


In Our Age

Living local history

Issue 45
Summer 2017

River Voices
Stories from the Wye
Page 4 & 5



 Find In Our Age on
Facebook



Highfield Ross-on-Wye
Page 3



Preston-on-Wye
Page 3



Breinton Camp
Page 4

The Night Titch Took a Ton

Tales from behind the bar in the Lich'

No guessing how Fred 'Titch' Rowberry earned his nickname. He'd married Ethel Brookes whose mother Harriet owned the White Lion Hotel in Maylord Street. The White Lion, recalls Titch's son **Tim Rowberry**, was the city's only non-brewery-owned pub and boasted its own waiting room for farmers' wives on market day, waiting for their menfolk to sup up.

Titch ran the Lichfield Vaults, one of the city's oldest pubs, from the 1930s to the early 1960s. As a landlord in wartime he made sure that two former customers, taken prisoners of war in Germany, continued to receive cigarettes in their Red Cross parcels. When the pair returned Titch tried in vain to dissuade them from drinking away the pay that had accumulated during their incarceration.

The war's end also marked the first time the Lich took over £100 in a night. On Christmas Eve 1949 Titch, Ethel, son Tim and barman Albert Morris struggled to cope with the rush. Christmas Day dawned on takings of £112 or an estimated 1000 pints.

The Lich served no food although Ethel regularly produced her crib night specials: little bits of bread topped with cheese squares. Tim recalls the perpetual fug in the Smoke Room, mostly created by hospital doctors on their break, and the odd nicknames given to customers including 'Chittelins' Bill the pork butcher and 'Oyster' Vaughan. Harry Field and his dog Peggy, and King Street sweet shop owner Mrs Wathen were also remembered by readers Mike Brook, Terry Morris and Phil Jones.



Ethel and Titch Rowberry (far right) receive a retirement barometer from brewers' Ind Coope and Samuel Allsopp representative. A picture of the Church Street, Hereford pub hangs on the wall above Titch, the work of Belgian refugee Simon Le Grys. Le Grys lodged in rooms opposite the Lich.



River Voices

Rowing boats and ferry women, famous fishermen and gillies - all feature in this special edition of In Our Age. I'm Marsha O'Mahony and I'm delighted to be running River Voices, Herefordshire Lore's Heritage Lottery-funded project to record your memories and photos of our lovely River Wye from Hay down to Monmouth. Any memories or photos to share, or maybe you want to volunteer and get involved? Drop us a line (address bottom of the page) or give us a call on Herefordshire Lore's: 07845 907891. We are also offering IOA readers a chance to learn more about oral history interview skills. If you want to host a session in your community, then get in touch.

(River Voices is run by Marsha O'Mahony, Bill Laws, Eileen Klotz, Julie Orton-Davies, Linda Ward, Kate Bower, Heather Allan and Harvey Payne.)

The School Run

Pam James attended Hereford Training College in 1952. In this second extract from her memoir, Pam tackles damsons, boys and diving.

There was a glut of damsons during our first term and kitchen staff served them in every conceivable way. Rabbit was also served and, if one was early in the supper queue, it was possible to get seconds.

We were very restricted. Males were allowed in the Common Room or study bedrooms only on Sunday afternoons. There was also 'Little Sit', a small room reserved for entertaining on the ground floor. You could wear trousers in the grounds, but not in town and you had to be in by 10 p.m. having signed the Evening Book – I became an expert forger.

Some of us formed U.M.S. – which was either United Mintonians Society (after John Minton, an artist whose work we admired and who later committed suicide: not our fault) or Unmarried Mother's Society and we had the initials U.M.S embroidered on our socks. (Yes socks!)



We cycled to the Edgar Street baths for swimming once a week. We were divided into non-swimmers and swimmers, non-swimmers being herded into the shallows and expected to learn as fast as possible.

The rest of us were divided into divers and non-divers. I was definitely a non-diver. We did sitting dives – and I, alas, always breathe underwater! I know one shouldn't, but I couldn't help it. After I was fished out, waterlogged, several times, we advanced to kneeling dives. Again I had to be rescued.

By now I was ready to give up teaching when along came the Baths Superintendent who, in no uncertain terms, told our instructor I'd had more than enough and was not to be made to do any more.

Pam went on to teach at Redcap, Scudamore, Yarpole and Kington schools before marrying and starting a family with Tim Rowberry (see The Night the Lich Took a Ton, opposite).

Did you teach? Tell us about your experiences.



Reader Russell Bunn (back row, 3rd from the right) from Checkley pictured during his school days. Russell was a St James boy in the 1930s when his father Fred drove the buses and the family lived at Weston Place, Park Street, Hereford. Eventually Fred took over the New Inn at Newtown and Russell remembers the hundreds of hop pickers who would descend on the Inn from hopyards such as Dean Dent's at Woodmanton, Cowarne Court, Whitick Manor, Monksbury Court, the Pitts at Stretton, and Godsell and Lewis at Eggleton. "There was one picker, Ash Harris, at Bishops Frome and he was a hard man. The other pickers brought up a fellow from Wales to give him a hiding," recalls Russell, "but Harris walked into the pub and hit him first."



Anne Milne from Edinburgh attended Highfield School in Ross until 1948. "One fascinating sight when going to school in the morning was the steam-driven coal lorries travelling up from Ross station", writes Anne.



Eileen Williams (nee Dale, right) shared her school memories. Jessie and John Dale's family of five lived at Huntley Court, Preston-on-Wye where Jessie bred her White Wyandotte hens and Aylesbury and Khaki Campbell ducks. Eileen went to Blakemere School before heading off to Hereford High School in 1938. She remembers Neville Chamberlain announcing the outbreak of war on the radio and of how, once a year, Jessie treated her girls to a day out – in Hereford. "Robert's Café or the Milk Bar," recalls Eileen. Bride Jessie is pictured arriving at Preston Church with her father. She married John Williams of Lower House.

River Voices

Left, Wye Valley gillies in 1979 at the Courtfield Arms, Goodrich with, among others, George Woodward, Lyn Coble of the Foy beat, Sammy Mayo, Cecil Teague and General Sir Thomas Pearson. (Photo: George Woodward). "In those days there were about 15 gillies within 55 miles of river from Bigsweir to just below Hereford," remembers George Woodward. "It's doubtful now if there are more than three or four full-time gillies on the river. It reflects the drop in the numbers of salmon."

The Wye's salmon fishermen have included wartime prime minister Neville Chamberlain (left), his arch enemy the Japanese Emperor Hirohito, and Doreen Davey who, in 1923, landed a 59.5 lb salmon, the largest recorded on the Wye, at the Cowpond near Winforton. Her bait was supplied by Hatton's Fishing Tackle shop in St Owen Street.

For many families including those of Joan Lloyd of Jordans Boatyard, Frank Ford and Doris Kershaw summer meant rowing up river and camping on the Breinton banks. Far right are Doris's grandparents John and Kate Marshall of St Nicholas Street and daughter Florence Helen Marshall who became head of Mahollam School, Kington.

The Wild West troupe (top right) included members of the Jordan family who ran Jordans Boatyard, pictured in the background below with Gertrude Jordan and children Billy, Emily and Joan. (Joan loaned the photos).

Bottom right, **Frank Ford** loaned the photo of Mick Masson flexing an oar as he pulls up river. An intensive training regime at the Rowing Club in the 1970s led to Mick, Frank and the other crew members pictured on our front cover taking the Jackson Trophy at the Head of the River Race on the Thames in 1976.



Jammy fried eggs and bananas at Kington

Former policeman **Peter Holman** recalls a lad's life in Kington during the last war.

"War, at first, made little impact on the lives of me and my friends, Neville Ovens, Raymond Parker, Terry Creamor and John Stimpson. As the son of a policeman, we lived with other police families in Oxford Street, close to the police station and Sergeant Ovens' detached house.

"We drove flocks of sheep through the streets to the market nearby; we caught minnows in the Arrow, played in the 'Rec' and paid 3d on Saturday mornings for the Bridge Street Picture House film shows. John Stimpson was related to the cinema's Mr Dickinson and he allowed John and I into the projection room to change the records on his two-deck player."

The new military hospital at Hergest (right) began filling with wounded Americans and food became increasingly scarce. "John's French Mum served boiled nettle tops one lunch time: I was convinced I'd get stung.

"When the Americans arrived, the soldiers threw sweets and gum to people lining the streets to welcome them. Their military police worked closely with our police and my father invited one American to tea. They weren't rationed like us, but they only had powdered eggs at Hergest so my mother made him fresh fried eggs. We were horrified to see him put a load of homemade jam on them.

"We used to watch Flying Fleas, small one-man operated airplanes in khaki drab, trundle along a field on the edge of town carrying, we thought, mail to the Camp. And one time a low loader pulled onto Yeomans' depot laden with the fuselage of a large military aircraft still with bandoliers of ammunition inside. We clambered through it, unchallenged, whilst the driver had a break: no health and safety then.

At the end of the war the Americans threw a party at their camp for every Kington schoolchild. We were royally entertained and scoffed food and ice creams we had not seen for years.

Then in February 1946, when Mum was having my brother Paul at Hereford County Hospital, I saw people queuing outside the greengrocer's for the first bananas to be seen for years. My father took one to Mum. She was thrilled."

Peter's memories will form part of Herefordshire's Home Front in World War Two, due out in 2018. What do you remember?



The Gl camp and the sheep market, Kington. The photos are from Kington Museum. Staffed by Sally Mansell the Mill Street museum is open until the end of September on Tuesdays and Thursday (10.30 – 4) and Wednesdays and Saturdays (10.30 – 1). It's run by volunteers and admission is free! (kingtonmuseum@gmail.com or 01544 231748).

Around & About

Wiggins

George Agate, at 23, was Wiggins' youngest foreman, writes **Joan Martin-Agate** from Weston-super-Mare. Her Dad, Holmer allotmenteer Charlie Martin won 23 prizes at the company's horticultural show in 1962. "The prizes were so good!" **Valerie Sim's** family moved from Birmingham to come to Wiggins, Valerie working in the stores with Mr Growcott and the front office with Mr Turner in the 1970s. "Wiggins' pantomimes were the talk of the town," she writes. **Vic Herbert** recalls coach parties coming from Cardiff, Swansea and Birmingham for the shows: he starred as the Dame in fourteen of the productions. Our Nick Jones is compiling a history of Wiggins for IOA so keep those memories coming in!

Wormelow

"I'm trying to join my ancestral dots," writes **Anastazia Smith** after coming across the photo of a brass snuff box engraved 'John Ford, Gamekeeper – Bryngwyn'. "I'm hoping to find family members called Ford or Jones in Fownhope, Much Birch and neighbouring villages during the 1850s to the 1890s. I'm also trying to find out more about Bryngwyn Manor, Wormelow."



Weobley

Reader **John Martin** commented on Weobley Museum's photo of Colcombe's (IOA 44) which features his great aunt, Liverpool-born Beatrice Oakes (below). She moved with her family, including sister Sarah, to Weobley around 1904 to nurse an ailing aunt, Ellen-Maria Merrick of Brook House, Bell Square, Weobley. (The Merricks had long farmed in Norton Canon and Sarnesfield.) The butcher Edgar Colcombe (far left) married Beatrice. When she died following the birth of their son in 1915, Edgar married her younger sister Sarah in 1918. She had been in service at Cowarne Court (the place inspired Edward Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March) and Garnstone Castle, Weobley demolished around 1959.

Leaning on the door frame next to Beatrice is John 'Tiny' Jones. Tiny's father was a 'victualer' at the Unicorn.

"And, adds John Martin, it was a Colcombe (a William Thomas Colcombe I think – no idea of relationship if any) who was one of the main subjects of Ella Mary Leather's (The Folklore of Herefordshire) recordings of Herefordshire folk stories and songs in Weobley workhouse (died 1911). She collaborated with Ralph Vaughan Williams."

Snodhill Castle Photos

Surrey Garland from Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust is looking for old photos of the village castle. "The grounds were a popular trysting and picnicking place and will be again once our £500k restoration project is complete. We have a wood engraving and one snap from the 70s but that's about it..." Get in touch if you can help. (www.snodhillcastle.org)



Bullinghope

One name on the recently restored Bullinghope Church war memorial is Pte Cyril Bryan Jones, a local lad (top 1st left, back row) who emigrated to New Zealand before the First World War. **Jean Evans** explains how he came to be on the memorial. "Cyril, a wheelwright from Ridgehill, emigrated, and worked at the Midhurst Dairy of Taranaki before enlisting with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, only to die in the opening battle of the Somme in September 1916." The memorial names James Beavan, James Bundy, Arthur Holmes, Arthur Wood, Sidney Smith and Lt. H. Bodenham Lubinski, the eldest son of the family whose estate, Rotherwas, became the Rotherwas Munitions Factory. Lubinski was killed in 1916. His family had benefited from the sale of Rotherwas, which included a cottage, then described as a hovel in the Rotherwas sale particulars (Jean still has a copy) bought by Jean's grandfather and which later became Quarry House.

The Runaway Evacuee

More from Brummie war child **Eileen Carpenter**



After her surprise Christmas back home in Birmingham (Issue 44) and after being caught in several air raids ("We'd have to go into the air raid shelter and I'd get hysterical in that confined space"), Eileen is returned to the family friend 'Aunty' in Edgar Street. Eileen is deeply unhappy.

"In January 1941 Mum and Dad came down. Mum stayed with me and 'Aunty' and Dad was put up with Grandma, now sharing her niece's tiny one-bed flat in Alexandria Avenue, College Estate after being bombed out of Birmingham.

"I persuaded Mum to take me back to Birmingham, but 'Aunty' took it badly and wouldn't let me go. It finished up with Mum and I walking out at nine in the night and staying at a B&B by the station. Next day I was over the moon: I thought I'd be going home to Birmingham! But Grandma persuaded Mum to leave me with her so I slept on an old sofa while Grandma slept in a chair. I lay awake worrying she'd fall off.

"I'd made friends with another girl and one day we climbed a ladder into an old building and had a look round. When we went to go back, someone had removed the ladder. Panic! It was too far to jump. We called out to a couple of boys and one climbed a drainpipe and helped us down."

"I had to own up to my Grandma and got a telling off. Sadly Grandma died that March and I had to find somewhere else to live."

Faces and Voices of Leominster

Leominster's Faces andVoices features a cast of 21 local characters including Mike Baldwin ("My grandfather, he didn't have any teeth or, if he did, he didn't wear them"), Cyril Davies ("We walked from Risbury to Leominster to get married and walked back again"), Jeremy Finney remembering life as a reporter on the Leominster News and former mayor Alec Haines (right): "I love Leominster". Catch Christopher Preece's (photographer and new media designer) Heritage Lottery funded audio-visual project at Grange Court, Leominster Monday to Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm until the end of September: www.facesandvoices.org.uk



Where is it?

Jean Sharples not only identified our last Where Is It? but also sent us a photograph of the scene today - Woodseaves Road, Eardisley.

There's a double mystery in this issue thanks to reader Keith Taylor who asks which school is this (above)? And where was this garage?

In Our Age Editor: Bill Laws. Design: Pink Sheep Design. Website: Chris Preece. Print: Orphans Press.
Herefordshire Lore: Chair, Mark Hubbard; Secretary, Eileen Klotz; Treasurer, Harvey Payne; Proofs, Sandy Green. Committee: Rosemary Lillico, Chris and Irene Tomlinson, Betty Webb, Julie Orton-Davies, Marsha O'Mahony, Joyce Chamberlain, Keith and Krystyna James and Jean and Peter Mayne.
Munitions Group (www.rotherwasmunitionshereford.co.uk) Barrie Mayne (chair).

In Our Age direct to your door?

Make sure of your copy - subscribe to In Our Age and we will post or deliver your copy.

Sign up below for:

☐ Individual Subscription: £5 for the rest of the year.

Day Centre? Residential Home? Meeting place? Why not take out a group subscription? Still only £30 a year for 10 copies.

Send a cheque (made out to Herefordshire Lore) to Herefordshire Lore, c/o Castle Green Pavilion, Castle Green, Hereford HR1 2NW

Name: Address:

..... Postcode:

Contact number: Email: