

In Our Age

Herefordshire Lore : Living local history

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Music and Memories



Music makers: Musician Dave Warnes at home, photographed by Emma Drabble (www.drabbleandco.com) for our River Voices project. Dave's sister Jean Rees sang with Ed Falkiner's Easy Riders, below.

Readers remember the county music scene.

Jan and Ed Falkiner opened a jazz club in the Racehorse skittle alley in Widemarsh Street in 1956. It was, says Jan, a handy venue for Ed's band, Ed Falkiner's Easy Riders. The son of Sir Terence and Mildrid Falkiner, Ed, who would later become a probation officer, taught himself the clarinet and teamed up with art school lecturer Jeff Nuttall. Jeff's reputation as a radical anarchist rose after his book *Bomb Culture* was published in 1968, but for now he and the Easy Riders played when and where they could.

Jan came from Birmingham, an evacuee placed with "a lovely couple", Frank and Ellen Watkins from Munstone. "We ran the Club for two years, a time when I dyed my hair various colours from blue and red through to green." Hereford Times journalist Felix Watkins neither liked her choice of colour, nor the Club, once describing the music as akin to an H bomb exploding.

Hungarian Band

The Easy Riders fared better than the musicians stranded in Hereford when war broke out in 1914. The Hungarian Band had been giving public concerts on the Castle Green for over 20 years, but they were now marooned, without their instruments, which had been sent on ahead. Some tried busking on borrowed instruments, leading to a letter in the Hereford Times demanding to know why "foreigners of this class [are] allowed to play in our streets for the purpose of begging." The Band was eventually arrested and interned.

Redhill Hostel and the Crystal Rooms? Ross Jazz Club and Park Hall, Wormelow? The Forge and Ferry Folk Club or Randy Vaughan's Cellar Bar in Church Street? Jazz at the Booth? Your memories please! info@herefordshirelore.org.uk 07845 907891.

Hello from Julie!

IOA 49 introduces us to a small factory in the Hay/Whitney area where essential parts for allied aircraft were produced by 30 local women under the supervision of the Henderson family (page 3); the hazards of becoming a roofer with no safety net (page 6) and life in the ever practical prefab, the answer to the housing shortage in war-torn Britain (page 7).

Meanwhile the end of the RiverVoices project sees the launch in October of the RiverVoices book and a special Year 6 teaching pack. This is aimed at helping children appreciate the role played of the River, past and present, and encourage them to connect more closely with nature.

Julie Orton-Davies, chair Herefordshire Lore

Front cover: Fishy Gardiner's on Hereford's King Street, Bridge Street corner. See RiverVoices back page.

Whitney's Wartime Women

Tom Henderson reveals how a group of country women from Hay and Whitney helped keep Allied aircraft airborne

Jim Henderson was running the garage at Whitney-on-Wye (right) at the outbreak of war. After being interviewed by Rolls Royce technicians, and having the garage equipped with lathes and other machine tools under the US Lend-Lease scheme, the garage was turned into a small factory making vital parts for Allied aircraft.

"Jim was already familiar with lathe work, having moved up from London where he'd been a watchmaker," explains his son Tom. "They were manufacturing fairly simple turned parts: thousands and thousands of aluminium rings, used to seal pipes, and manifold nuts. Then there were all the tiny valve cotters, which had to be hand etched – in pairs." It was, says Tom, quite a performance.

And the workforce?

"Nearly all country women: there'd be up to thirty women, working two shifts for a twelve-hour day, Saturdays included. Father taught them how to work the machines and their working day centred around the Hay to Hereford railway line and Whitney Station." (The local Home Guard held regular training exercises to protect the Station and Whitney Bridge in the event of a German invasion.)

One of the first to apply for work was Hazel Evans, from nearby Whitney. Hazel went on to marry Bob Rayner who assisted at the Nuremberg Trials in Berlin at the end of the war.

Was there any suggestion that the women might not cope with working the machines? "It was never thought about – there was a bloody war on!"

Remarkable women: a series of violet coloured plaques have been temporarily put up around Hereford during the Three Choirs Festival (www.herefordcathedral.org/violet-plaques) commemorating key moments in the Suffragette movement. They include one to Ethel Davies, thrown out of Hereford magistrates court in March 1915 for shouting "I protest as a woman and a mother" when a six-month prison sentence was passed on 31-year-old Lucy Carter for the manslaughter of her baby.



Remarkable Women

Taught To Be Kind

Army interrogator John Oswald recalls quizzing German POWs about Hitler's V3 rocket factory

Twenty-two-year-old Bombardier John Oswald was working as a British army interrogator in Liverpool, interviewing captured Germans about the secret rocket factory at Peenemunde in 1942.

A serendipitous moment brought John into the Combined Services Detailed Intelligence Corps (CSDIC). Fluent in French, German and Italian (he was raised in Germany with his German mother, Martha, and British father Alman, a sales manager for a pharmaceutical company), John was then serving with the Territorial Army. In 1942 his artillery unit was in retreat, heading for Cherbourg when some French villagers flagged them down.

Parking the truck and their 'pipsqueak' Bofors gun, he and the others stopped to swap news and share a last glass of wine. "The next day one of our officers said, 'I hear you speak French? Can you order wine for our officers' mess?'"

Instead of purchasing military wine, he was sent to the CSDIC and trained in interrogation techniques by the renowned interrogator Colonel Alexander Scotland. "We were taught to be kind," recalled John. "Hectoring the Germans was no use."

He was soon interviewing German Afrika Korps troops, POWs from El Alamein passing through Liverpool docks on their way to America. The interrogators weeded out any POWs who might have information on the north German rocket station. "I must have interrogated about 2,000 Germans," says

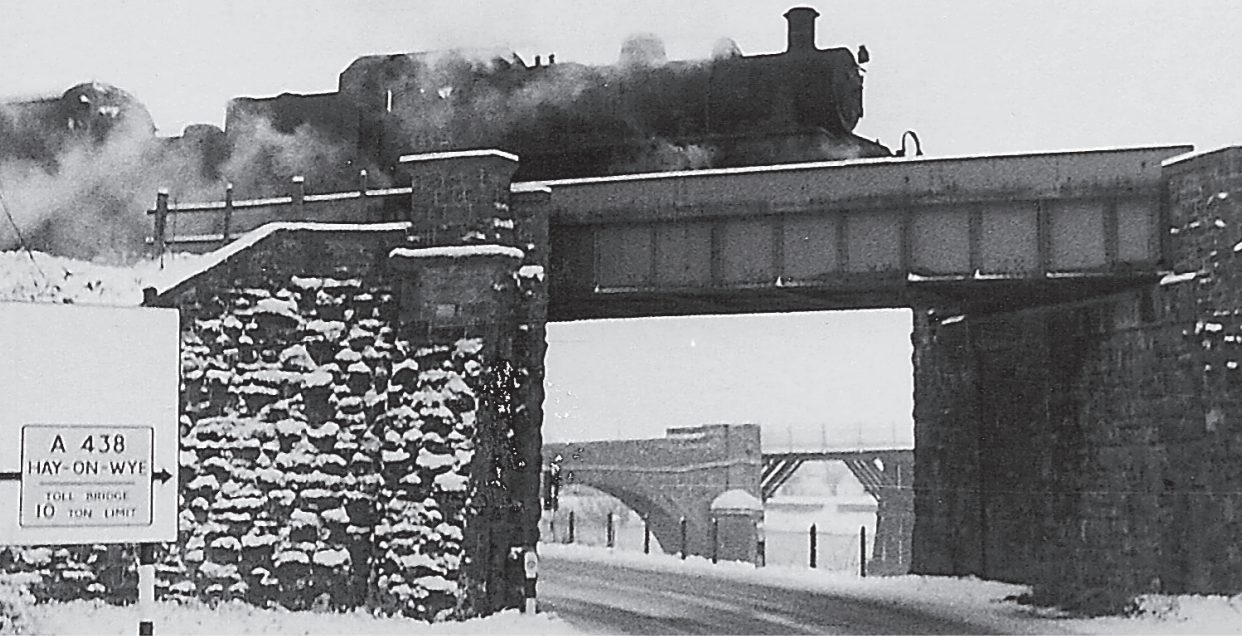
John. "We had three minutes with each. Those who knew nothing were sent through one door – to their American ship – the others through another door ... and further interrogation. (Peenemunde was subsequently bombed by the Allies.)

Later, screening POWs at Wolfsberg in Austria, John Oswald exposed a seemingly ordinary Obergefreiter (Senior Lance Corporal). The 'Obergefreiter' turned out to be a senior SS officer wanted for war crimes in Yugoslavia. He was handed over to the authorities, tried and executed.



From My Album

Where is it? The final passenger train rushes over a Herefordshire railway bridge in the early 1960s shortly before Lord Beeching's rationalisation closed the line. Do you know where it is? Answers to Herefordshire Lore – details at the bottom of the page.



Nancy Preece recognised her sister, Ivy Powell far left, at Eaton Bishop school in 1939. Nancy left the school in 1938, aged 14, and by 1942 was filling 25lb shells at Rotherwas munitions factory. She recently received a medal for her efforts from the Prime Minister. "The school was run by Mr and Mrs Say," recalls Nancy who lived at St Donat's Cottage, Ruckhall Common with Dad George Powell, a farm worker, and Mum Ellen who regularly worked on apple and walnut picking. Their neighbours included former Ross MP, Sir Charles Pulley, and his racehorse stables, and the landlord of the Camp Inn. "When men were building the pumping station to take water to RAF Madley, they'd come up to the Camp for a lunchtime pint," recalls Nancy who learned to swim ("it was lovely") in the Wye. "We were encouraged by Bishop Lisle Carr who offered a shilling for the first to swim across the river."



When a giant Daily Mail publicity football arrived at Whitney on Wye, the only place to inflate it was Jim Henderson's garage. Ina, Jim's wife, is on the left. And (below) a nasty accident on the Hereford to Hay road in the 1930s brings out the Henderson's breakdown truck. (Photos: Tom Henderson)

Margaret Riley graduated from Herefordshire Technical College with 120 words per minute shorthand in the days when secretarial pay was tied to a secretary's shorthand speed. Margaret taught at the College when it was based near the Fariery School at Newton Road and later (below) when it moved to Foley Lane. (She recalls the tears of dismay from her would-be secretaries when the Fariery School and its dashing young men were moved to Holme Lacy.)



High Flier

Brian Smith started work full-time on the roofs of Herefordshire at the age of fifteen.

"I left St Owens School, and headmaster Dickie Weston, in the March aged 15," remembers Brian. "I should have stayed on until the summer, but Dad said: 'You ain't gonna learn anymore.' The education officer came round, but I was at work; I was already working every weekend."

Brian was born in 1938. His mum and dad, Rosemary and Tom, had met in the Manchester cotton mills, and Tom had set up a roofing business in Halesworth. When it was hit by the 1930s' recessions, Tom and several of his workers came to Hereford looking for work.

The family moved into the Old Post Office in Wellington and Tom started on maintenance at the Rotherwas munitions factory. Later Tom and Rosemary and children Arnold, Joyce, Alma, Brenda, Dorothy, Brian, Tom and Joan, moved to a new house, 130 Holme Lacy Road, Hereford and Tom got his roofing business back on track – he even roofed their own home. When Tom landed a roofing contract at RAF Credenhill, it was time for Brian to leave school.

"All of us were on bikes. I'd be on my bike cycling from Holme Lacy Road to Credenhill where we were roofing. I'd carry my tools on my back in a bag, a batten axe, slate pick, ruler, trowel, slate cutter – whatever you needed for the job. We had some real characters working for us, Roy Jarvis, Richard Wall, and a couple of rough ones, in the pub every evening, getting into fights and coming to work with a black eye." Despite this they worked hard. And long hours.

"We worked from 7.30 to 5.30 six days a week and I'd work Sundays as well: 'Sunday pays your tax,' we'd say. My first wage was 30/- (£1.50 today) for a week. I said to Mum: 'How much do I owe you?' '£1.' "So I had ten shillings (50p) for the rest of the week. But when I got a rise to £2 a week it stayed at £1 to Mum." Things got better when Brian learned to drive.

"I had £7 worth of lessons, a pound a lesson, when I was 17. I sent off to the driving people as soon as I finished, took the test two weeks later and passed. That was it! Dad bought a van for me and I could use it at night: ten shillings for four gallons of petrol!"

Tom had bought a little yard for £50 at 70 Hinton Road. "It had an air raid shelter at the entrance and you had to back round it to get in. Eventually the Council took the shelter down and I bought the yard off Dad." By now Brian's brother Arnold, having built a house in Manor Road, moved to set up business in Hay, covering mid Wales as far as Machynlleth. Brian went to help.

"There wasn't the health and safety in those days. I fell off Grosmont Church roof once. We'd stripped it and we had a sheet we rolled up to the ridge, which we'd pull down if we saw the rain coming over the hill and down the valley. But this one time there was a big wind: I jumped on to the sheet to hold it down, but it flicked me off, over the roof. I fell about 60 feet landing, luckily, in long grass between two graves. I'd caught my eye on a couple of slate tiles and I was bleeding." Did he see a doctor? "No, not in those days.

The Smith's roofing business moved to Kings Acre Road and later to Rotherwas and Brian's three sons, Paul, Mark and Gary, took over. But looking back, Brian still believes people worked harder: "In those days I could batten, felt, tile and finish an average-sized bungalow in a day. Today that would take two or three blokes two or three days. In those days that was normal."



Seven-year-old Brian (right) with neighbour Brian Sherlock by the company van in Putson and with the old van, now restored, today.



Around & About

Madley

Janet Walters writes: "There was a lovely neighbour of ours in Madley who worked at the munitions factory, Laura Broad. She'd had polio and had a calliper and walked with a limp. When the factory finished, Laura, who lived at Shenmore, worked at the Boy's School in Belmont Abbey. A wonderful woman." The new group, Rotherwas Together, continues the work of Herefordshire Lore's Munitions Group, collecting the names of former workers.

Queen of Ewyas

This image of the crowning of the Ewyas Harold Carnival Queen, comes from Coronation Festivities in Herefordshire, an amateur 1953 film held by the British Film Institute. It features other villages including Peterchurch, Bishopstone, Fownhope, Ashperton, Withington and gymnastics on Hereford's Castle Green. Watch it for free at www.player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-coronation-festivities-in-herefordshire-1953-online Are you the Queen? Let us know!



Mansell Lacy

Students from Whitecross School visited the former Foxley Camp, Mansell Lacy recently as part of their Heritage Lottery project, Shared Freedom, Shared Future, a short film celebrating the roll of Polish fighters in the last war. Many Polish families lived at Foxley in the post war years. Meanwhile Anne Williams emailed (info@herefordshirelore.org.uk) asking about the Canadians (IOA 46) who were at Foxley in the 1940s. She is trying to trace a Canadian soldier who fathered a child, born at Hereford in 1941, to a young nurse.

Hampton Bishop's Monkeys

Brian Chamberlain remembers the caged monkeys outside the Bunch of Carrots (mentioned in IOA 48 by Donald Mash). "There were several of them in a wood and wire netting cage on the grassed area between the road and the car park," writes his wife Margaret: "They were always of great interest, particularly to the children, when the bus stopped there on its way into town."

Where was it?

The Chamberlains, like Rosemary Lillico, recognised Brian Croker's photo of Marchant's shop on the move (IOA 48, page 7) "When the shop closed there were plans for a Littlewoods to be built there (now also long gone), but the developers had to retain the oldest part of the original building. This was removed and transported on a low loader to High Town near the Black and White house, where it remained while the demolition of the rest of the building took place. It was carefully replaced during the rebuild and can still be seen today."

Whitecross

John Edwards, of Blackmarston Road drove the 446 (featured in IOA 48), says his colleague Mr Spencer who worked for Midland Red for 41 years.



Hereford Prefabs

Michael Young's memories of growing up in one of Hereford's Barrs Court Terrace wartime prefabs (above) struck a chord with Nigel Whittington. His family moved into 9 Barrs Court Terrace from 25 Old School Lane, off College Road where the Bridge Inn ("a bag of crisps and a glass of Vimto on Sundays") stood. Nigel's Dad, Charlie, demobbed in the First World War after contracting trench fever at Ypres, was an overseer at Rotherwas munitions factory alongside his wife Mabel in the Second World War. Mabel left the factory to have Nigel in 1942. Taxi driver Trevor Burland, a Mr Thomas and his daughter, a Mr Preedy and, in Number 1, a driver with the Midland Red all lived nearby. "It was a lovely little place, all metal and very cold in winter. There were three steps under a metal canopy at the front door and two steps at the back leading to a kitchen with fitted aluminium units, a gas cooker and gas fridge. There was a toilet. And running water! The front room had a fitted fireplace (I used to fetch coke from the gas works down by Painters) and we had a double bedroom on the left and a single on the right.

"You could jump over the wall at the back to where the Great Western Railways stabled the dray horses." Like Michael, Nigel remembered seeing a young horse, which had been impaled on the railings near the station, being put out of its misery. The horses were replaced by three-wheeled Scammells. (Playing around after the workers had gone home, Nigel managed to start one up by accident.)

The Hereford Hatchery was also nearby. Newly hatched chicks were sexed and either disposed of (males) or sent for sale (hens). "There was a bin full of the cocks and I used dig out the few live ones and pass them on to my uncle who raised them for meat." Nigel joined the post office after working first for Henry Willis, the city's organ repair and tuning company, and then as a milkman with Bartonsham Dairy delivering in the St James area.

Bromyard History

Barry Lawrence extolls the virtues of Bromyard's excellent local history centre

Ever wondered who your ancestors were? Where they lived? Or perhaps you are intrigued about the history of your house and its previous occupants? If so, we can help you find the answer much nearer than you ever envisaged. No need to endlessly trawl the net, visit the National Archives at Kew or Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre in Hereford. The volunteer-run and self-funded Bromyard History Centre is situated next to Bromyard Post Office and opens on Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings (www.bromyardhistorysociety.org.uk 01885 488755). The Bromyard & District Local History Society run a shop, a disabled-friendly Research Room and a comprehensive library with people on hand to help.



From Bromyard History Society archives: Ocle Pychard Fete at Burley Gate School in the 1950s; and a contestant tries her luck at Bromyard Gala.



River Voices: Stories from the Wye.

Marsha O'Mahony on Herefordshire Lore's latest project

Herefordshire Lore's oral history of the Wye, the *River Voices: Stories from the Wye* book is launched in October, adding to our growing list of titles that record Herefordshire life.

In the summer of 2017 a team of Herefordshire Lore interviewers travelled up and down the river, speaking to swimmers, walkers, anglers, ferry women, canoeists, bailiffs, poachers, bridge keepers like Dave Warnes and many more, recording their experiences of this lovely river of ours. From landing a 40-lb salmon at Ballingham, shopping for lures at Hatton's, crossing the river with Preedy's Hunderton ferry, chasing poachers at Symonds Yat, walking on the frozen river at Whitney-on-Wye, rescuing stranded villagers at Letton, to home-made canoes at Hereford, these are just a few of the stories gathered. Illustrated alongside some hitherto unseen photos, this is an excellent record of life on the Wye. We are grateful to Heritage Lottery Players and our match funders, Hereford City Council, Wye Valley AONB, Cadbury Trust, New Grove Trust and MBSCF, for making the project possible.

Ty Price Hall, St Thomas Square, Monmouth - catch the River Voices exhibition before August 31. Or hear Marsha O'Mahony's illustrated talks, *River Voices*, on Tuesday September 18 at The Grange, Leominster; Tuesday October 16, Garway Village Hall; Tuesday November 26, Ross Library. Would you like to hear Marsha's River Voices talk? Call us for bookings: 07845 907891.



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