

In Our Age

Herefordshire Lore : Living local history

Issue 51
Winter 2019



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Off to the Wood

Keith James recalls an unusual Herefordshire sporting fixture.

On the Sunday of any bank holiday, writes **Keith James**, my father and grandfather would announce they were "off to the Wood". Dire warnings were issued not to be late for Sunday lunch, but they were always ignored as the two men came home full of Hancock's beer, red faced and still chuckling at stories heard.

If we were lucky, summertime, the whole family would pay a visit and my brother and I would sit outside with a bottle of Vimto and a bag of Smith's crisps.

Although its real title was the Yew Tree, all those who knew the freehouse pub simply called it the Wood. This was because of its location, almost halfway between Brockhampton and Hoarwithy down a rough lane that led to Capler Wood. The pub stood high above the Wye, hidden from the water below by woodland. Demolished many years ago, it had a thatched roof and was so small that in summertime most drinking was done outside on a railed terrace. Robert Pember and his wife were the hosts. (The property was owned by the Williams of Aramstone.)

No villager failed to hold a view about the Wood. Wives saw it as a place where their Menfolk wasted good money on strong beer and tobacco, and men saw it as a jolly place where ribald stories were swapped and laughter seemed easier after many pints of Hancock's beer. Children knew it as a source of rows and threats as hearty meals were destined for the family dog rather than a drunken husband. Brockhampton village had a fine church and parish hall but the almost hidden drinking place was the black heart of the community.

All, however, put their own views aside each summer for the Wood's annual sports day, which was a family day. There were pillow fights on a greasy pole, skittles for a pig, three-legged races, sack races and egg and spoon races for the children. Beer and cider flowed from barrels and was dispensed with enamel jugs.

I last visited the Wood one winter's night driving down the lane to be greeted by a single outside light and the glow from the small windows. Paraffin "Tilley" lamps had finally given way to electricity. There was a huge open fire burning in the bar with several folk, pints in hand, warming themselves.

By then there were new hosts, Reginald Pritchard and his wife. Her announcement of final orders is as memorable now as it once was to all draining their last pint: "Come on you buggas, time to go home".



Closing time: a genial customer outside Brockhampton's Wood pub photographed by Keith James' father George).

Welcome to Issue 51

This winter edition of IOA features, on a positive note, St Michael's Hospice at Bartestree, the brainchild of Dr Richard Miller, who together with dedicated fundraisers, gave Herefordians a beautiful sanctuary offering care and support to the terminally ill. And we are

DELIGHTED to report the success of *River Voices* (page 4), now undergoing a reprint. Our thanks to Marsha O'Mahony;

EXCITED with the spring launch of our new book, *Herefordshire's Home Front in World War Two* (page 8); and

CELEBRATING thirty years of Herefordshire Lore and the 51st edition of *In Our Age* - Enjoy!

Julie Orton-Davies, chair, Herefordshire Lore

Herefordshire Lore, the county reminiscence group started in 1989, is run by a group of enthusiastic volunteers under chair Julie Orton-Davies (centre) with (left to right: Bill Laws (editor), Keith and Krystyna James, Jean Mayne, Joyce Chamberlain, Peter Mayne, Eileen Klotz (secretary), Julie (chair), Rosemary Lillico, Chris and Irene Tomlinson, Heather Allan, Linda Ward (stock), Sandy Green (proof), Marsha O'Mahony (River Voices), and Chris Preece (webmaster), missing this time Harvey Payne (treasurer) and Betty Webb.

Design: Nicole Williams of Pink Sheep Design

Print: Orphans, Leominster



Front cover: *The Wood* pub photographed by George James: see above

Monastic tableau



Charles and Richard Weston, centre, kneeling, on board a horse-drawn dray celebrating the creation of Coningsby Hospital. The event, part of the Castle Green Coronation, Fair featured a replica of the Coningsby Hospital preaching cross (right) beside Michael Blackford. Does anyone know the five on the left, asks Charles? (The tableau also features in issues 46 and 47 – see www.herefordshirelore.org.uk)

Sign of hope

The St Michael's Hospice symbol is 40 years old.

Five years before St Michael's Hospice opened in Bartestree, a key figure behind the project, Dr Richard Miller, asked Hereford Art College lecturer Roger Collins to set a design brief for a logo.

Student Jane Cross' 1979 design of a dove flying across the sun, described by Dr Miller as "absolutely the right image", has become a local icon.

Freda Pearce (right) was one of the Hospice's big fundraisers. The diminutive daughter of a Welsh coal miner, Freda had been in domestic service before becoming a buyer for the Hereford stores Greenlands and Lindsey Price. But after her policeman husband Vic died, and following her own diagnosis of cervical cancer, she pitched in and raised £178,000. Freda died in 1983 and the St Michael's opened in 1984.

St Michael's is marking its 35th anniversary with a series of fund-raising ideas (www.st-michaels-hospice.org.uk)



Freda Pearce and right, Hereford College of Art student Jane Cross with her logo for St Michael's Hospice.



A golden gift

Dr Richard Beeching's axe fell on Herefordshire's passenger railway services before the freight lines were closed. The Hay to Brecon line carried its last passengers in 1962 and the Hereford to Ross and Gloucester line 55 years ago.

For Hereford driver Charlie Martin the cuts caused less unease than the switch from steam power to diesel as his daughter, reader **Joan Martin-Austin**, remembers. "Father, who never drove a car in his life, was a first-class driver running to Cardiff, Bristol and Shrewsbury and once, to Paddington. But the change to diesels left him feeling exposed, sitting in those box cabs all on his own. He took the 'golden handshake' and retired as soon as he reached 60."

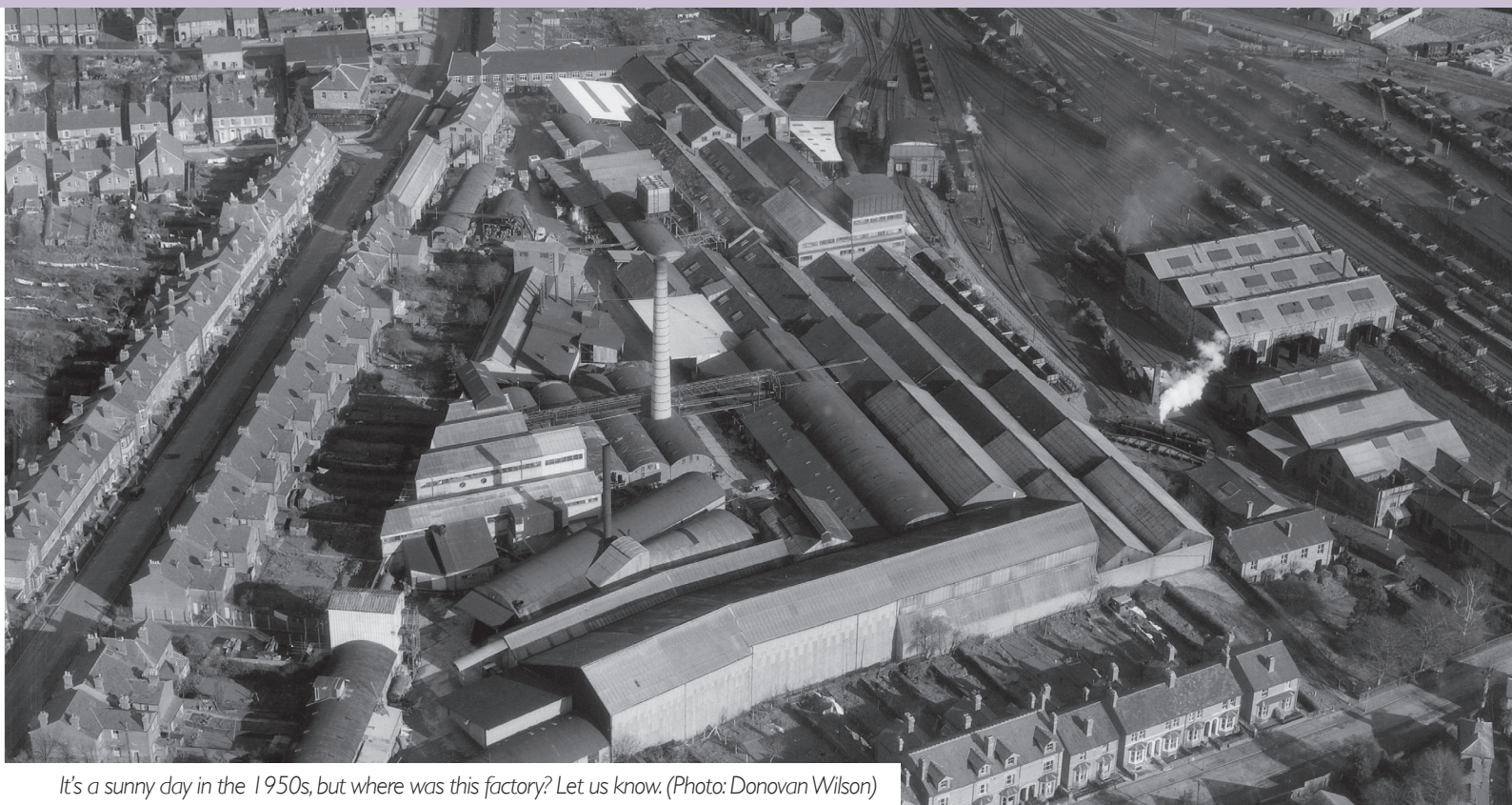
Charlie and his wife Nancy had moved from Kidderminster to Hereford with the then four-year-old Joan in 1941 lodging at Willow Cottage (centre, above in Donovan Wilson's photo from 10A 50) behind the Sanitary Laundry on Ledbury Road, Hereford. "We stayed with Mrs Bowly whose husband gardened for Mrs Wilson, the seed shop owner who lived nearby. Next door was Harding's Farm and their shop in High Town was opposite Wilson's seed shop."

The family moved to 13 and 15 Mortimer Road once Charlie saved enough to buy the houses, paying for them with gold sovereigns. "He didn't trust the banks," recalled Joan, "and instead kept his savings safely stored in a bag on the end of a piece of string hidden behind a cupboard!"



Plenty of salmon: Winifred and James Horsley ran the Kerne Bridge Inn (above, now Lumleys guesthouse) at Bishopswood near Ross-on-Wye. The centre of community life, the Bridge boasted a pair of petrol pumps - below left, Winifred and James' daughter Margaret fills up her beloved Mini at the Bridge. (Photos: Margaret Morgans). The Bridge also received a steady supply of salmon from passing fishermen. Below right, Goodrich's Jack Whittingham ghillie to the famed Bishopswood fisherman Robert Pashley, with a group of wartime evacuees and a salmon. (Photos: Jack's daughter, Dorothy Joyner). These stories feature in Herefordshire Lore's *River Voices* by Marsha O'Mahony. Order your copy on the back page.





It's a sunny day in the 1950s, but where was this factory? Let us know. (Photo: Donovan Wilson)

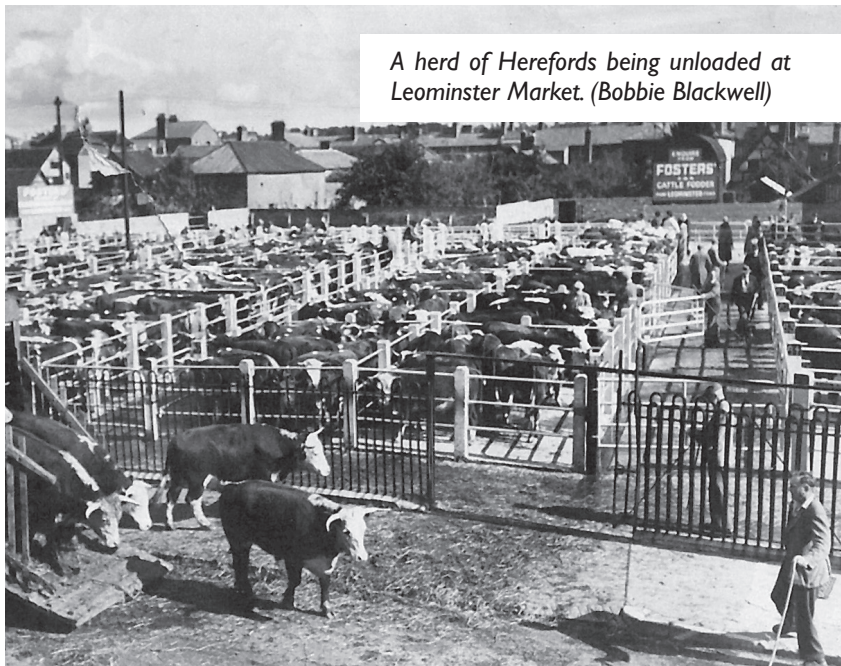


Tour of honour: World champion ploughman Les Goodwin (who featured in IOA 50 holding aloft his golden plough trophy) waves to crowds in High Town on his return from the 1958 match in Germany. He and his wife Rita married in 1960 and farmed at Hill Top Farm, Wormsley for nearly 50 years. Les continued to judge ploughing matches, but never competed again, says Rita. (Derek Evans/Rita Goodwin)

Ernie Cole, the cowman

Gillian Woodman Smith concludes her memoir of life at The Flann, the family dairy farm beside Peterstow church.

Our cowman, Ernie Cole, knew each animal from birth; he knew which ones were sweet natured and easy to handle, and which were in the awkward squad. A few meaner characters were known to kick and might need a leather restrainer whilst in the stall. At milking time he would turn his cap back to front, rest his forehead against the cow's flank and begin to pull the teats producing the ensuing wonderful liquid sounds. Once full, the buckets were carried through the yard, up a flight of steps and into the dairy. I loved hanging around the barns and lofts and the sounds and smells of milking time. In particular the munching of hay disappearing from the mangers, the soft lowing of the beasts, the milk squirting into the buckets and Ernie's quiet one-sided conversation with his herd as he washed udders and placed his stool and bucket. I remember vividly the first time I tried touching the strange cool, slightly damp and wrinkly teats, being afraid to squeeze in case I hurt the cow, and hearing her stomach noises as I imitated Ernie. In the early 1950s we built a new milking shed, lit by electric light, but eventually we gave up The Flann's milk round and the milk was put into churns and collected daily.



A herd of Herefords being unloaded at Leominster Market. (Bobbie Blackwell)

Peters of Credenhill

How did an Armenian husband and wife come to start up a Herefordshire restaurant?

In 1968 a former Royal Air Force PT instructor and his wife, 'Bim' and Romyne Peters, opened a little restaurant and fish and chip shop in Credenhill. The couple, both Armenian, named it Peters and, after an enthusiastic review in the Worcester Evening News written by Veronica Gooley and illustrated by Peter Manders, the business took off.



Armenian charm: Romyne and 'Bim' at Peters

Bim and Romyne ran Peters into the 1980s (the business continued after they retired), but the story of how a poor Iranian boy and a girl from Rangoon set up a successful Herefordshire enterprise is a curious one.

Bim was born Herand Mathevosian in Masjidi-i-Suleiman, Iran in 1924. He and his brother were sent to a philanthropic school over the border in Calcutta, a school with a reputation for turning out athletes. Bim did well and when an Indian Army colonel called looking for recruits, his eye fell on Bim: "He wasn't very tall, but he was very strong," recalls Romyne.

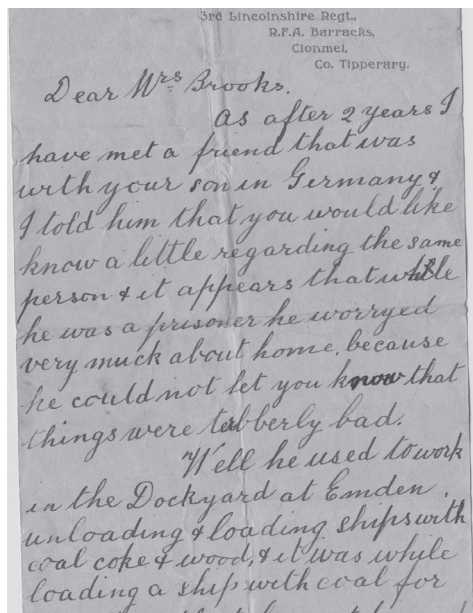
Bim was drafted into the Indian Army and, when war finished, joined the RAF as a remedial gymnast based at the force's famous Surrey rehabilitation centre, Headley Court. However, it was while attending the Kensington Armenian Church of St Sarkis, built by the world's richest man, Calouste Gulbenkian, that he met - and later married - an attractive young Armenian woman from Burma, Romyne Boldy.

The couple moved to Germany with the RAF (where daughter Julia was born) and then, by chance to RAF Credenhill where Bim trained young cadets. It was here, living at 5 Cranwell Drive, that Bim hatched his plan to open a restaurant. "He did 24 years in the RAF, received his pension and put some of it towards the Credenhill restaurant," recalls Romyne.

And how did she make the journey from Burma to Credenhill? Read Romyne's side of the story in the next issue.

How did you come to live in Herefordshire? Let us know at In Our Age.

Burghill



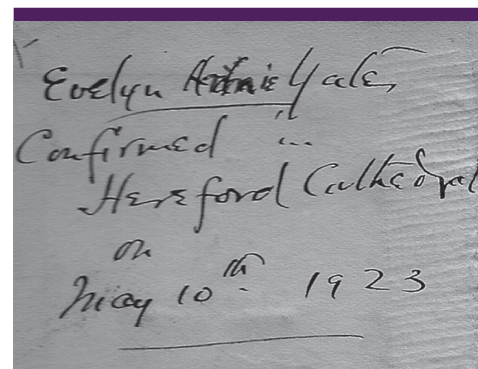
The Brookes, living at Haymeadow Farm, Burghill shortly before the First World War, were a close-knit family. Along with Annie ‘Granny’ Brookes was her son Charles (born at Mordiford and brought up next door to Checkley’s Yew Tree Inn), his sister Annie and her husband John Morris. When war broke out Charles joined the Lincolnshire Regiment, but was taken prisoner by the Germans on July 31 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele. Charles’ grand-niece **Margaret Colley** takes up the story: “Charles was one of the

prisoners working at the docks, loading and unloading coal, coke and wood. But when he was coming off the boats for a break he fell in the water walking along a plank between two boats and drowned.” Granny Brookes eventually received this letter (above) from another soldier: “I’m pleased to tell you he had a very respectful burial.” Margaret adds: “Charles was engaged to Clara Morris, but she never married after his death and lived in the Morris family home Portway House, Burghill for the rest of her life.”

Tupsley

Reader **Don Mash** recalls Tom Lane who farmed “beyond Tupsley House, the farmhouse standing close to the Mordiford Road” on the east of the city. Tom kept Shorthorn cattle, moving them about to various meadows and visiting them by bike. (He had a way of mounting his steed with one foot on an extended rear wheel nut.) “Cider was made on the farm and drunk from a cow’s horn attached by a lace to the barrel; rats were caught in the orchard in his homemade spring trap; seed was sown with a seed fiddle, the seed flying left and right as Tom walked along; and hay and corn ricks were thatched by hand, Tom climbing the steep thatching ladders until quite late in his life. Tom also cut hay on the Lugg Meadows where he kept a mowing machine. One

morning his nephew Frank, who worked on the farm, pulled the covers off the mower and found a puppy. Frank raised Prince, as the puppy became known, and the dog would follow his owner down to the Rose and Crown, usually arriving just as Frank was starting his second pint.



Stretton Sugwas

This little prayer book, sold by booksellers Jakeman and Carver, was presented to Evelyn Annie Yates at her confirmation in Hereford Cathedral on May 10 1923. It was signed from C. Arkley Griffith, the rector at Stretton Sugwas. Her grandson **David Taverner** came across it while clearing the Hatfield, Hertfordshire home of his mother, Annie’s daughter: “Annie was born on April 13 1908 and worked as a servant at Stone Cottage, Swainshill before moving to Hatfield many moons ago.”

Mansel Lacy

Many readers recall Foxley, the former US army hospital near the village that housed both Herefordshire and Polish families through the 1950s and ‘60s (right, photo Derek Evans archive). A poignant memory is of the candle-lit village churchyard on All Saints Day or Wszystkich Swietych: several Polish graves are still marked with simple concrete crosses. Mansel Lacy’s Community Association (foxley2019@gmail.com) is planning a Foxley Remembered event this summer (June 22 and 23). Whitecross School’s film *Shared Freedom – Shared Future* about Polish heritage is showing at The Courtyard, Hereford on March 10 at 11.15 am. Do you have Foxley memories to share? Call us on 07845 907891.



'I cried bitter tears'

Book will capture readers' memories of Herefordshire during the Second World War.

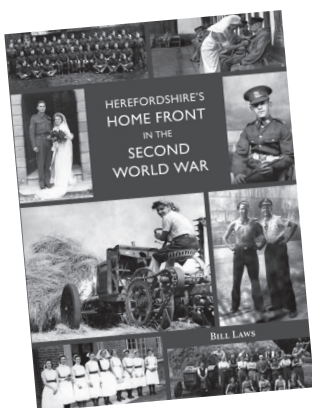
Following the fateful announcement that Britain was at war, schoolboy Henry Moss was dispatched to hide Aconbury's church silver; a hastily formed Home Guard prepared for a final stand against the Third Reich; and clandestine Covert Auxiliary Units were instructed, as one Herefordshire landowner put it, "to lay low then kill off important Germans."

Children grew frightened and confused: "A bomb fell near Canon Pyon: I thought Hitler had followed me," reported little London evacuee Bruce Leonard. "We were put on the trains without our mothers," wrote another: "I cried bitter tears."

As teenagers started after-school farm work, their mums shouldered the men's jobs, making munitions, or joining the Land Army, Timber Corps, the WAAFs, the Wrens or the Auxiliary Training Service. Meanwhile Herefordshire welcomed a flood of new faces - Canadians, Indians, black and white Americans, Italian and German prisoners of war (POWs) and displaced Polish families.

War had its lighter moments: when one German POW asked a farm lad what he planned to do when he grew up, the boy replied: "POW! Like you!"; a Tupsley Home Guardsman hit his own house during mortar training; and friends Barbara and Gwen learned to jitterbug in Hoarwithy Road with wounded GIs. "My experience taught me to smile even in the face of tragic times," recalled Barbara.

Herefordshire's Home Front in the Second World War will be launched in May.



Nurse Dale: too tired to shelter during air raids.



Evacuee Bruce Leonard thought Hitler was following him.



Marjorie Rosser caught an escaping German.



POW Otto Carl rescued a farmer's daughter.

Sanitary Laundry

Several readers, including Ann Morgan, Derek Foxton, who loaned the photo of the Sanitary's lorry, and Joan Martin-Austin, correctly identified the Sanitary Laundry on Ledbury Road in our Where is it? issue 50. Ann Pawley (Lawrence as she was then) recalled working as a clerk for Mr Legge, the owner: The 16-year-old joined the Sanitary from Radio Relay in Commercial Road and enjoyed the work: "I stayed there until I was 21."



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"I must say how much I enjoy the IOA magazine. Thank you so much. And long may it continue." Ken Hyett, Horsham, Sussex.