

Herefordshire Lore

Age to Age

Reminiscence Newsletter

Vol 10 Issue 2

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Comments to:

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Inside this Issue



The Royal Ordnance Factory at Rotherwas. Detail from a Luftwaffe reconnaissance photograph of 1940.



Remember!

SPECIAL JUBILEE ISSUE of Age To Age

(Available in June)

Mavis Adams from Grafton Lane sends us these two pictures of a Coronation street party at Edgar Street (left, looking north) in 1937 Herefordshire Lore is looking for a sponsor for its bumper Coronation issue.

Would your organisation like to help?

Write to Age To Age at PO Box 2, Hereford HR2 8YE or email us at john.herefordlore@btinternet.com



What a Response!

WELCOME to our Spring issue of Age To Age and what an extraordinary response we've had to our appeal from Munitions workers at Rotherwas. We've had a lot of coverage too by the Western Daily Press, Hereford Times and BBC Hereford & Worcester resulting in an avalanche of interesting material, some of which is printed inside this edition. Amazingly we are approaching our 10th Anniversary this Autumn and to mark this milestone, we'd love to put a book

together of your reminiscences. As ever, this needs funding - if you have any ideas please do contact us. Apologies for those waiting for audio tapes of Age To Age. We just haven't been able to do them yet, but we will do so eventually. Please bear with us. Age To Age isn't just a newsletter, but could be a resource for your group of society. We're applying for specific funding to help other oral history projects. We'll keep you posted on this one. Meanwhile enjoy this Spring edition and best wishes from one of the team at Age To Age.

Eileen Klotz



A Good Runner: Tanner's Garage in Widemarsh Street, sent in by Keith Taylor from Belmont.

Age To Age is the bi-monthly newsletter from Herefordshire Lore, a group formed in 1989 to collect, remember and celebrate our past.

Herefordshire Lore is Margaret Beare, Bobbie Blackwell, Siriol Collins, Sam Goodwin, Eileen Klotz, Bill Laws, Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe, Harvey Payne, John Turner.

We depend on your subscriptions — details on the back page.

Age To Age is also available free from the Hereford Town Hall, Museums and local Libraries, the Tourist Information Centres, Herefordshire College of Technology and Age Concern (Hereford). The next issue will be out in June 2002.

Send your comments and subscriptions to: Herefordshire Lore, P.O. Box 2, Hereford HR2 8YE

**South
Wye**

We Can Make It Better



**HEREFORDSHIRE
COUNCIL**

"It was all work and bed"...experiences at the ROF, Rotherwas.

THE Royal Ordnance Factory at Rotherwas has always been shrouded in secrecy. The factory employed 2,700 people, 2000 of them women in May 1944. Now an industrial estate, there is no other memorial to those who died than the memories of the workers themselves.



Dated December 4th 1940, this Luftwaffe reconnaissance photograph of Rotherwas was obtained from the US Library of Congress. Sent in by **David Lovelace** who adds: "They were probably disappointed by the cloud cover."

September 12, 1941 a milling machine overheats, its contents explode and three die: George MacLaren, Francis Hicks and Henry Bigglestone.

June 27 1942: a German bomber drops two 250kg bombs. The first hits a transit shed killing 19. The second strikes a girder, is deflected through the shed door, across the factory floor to hit the Police Superintendent's house killing all but one of its occupants. A heavy machine gun in the centre of ROF was unmanned, the crew having stood down because of the inactivity of the Luftwaffe in the area. The dead included: Fred Bull, 41, Bow, London, David Williams, 50, Belmont Avenue, Hereford, Beatrice Saunders, 22, Shelwick; Ernest Chesterman, 58, Wellington; Fred Dyke, 47 Ross; William Garland, 45, Bodenham, Joseph Giles, 47 Poplar, London, Edwin Gwilliam, 38, Coleford, James Shine, 33, Merthyr; J Kathleen Wheeler, 31, Stonebow Road Hereford. At Moorlands, Lower Bullingham, Bertha Hursey, 40, Ernest Hursey, 48, Florence Carter, 47 Vera Hursey, 23.

May 30, 1944: The Hereford incident. Fire in a South Section shed causes two explosions, but thanks to the bravery of workers and firemen, 800 are evacuated before a bomb explodes. A second explosion sends sheets of flame 2000 feet into the air. Windows for miles around are broken. Two die. Fred Raper, 41, Ledbury; A.J. Morris.

Bobbie Blackwell.

- **John Edmonds's** researches suggest poisonous mustard gas may have been stored and used to fill shells on the site in the First World War.

- "My father Edwin Gwilliam was killed on July 27 1942 and for many years I could not understand why my father seemed to be the only one killed." In his researches my brother-in-law Harry Fox found that there were a large number killed and many died from their injuries. Everything had been kept secret because of the war. **Mrs T.J. Brown, Coleford.**
- "My first job was painting shells yellow until I got paint poisoning! I became very ill and then yellow jaundiced. When I returned I was chosen to go into the experimental unit. The canteens were good boiled spuds and watery custards. People went very yellow that worked in the Powder Unit, but they didn't moan. My health has suffered from the poisoning. Still at seventy eight, I'm still alive! I enjoyed working with lovely loyal people." **Mrs Winders, Worcester.**
- "We were all good pals," says **Maud Andrews** who worked here throughout the war. "Myself, I hated the work."
- When James Markham from Worcester worked for the Fire Service he could find little recorded information of the 1944 explosion. "No fire service records are available." I was there when the bomb dropped, writes **Doreen Bell** from Putson.
- My father Albert Chambers was a police sergeant at ROF. I believe he was the last man out when a land mine exploded. **Dennis Chambers, Hereford.**
- I started at the ROF in June 1942 and finished December 1945, writes **Mr A Double** of Standale Road.
- I was on the South Side in 'the powder' getting four pence an hour extra, says **Mrs Pitman** from Lydney. Three of us were in a cubicle filling 25 lbs; I think we defused on the shop floor, I got TNT poisoning and was

dispatched for a few months under Dinmore Hill going through cases to find any that had been missed.

- "It was all work and bed," according to the mother of Doreen Jackson from Leominster.
- My father Bert Griffiths was residential fitter and we lived just inside the gates from 1930 to 1938, writes **Miss E Watkins** from Shrewsbury. Mother boarded some of the factory visitors including the 'Powder Boys' who bought the explosive powder from Stockton on Tees.



While many came to work at Rotherwas, many were also evacuated to Herefordshire. **Pamela Double** from Belmont Avenue is the ten year old in this 1940's photograph. "Myself and my friend were from London and we stayed with Mr and Mrs Lewis Uncle Will and Auntie Em in the vicarage cottage, Canon Pyon."

Angling To The End

WAS that really the old Anglers Inn (now part of the Marches) in Union Street, pictured in our February/March issue, asked **Ron Shoesmith**.

It certainly was writes **Derek Foxton**, clearing up the mystery for once and all. Brian Johnson's 1890s photograph of a taller building had the licensee's name, J Hockaday, on the wall. Derek's 1895 Directory lists Frederick J Hockaday at the Angler Inn, 24/25 Union Street. Curiously his neighbours included two policemen, a coachman, shop assistant, two greengrocers, foundryman, porter, two tailors, shoemaker, painter, carriage builder, blacksmith, dressmaker and Thomas Innes at the New Harp Inn. What a busy street!



This young angler is Kenneth Hosie, fishing at The Moat, Ashperton Church around 1932 "The moat teemed with roach and all we used for bait was a piece of Granny's raw pastry," writes his brother John from Glasgow. "We are always moved today when we visit the churchyard and see the tombstones of the many kind people we once knew so well."

City Life

MAUREEN Gilbert from Llancloudy worked at the Co-op in Widemarsh Street in 1953. "It was my first job after leaving school and my wage was £2 a week. I was employed as a junior clerk, making tea, running errands and delivering the mail to each department shoe shop, drapery and furnishing in Bewell Street. I worked in the top office with Wendy, Rosemary, Doris Buck and Edith Hooper who both belonged to Hereford Amateur Dramatic Society. We would go and see their shows at the Kemble Theatre in Broad Street." **Ann Morgan** remembers Percy Harrison managing the St. Martin Street Co-op. "I used to love browsing around Greenlands with its fine china and canteens of bone-handled cutlery," writes **Ivy Doody** (then Ivy Powell) from Bartley Green. "The shop was a great feature of High Town along with Augustus Edwards and the Odeon where, after work on Saturday mornings, Rosemarie Thomas (now Mrs Amies) and I would sometimes go to lunch then in to see a film. I remember Harolds in West Street where you could enjoy lovely fish and chips and the Conti in Eign Gate for delicious coffee."

Snippets

Tile Workers

MOST of those tile workers (front page, December 2001) are named by **D. Collier** from Barrs Court Road. from left — not known, Stan Barnes, unknown lady, Trevor Sullivan, Jimmy Davies, Vic Cox and Tom Smart.

Pyonear People

THE people who run The Pyonear which circulates Birley, Canon Pyon, King's Pyon, Ledgemoor, Upper Hill and Westhope want to collect and publish people's memories and build up a photographic archive. Can you help? Call **Lynne Pugh** 01432 830737

Whitehorse Square

"IS there any more information on our Coronation Day photograph (Vol 9, issue 3) at Whitehorse Square?" asks **Eileen Heald** (nee Skyrme) from Merseyside. Her relative Bessie (or Jessie) Davies is in the picture.

Golden Volunteer

WHO deserves a Golden Volunteer Award? Herefordshire Volunteer Bureau are looking for people who volunteered in 1952 Call your local volunteer bureau or Hereford's Centre (01432 343932).

Early Explorations

GRIFF Lloyd of Ealing used to be Griff Jones of Hereford. His

acting career forced the name change in the 1950s because of the presence of fellow actor Griffith Jones.

His school friend was the traveller and explorer John Blashford-Snell, son of the Vicar of Holy Trinity in Whitecross. "We played in his vast vicarage garden as make-believe explorers, going out on safari into the wilds the bushes, trees and unattended perimeter of the garden. It was that make-believe part of our lives that I strongly believe was the instigation of his future chosen vocation as an explorer."

Waste Of Space

IT'S good to get feedback from readers. Here's a broadside from Rugby's **Michael Young**. "I am unhappy that 5% of your editorial space is taken up with a 'lead-in' to items inside the newsletter. If you are giving away copies - 3,000 of 'em — subscribers should expect better use of space. Please bring back my old English master 'Spadger' Morris to proof read and iron out the inconsistencies." Michael adds: "You and your team do a fine job."

Fascinating Age To Age

JILL Sparks from Hereford finds Age To Age "absolutely fascinating. It was interesting to see the King Street view of the Cathedral (December 2001 issue) My father-in-law, Frank Sparks was responsible for demolishing these shops - one of which was Pritchards - in the late 1930s."



***Peter Morris** from Hampton Park sent in this autumnal scene, hop-picking at Moores of Shucknall Spout. In the frame are Nan Cornock, Micky Jarvis, Diann Morris, Gerard Morris, Muriel Morris, Peter Evans, Dad George Morris and Mum Irene Morris. Francis Evans is next to Diann.*

Age To Age- From Door To Door

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Railway Club, Barton Road,
Hereford.



This shadowy image is thought to be the earliest picture of St Owens Street. "It was kindly given to me by Mrs B. Fitzgerald who lived in the Black and White House The Old Manor House demolished about 1960 and now the site of the Cantilupe Surgery," writes Derek Foxton.

Foxley

THE former Second World War American Hospital at Foxley came in handy when villagers at Edwin Ralph, Bromyard needed a village hall. **Vera Powell** remembers how local farmers, her late husband Len amongst them, transported one of the hospital units to the village where "it served as the centre of community life for Edwyn Ralph, Collington and Thornbury for fifty years." It's now upgraded, but a plaque on the wall still reads. 'Originally Hospital Ward

of the 123rd General Army Hospital, USA, Foxley, Mansell Lacy' And there's a picture of former Foxley surgeon Dr Tom Glennon who visited his old ward in 1988. **Vera Bond** from Hereford reminds us that when the camp was used for emergency housing after the war, several huts were adapted to make a school with up to eight teachers. She was one of them. And **Pat Billings** from Basingstoke recognised herself and sister Dawn (then the Davies' girls) in the Foxley picture, December 2001, bottom right.



Meet the young Bond family, writes Betty Howat who sent this picture of Stretton Grandison school children from 1919 (not 1819 as the picture states). George Bond is back row far left, Gwynilda Bond, third row, middle with ringlets and Julia Molly Bond directly in front of her.

**Herefordshire Lore hopes to come out and meet you during
Local History Week in May — Look in your local Library for details.**