clem' Clements** earned 10s 6d plus 4d stoppages delivering groceries. "It rose to 12s 6d, but when I heard of a 15s a week job at Bartonsham Dairy I was off like a shot! I'd hand milk from 6am to 8am then deliver round St Martin's Avenue, Westfields and the Farmers' Club with a 30 gallon churn, a two gallon hand-can and two ladle measures on my pony and trap. Milk was 3d a pint, 2s a gallon."

After the Second World War Clem became head chef at the General Hospital, following something of a family tradition. "My grandmother, Jeanetta, had been a cook at the prison governor's house [now the city bus centre]. She'd cook the final meals for the prisoners on death row," he says. (See also Rotherwas below).

## Dinmore Cheese

During the First World War a cheese factory was set up at Dinmore close to the Railway Inn. Established to combat food shortages and process local milk, it was already turning 800 gallons a week into cheese by 1918. The Jones family at Wellington Court hosted a tea party there to celebrate finding first 60 customers. Permission has been given to change the old factory into housing.



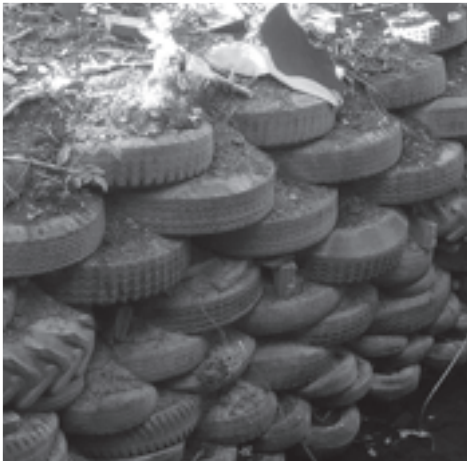
Filling Factory Number 14, April 1918. Munition staff including Canadian managing director Lt Col Frederick Mondelet Gaudet outside the head office, later occupied by Thorn Lighting. The factory opened in November 1916 and closed two years later. Alfred Clements worked as a policeman. "When Dad had the note in his pay packet to let him go he took up selling fruit and vegetables door to door around Putson," recalls his son Clem.



# Trees and Tyres

Pembridge is to regenerate its Verdun oak. **Tony Norman** reports that they plan to plant the same number of acorns, collected from the Verdun oak outside Trafford almshouses, as there are names on the village war memorial. Verdun oaks, such as the ones at Pembridge and Leominster, were planted from acorns taken from the French battlefield.

Artist **Marie-Pierre Leroux** is curious to know more about the wall of tyres (below), built by Polish people to contain the Red Brook in Lower Bullingham. The Polish Catholic Marian Fathers set up a junior Polish boys' school here in the 1950s. Marie-Pierre is using a similar construction for an artwork to mark the modern, or anthropocene geological era. And **Peter Whitestone** (applehurst@aol.com) wonders if there are any technical drawings of the Hereford two-seater Westland car: He is rebuilding a Westland Lea-Francis sports car, seen here (right) in the 1950 Alpine Rally. "I'd love to find any drawings that might have been archived," he writes.



**Where is it?** Can anyone shed light on this curious druidic ceremony taking place in a Herefordshire wood? Several readers including **Ann Morgan** and **John Strong** correctly identified the Dinedor tea room depicted on the back page of IOA 41. "The two young waitresses are Doris and Kate Holmes," writes John, "Kate being my late wife's mother."



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