

# In Our Age

Herefordshire Lore : Living local history

Issue 48  
Spring 2018



 Find In Our Age on  
Facebook



Whitecross  
Page 2



Rushall  
Page 4



Preston-on-Wye  
Page 5



## The Ross school bus

Following Hugo Mason's account of his daily train ride to work Rosemary Brown recalls some tricky school bus journeys.

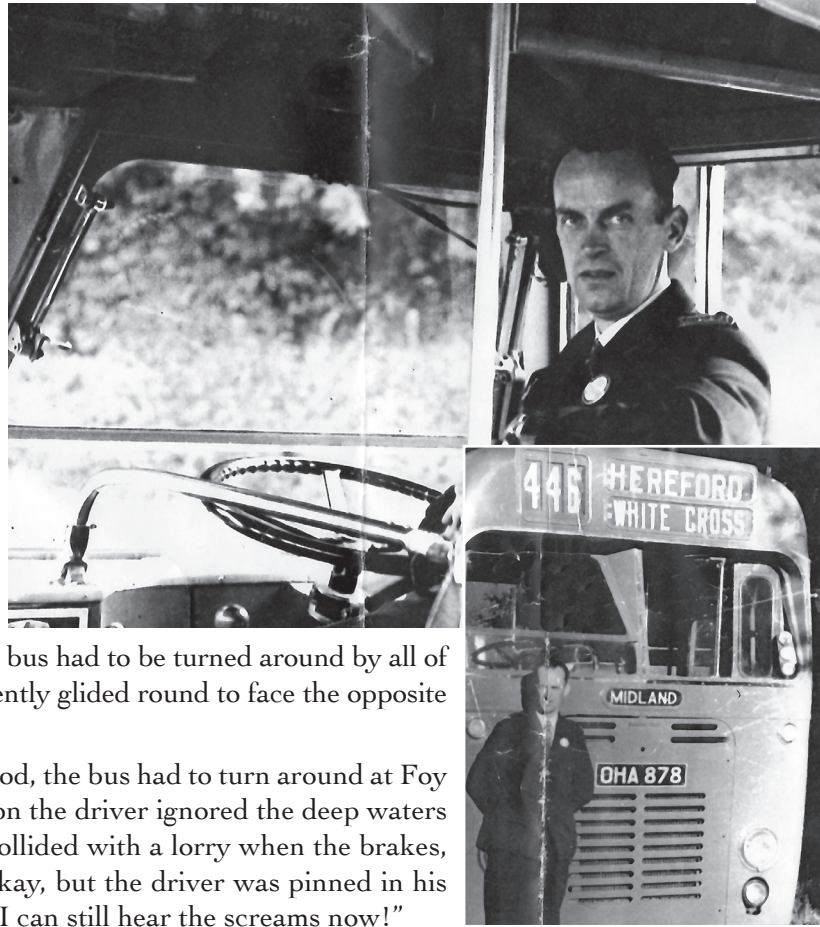
Rosemary went to Ross Secondary Modern School in the early 1950s. Her school bus picked up at How Caple and travelled onto Brockhampton, then Foy, before arriving at its final destination in Ross. It was a bus journey with some adventure and a bus driver with some 'character' as Rosemary was to learn.

"He kept a gun in his cab and regularly bagged a rabbit for his tea during the school run. He would also stop where the sweet chestnuts grew by the river, allowing us children to collect them.

"Just up from Foy, en route to Ross, was a very steep hill called the Slad. In winter, it was near impossible to negotiate, but the bus driver had a plan. He carried quite a few shovels and he coaxed us pupils to dig the bus out so that it could progress. But on one occasion it refused to budge, even after some frantic digging and pushing. So the bus had to be turned around by all of us pupils pushing. We all pushed at the rear and the bus gently glided round to face the opposite way. We were late for school that day."

The route ran alongside the Wye and if the river was in flood, the bus had to turn around at Foy village and return to Ross via How Caple. On one occasion the driver ignored the deep waters and continued regardless. At Brampton Abbots the bus collided with a lorry when the brakes, damaged by the flood water, failed. "All on board were okay, but the driver was pinned in his cab. Some of the bigger lads managed to release him, but I can still hear the screams now!"

School run: we don't know the driver of this 446 Midland Whitecross bus. Can you help?



## Hello Julie!

Julie Orton-Davies is taking over the helm from Mark Hubbard at Herefordshire Lore. "Mark has helped steer a successful path over many years and our gratitude for his support during this time is heartfelt," says Julie.

"Looking forward to the future, my aim is to encourage children of all ages to share their unique childhood experiences through the medium of storytelling and photography. Maybe a likely suspect springs to mind, in which case please forward details to enable us an opportunity to capture a new take on life in our beautiful county." Can you help Julie out with your school memories?



Marsha O'Mahony and Julie Orton-Davies enjoying a laugh.

### Herefordshire Lore

Herefordshire Lore has been collecting and publishing your memories since 1989. We've no staff and no office, but plenty of enthusiasm! We are Joyce Chamberlain, Julie Orton-Davies (chair), Keith and Krystyna James, Rosemary Lillico, Jean and Peter Mayne, Chris and Irene Tomlinson, Linda Ward and Betty Webb. Marsha O'Mahony runs RiverVoices with help from Heather Allan and Katie Bower; Sandy Green is our proofreader; Eileen Klotz our secretary, Harvey Payne our treasurer and Chris Preece our webmaster. Design is by Pinksheep, print by Orphans Press. Bill Laws is our editor.

We depend on your contributions – call us with your stories on 07845 907891, email [info@herefordshirelore.org.uk](mailto:info@herefordshirelore.org.uk) or drop us a line at Herefordshire Lore, Castle Green Pavilion, Castle Green, HRI 2NW.

**Front cover:** One of Vivian's wartime photos (see page 3): the farewell parade of Much Marcle Home Guard in December 1944, loaned by Gordon Armand. From the right, top, Lieutenants Watson, Greenhill, Thompson, Captain Waller, Lieutenant Parry, 2nd Lieutenants Hawkins and Boughey, Lieutenant Ree, Captain Allwright. Second row, Captain Farr, 2nd Lieutenants Dougherty and Hill, Lieutenant Eccles, Major Turner, Lieutenants Denness and Gardner. Third row, Lieutenants Maddar, Bristow, Blakemore and Lucas, 2nd Lieutenant Tyler, Captain Bickham. Front row, Majors Farrow and Moorland, Lieutenant Colonel Toybee (commanding officer), the Lord Ruthvin, Major Spankie and Captain Raymond.

## Hereford's all women photo studio

Ada and Gertrude Durrent ran Vivian's studio in Hereford High Town. Keith James looks back at their lives.

At some unknown date, probably the 1930s, sisters Ada and Gertrude Durrent, chose, again for some unknown reason, the name Vivian to start a photographic studio in Hereford. It was to become the largest studio business Herefordshire has ever known – a record perhaps never equalled.

Remarkably for a business that spanned at least thirty years, the two sisters only employed women. One was Thelma Holland who recalled another photographer, Marjorie White, bringing images in for processing. "We worked in rooms next door to Lloyds Bank above Mansfield's shoe shop and Russell's the book shop. Marjorie would arrive during our lunch hour and borrow our darkroom to print her photographs."

Ada was the photographer and the undoubted creative driving force whilst Gertrude, who had run a craft shop in St Peter's Square, ran a separate but parallel enterprise making the popular Polyfoto photographs.

Ada's portraits are as typical of the period as the instantaneous "selfies-on-a-stick" are today. The lighting was of soft summer sunshine and the portrait lenses suitably rounded so as not show every pore and pimple. Where a catch light was needed to add sparkle to the eyes this was simply bleached later with a fine brush. And the final flourish? In her own hand to sign the print in pencil with the word "Vivians".

Ada was deeply religious and would arrive at work climbing the stairs singing "All things bright and beautiful". Fresh cakes would be brought to the studio and staff outings arranged to the Black Mountains or Porthcawl. She was a notoriously bad driver who, on occasions, would tell her favourite teenage employee, Pauline Seymour, that she would not need the car at the weekend and that she was free to borrow it.

Pauline was soon trusted to photograph weddings and present the public face of the studio. She was expected to take over the business, but having started a family she lost her husband in 1958. The studio meanwhile was running out of steam and in August 1961 the company was put into liquidation. The sisters retreated to their home in St James Road and when they moved to a retirement home the majority of their life's work was simply thrown away.

Thelma Holland, who died in 2016, set up the new business, moving to a smaller studio in Church Street. Known for her reliable and quality work at RAF Credenhill, Thelma became the official photographer to the SAS regiment at Bradbury Lines. One SAS biographer recalls the time a whole squadron of SAS men queued in Church Street for new passport pictures.

Go to [www.herefordshirelore.org.uk](http://www.herefordshirelore.org.uk)/In Our Age (Issue 40) to read Dorothy Kershaw's memories of working at Vivian's.



Pauline Seymour (above) borrows the company car at Vivian's. Below, Rita Scragg, Rita Hiles when she worked for Vivian's, on a shoot. The story involved photographing masonry damage to Holme Lacy House. (After the war the House served as a convalescent home. A nurse visiting from Birmingham in the 1950s was shocked to find the sexes strictly segregated: "Aren't they allowed to mingle?" she asked. "Oh yes," came the Matron's crisp reply: "At Christmas.")



## Nettle creepers and yaffles

Herefordshire Ornithological Club (HOC) was set up by the County Hospital's Charles Walker in 1952. HOC's John Pullen and Gerald Parker took a reflective look at local birdlife for RiverVoices.

It's not unusual to see 40 species on a riverside walk through Hereford, says HOC chairman John, although "We have lost a lot of birds over the years". Declines include marsh warblers from Hereford sewage works, the sand martins that had nested by the Greenway Bridge, and farmland birds like song thrushes, sedge warblers, kestrels and the flocks of black-headed gulls that used to follow the plough. Climate change, however, has boosted numbers of cormorants, mandarin ducks, goosanders, herring gulls and little egrets along with the red kites. John and Gerald used some traditional local bird names: nettle creepers, twinx, quists and yaffles. Can you translate them?



Budding sailors at Bodenham Lakes, now a wildlife sanctuary managed by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. (Photo: Vic Gammage).



# From My Album: Jonathan Seddon-Harvey, Doreen Pocknell, Clive Dale, Doreen Davies and Bobbie Blackwell



Musical memories: As Hereford prepares to host the Three Choirs Festival IOA remembers some non-classical musicians including storyteller Lenny Alsop, above (photo: Jonathan Seddon-Harvey), who helped found Herefordshire Lore and played with City Ditch; Albert Lee, now America's top country guitarist, was born into a Travelling family at Lingen in 1943; and before the Hereford-based Buddies morphed into Mott the Hoople, a succession of jazz bands played at Park Hall, Redhill Hostel and the Booth. Among them were Butchers Row and Easy Riders (with Eddie Falconer on clarinet, Lenny Thwaites on double bass, Jeff Nuttall on trumpet and Jean Rees on vocals) and the Russ Allan Band with Ambrose Emerson. Ambrose starred in a BBC Festival of Britain radio show, hosted by Hereford-born Beryl Reid, along with Lichfield Avenue's Sheila Porter, Louise Eacock of Wallis Avenue and Sydney Roberts from Eign Mill in 1952.

What are your musical memories?

A labour force of 20 including Doreen Pocknell of Rushall, who loaned the photo, finishing the harvest at Court Farm, Rushall near Much Marcle. Right, could they be Land Army women? A photo from the late Bobbie Blackwell's album.



An undated photo of Mordiford Football Club (left) with, below, Clive Dale's picture postcard of Preston-on-Wye's team. "Circa 1910 with Tom Hiles, the lad in middle row," says Clive.



Entering into the football spirit, nurses at the General dress up for Matron's New Year's Day Party. Unfortunately we don't know the year: do you? (Photo: Doreen Davies). The NHS is marking its 70th anniversary: were you part of the NHS? Send us your memories!



## There's the King!

In the third of his Herefordshire childhood musings, Michael Young recalls the Great Western Railway and some unlucky horses.

On the 22nd October 1941 King George VI proceeded via Shrewsbury to Hereford where he inspected a guard of honour on the station forecourt having made a brief stop at Leominster. On that grey, chilly Wednesday, my mother, three-year-old sister and I were walking to town along Barrs Court Road when my mother cried out: "There's the King!" The King, a seemingly slight figure accompanied by senior military personnel, was being greeted by the civic worthies on Platform 3. In the background, the Royal Train. The time would have been 3.50pm give or take a minute or two. We took in the scene and hurried on to spread the word, but by the time we had reached Commercial Road the place was buzzing. The King had already been spotted travelling at some speed in a motor car convoy preceded by the Chief Constable. The King later rejoined the Royal Train at Monmouth inspecting a troop of soldiers outside the New Inn at St Owen's Cross, as eye witness Marjorie Powell (IOA 23) recalled.

Chillingly, the King went on to review troops of the 18th Division who were later deployed to Singapore to bolster the colony's defence. They arrived shortly before Singapore surrendered and every officer and man was either killed or taken prisoner or died in captivity.

Hereford during the war was an important railway route. I well remember Dad in 1943 coming home one day and telling me that some American engines were on Barton shed (Hereford's locomotive depot). Many were built specifically for the war effort and after working extensively on the Great Western Railway were subsequently sent to Europe after D-Day. My notes even at the age of eight would have listed the numbers, together with equally 'foreign' LNER engines shedded at Worcester which would have worked to Hereford on light goods trains.

Another vivid memory, which I believe dates to autumn 1944, was of traffic in the opposite direction, that is from Europe to the UK. An ambulance train drew into Platform 3 of Barrs Court Station during the early evening with its distinctive khaki livery and bold Red Cross insignia. From the front steps of our house accompanied by my parents, together with Auntie Mag and Uncle Bob who lived next door, we witnessed the sight of wounded servicemen taking a little exercise. The obvious discomfort of the men made little impression on me, but I could tell by the way my parents spoke that it was a serious occasion.

### Railway horses



An obvious truism was that petrol was precious and the railways relied on much horse power for local deliveries at Hereford. There were a couple of ancient Thornycroft lorries reserved for distant locations that had no railway station, but in the main it was heavy horses that took the strain. Their stables were between Bryngwyn Terrace and the demolished side of Barrs Court Terrace. Each morning the GWR draymen and their charges parade 'light engine' between the stables and the warehouse loading bays. In the late afternoon the reverse, with a hard day's work completed. The horses were kept in immaculate condition, their accouterments gleaming and there was obvious pride and empathy between man and beast.

It is against this comforting scenario that two hideous accidents occurred when horses became impaled on the iron spiked railings that form the boundary between Barrs Court Road and the railway. I witnessed one such accident when coming home during the afternoon from St Owen's School. Men were trying to release a horse that had shied. I hurried on.

Dad explained that the problem occurred because young, largely untrained horses had been drafted in to assist with the increasing workload and hadn't been broken in sufficiently to experience railway work. When the boiler pressure of a locomotive was allowed to rise to maximum by the footplate crew and the safety valve lifted to release steam there was an explosive noise. With the horse perhaps only fifty yards or so away from the inferno the drayman had difficulty in controlling his charge.



A youthful **Michael Young** on National Service with the RAF at Wilmslow in 1958; below left, the GWR relied on horse power; below, the future King George on a visit to Ledbury before the war (photo: Peter Holman).



## Around & About

### Rotherwas

What's happened to the former munition workers' names you collected? asks **Janet Preedy**. The recently formed Rotherwas Together, which is documenting the district's history, is overseeing the process of digitizing the names at Herefordshire Archive and Record Office (HARC) in Rotherwas. Barrie Mayne from the Rotherwas Munitions Group says they are still collecting names at [www.rotherwasmunitionshereford.co.uk](http://www.rotherwasmunitionshereford.co.uk); alternatively you can send names to us at Herefordshire Lore. They will be passed on to HARC. They should be available to all by the end of 2018. Meanwhile BBC Hereford and Worcester's Nicola Goodwin hopes to see a statue to all munitions workers at HARC by 2019.

### Hampton Bishop

The number of eels in the Wye, estimated to have fallen by 95% since the 1980s (IOA 47), prompts **Donald Mash** of Minehead to share his memories of eeling or 'clotting'. Don grew up at 88 Church Road, Tupsley "above a retired policeman called Brummage". One night the policeman's daughter and her boyfriend went clotting in the Wye Pool by the Bunch of Carrots and caught 99 eels. "When they went back to the boat next day there were two more." Don caught his own Wye eel

when a boy: "It was so big it levered my foot off the ground." Don says he's sad to find the old Brickie pond on the former Tupsley brickworks filled in. He and his chums used to catch great crested newts there. And, he asks: "Did there used to be some monkeys in a cage outside the Bunch of Carrots?"

### Going loco

"May I suggest that you recruit a paid-up locospotter cum trainspotter to your editorial board?" asks one reader. "Someone who can differentiate between a locomotive and a train! Take IOA 46 for example: the loco is 6201 Princess Elizabeth (of the ex-LMS Princess Royal class). The train it will haul is named, as the loco headboard says, 'The Caledonian', purely for marketing purposes and to satisfy the steam buffs. (In real life The Caledonian ran between Euston and Glasgow.) Similarly, IOA 47: 92203 is named Black Prince. Bristolian is the name of the train that Black Prince will haul. The Bristolian in GWR/WR days ran between Paddington and... well, have a guess!

*Editor's note: Would that be Bristol?*

Below another of Brian Croker's fine pictures: "Looks like 45596 Bahamas (that's the name of the loco!) carrying a headboard denoting the train, but I can't read it," reports our railway man.

### Where is it?

**Janet Preedy** and **Michael Young** identified Ron Hodges' building (Where is it? IOA 47). They were the tea rooms by Jordan's Boatyard, explains Janet. Michael adds: "It was the terminal building of the Hereford Railway (formerly the Hereford and Abergavenny Tramway) at Wye Bridge. This historic and elegantly rugged building was demolished in an act of vandalism to make way for the Greyfriars Bridge." And here's another mystery building. Can you identify it?





## A strange catch

Continuing with our RiverVoices, Ron Hodges recalls catching a ray in the Severn and witnessing the Chepstow bombing

Evacuated from London to Chepstow during the war, teenager Ron Hodges found himself billeted with a Mrs Annie Curtin by the River Wye. There was an old boy, Caleb Cumper, who was licensed to net salmon. He used to wear this great overcoat and with a scarf around his neck, he'd get out in these large rowing boats. They'd be anchored sideways on, facing the incoming tide and then with a newt and these two poles they'd wait for the salmon to run into the nets."

The overcoat was equipped with two large, salmon-sized pockets into each of which a fish would disappear. "Old Cal would come most days to Mrs Curtin: 'Annie, would you like a small salmon?' 'Oh yeah.' So she'd give him a sixpence, or if it was a bigger one a shilling. We used to dine well on fresh salmon."

Ron also fished in the Severn near Beachley with another fisherman, Podger Humphries. "I used to go with him sometimes and we used to circle these sand dunes with the net as the tide came in or went out. Podger would moor the boat and be one side of the net. I'd hold on to the other end and, partly swimming and partly wading, we'd circle a dune and when it was the right depth under the water, we'd drag the net in."

The catch sometimes came as a surprise: "We caught the biggest flat fish I've ever seen. It had a long spiny tail and Podger said it was a ray of some kind. It was huge!"

On another occasion when he was out walking in 1942 Ron was astonished to see a German bomber – "a Dornier, I think" coming down the valley towards the Severn. "He was following the Wye down, a good navigation aid I suppose. I could see the crosses on the side and he flew down and dropped his bombs on Beachley Camp.

(According to BBC's WW2 People's War a lone German bomber dropped a bomb on the Camp and then strafed the area killing an apprentice tradesman and seriously injuring a sergeant.)



*Hatton's fishing shop in St Owen Street. Famed for its Wye Devon Minnow lures, Hatton's was run by husband and wife Herbert and Margaret before being taken over by their son John and Norman Owen. Hatton's closed in 2001.*

*River Voices: Stories from the Wye*, is a Heritage Lottery-funded project brought to you by Herefordshire Lore. This oral history of the River Wye records and celebrates life along its route. Interviews with over 40 people tell tales of swimming, fishing, eeling, canoeing, poaching, rafting, walking, ferrying, falling bridges and snorkling. Herefordshire life at its best and most colourful. The RiverVoices book will be published this autumn. Further information from project manager, Marsha O'Mahony on 07989 733870 or [riverwyvoices@gmail.com](mailto:riverwyvoices@gmail.com)

The RiverVoices exhibition opens at HARC in May and runs until June 29.



## 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:** £12.50 for 2018.

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: .....