

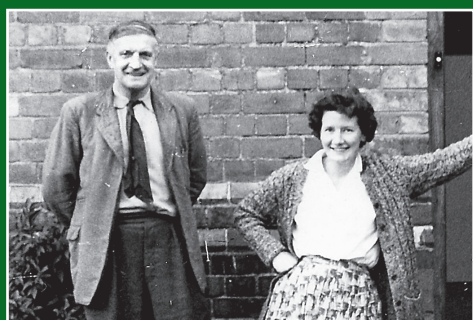
In Our Age

Herefordshire Lore : Living local history

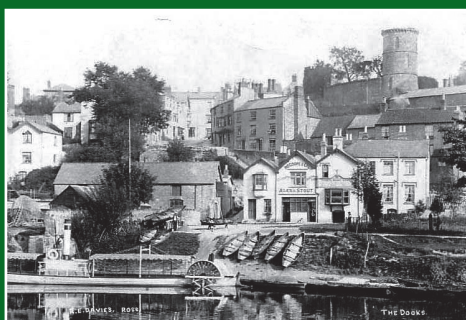
Issue 53
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Convent Laundry

Catholic Convent was a sanctuary for its 'girls'

Bartestree's Convent Laundry operated around the county until the 1980s. Its main competitor was Hereford's Sanitary Laundry on Ledbury Road (IOA 22, 50 & 51), and its two laundry vans served, among others, the Cathedral and Belmont Abbey schools, the Green Dragon Hotel, Marks and Spencer and Park Hall Ballroom, Wormelow.

Cyril Farr joined the Laundry as a driver in the early 1950s after working at the West End Garage in Hereford. The family had moved to Bartestree as May Farr, Cyril's wife, had been bought up in the village by her uncle and aunt, the village shopkeepers and garage owners Edgar and Charlotte Ellaman.)

Daughter Pat Clegg often joined Cyril on his rounds, sitting on a wicker laundry basket in the cab. "Households would have their laundry delivered in a kind of cardboard box, but the bigger places had these huge wicker baskets which Dad carried around on his back." When the pair returned to the Convent Pat would slip away to join Sister Margaret in the kitchen for "the most beautiful chocolate cake I ever tasted".

The Convent was run by the Sisters of Charity and Refuge, an old French Catholic order set up to give sanctuary to 'fallen women'. Bartestree was the Order's first British convent. Designed by Edward Pugin and paid for by Longworth Hall's Robert Biddulph Phillips, it opened in 1863.

The Laundry provided work - and a refuge - for women in difficulties. Some were referred to the Convent's St Bernadette's Training Centre by council social workers; some were reputed to have been evacuees from the First World War who, for whatever reason, had no home to return to.

Pat remembers the Convent and its 'girls' with affection. "The Laundry seemed a happy place. There was always music blaring away and the girls singing at the tops of their voices. I think of them as 'the girls', but by then they were ladies in their 50s and 60s who lived in at the Convent and worked at the Laundry. Some had had babies that had been adopted; some had been in trouble with the police and rather than go to jail they'd been sent there."

The Laundry closed in the mid 1970s and the Convent in 1992. It became a private housing complex, Frome Court.



Cyril Farr and Bartestree Convent Laundry manager Lizzie Corbin and, left, village shopkeeper and garage owner Edgar Ellaman, Cyril's wife May, Edgar's wife Charlotte and daughter, Lottie. (Photos: Pat Clegg)

Hereford 1984

Thirty-five years ago a group of Herefordshire radicals joined forces to imagine our county in 1984. In a tribute to George Orwell's novel of the same name they published their thoughts in *1984 Hereford* under editor and National Council for Civil Liberties activist Peter Baines.

Contributors included Friends of the Earth's Ingrid Heatley (she predicted agribusiness conglomerates and "glass hangers ... under which all fruit and vegetables were grown"); librarian Chris Phillips who worried about the bar coding of library books ("no doubt the system will speed things up ... the trouble is, it puts an end to your privacy as well"); and Women's Aid's Ellen Ryrie: "1984 has opened with no women's refuge in Hereford".

Travellers Support Group's Mike Baldwin focused on the plight of Travelling people, quoting a common Gypsy concern: "We seemed to get moved on continually, yet the Council in doing so is breaking a law passed in 1968 which said that they had to find sites for us."

Thirty-five years later, roadside camps have virtually disappeared, most local Gypsy families having, often reluctantly, exchanged their vans for bricks and mortar. And the glass hangars and bar codes? Well, judge for yourself!



A Travelling family with their Transit pickup in North Herefordshire. (Photo: Bill Kerswell)

A remarkable reunion

Facebook find for Herefordshire family



In 1966 eight-year-old Christa Natchwey, accompanied by her older brother Vernon, from Hamburg embarked on an adventure, a holiday in Hereford. Christa's hosts were to be the Houston family, Peter, Valerie and daughters Julie and Tina from Southbank Road.

The three girls instantly bonded and for the next two years Christa returned to the Houston's for a six-week summer holiday ... then she disappeared.

Peter takes up the story: "Valerie and I had read an appeal in the *Hereford Times* from International Help for Children asking for host families to give a child a holiday. We decided: 'We'll do it!'

"When Christa arrived she spoke no English and we spoke no German. (The only word I knew was *Achtung* which didn't help at all.)" But, says daughter Tina Gallaway, their friendship was beyond language. "Children communicate through play. Christa joined in with everything. She even came to school with me at Broadlands."

However the family lost touch when the German authorities, concerned about the visits interfering with her education, refused Christa a return visa. "The last time we'd seen her was leaning out of the carriage window at Barrs Court Station, waving goodbye," recalls Peter.

For the last three years, prompted by Peter's wishes, Julie and Tina sought to find Christa. Eventually through Facebook, contact was made with Christa's brother Ralph, followed by a message from Christa. Fifty-one years later, Christa, now married and living in Neumünster, near Hamburg visited Hereford once more. Tina again "She was just as we remembered her; it even turned out she and I had our sons five days apart!"



Above left, Peter Houston with, left to right, Christa, Tina and Julie outside their bungalow in Southbank Close in the mid 1960s and above, toasting their reunion at Tina's family home almost fifty years later.

Herefordshire Lore

Joyce Chamberlain, reader Margaret Hornsby and Jean Mayne share a laugh with Margaret Hornsby at the launch of *Herefordshire's Home Front in the Second World War* at Herefordshire Light Infantry Museum. (Photo: Chris Preece)

Herefordshire Lore has been publishing your memories for thirty years. We are: chair Julie Orton-Davies, secretary Eileen Klotz, treasurer Harvey Payne, webmaster Chris Preece, proofs Sandy Green; committee Joyce Chamberlain, Keith and Krystyna James, Rosemary Lillico, Jean and Peter Mayne, Marsha O'Mahony, Chris and Irene Tomlinson, Linda Ward and Betty Webb. Design: Nicole Williams, Pink Sheep Design. Print: Orphans Press. Editor: Bill Laws.



Front cover: *Sailing by – dinghies on Bodenham Lake, Herefordshire Council's former sailing centre.* (Photo: Vic Gammage)

From My Album *Derek Evans, Rosemary Whitehouse and Gerald and Ros Gardiner*



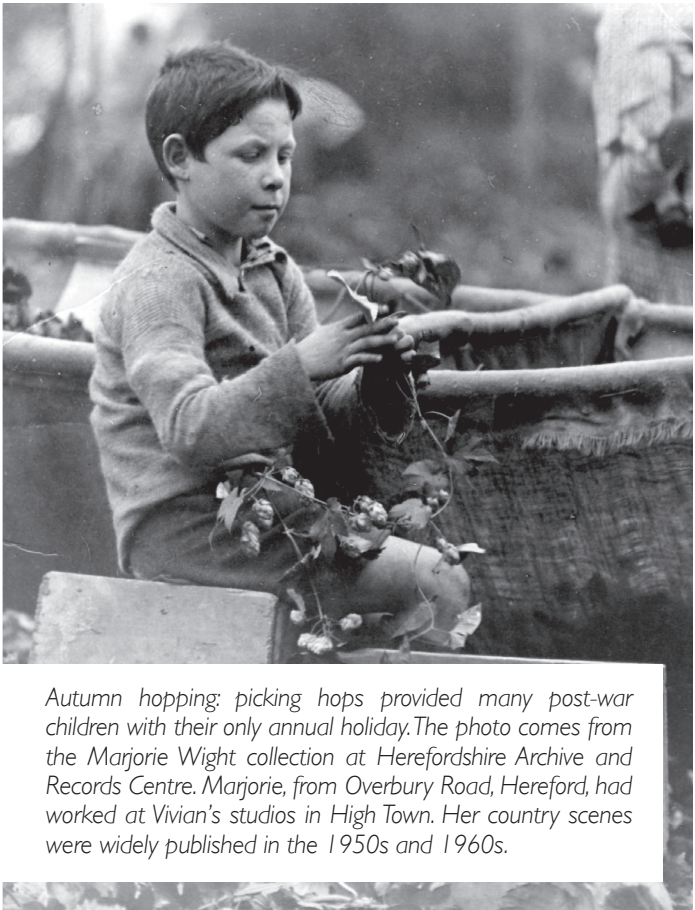
All too much: a spectator snatches 40 winks at a Hereford Regatta. (Photo: Derek Evans estate)



Walking out: in 1954 Rosemary Whitehouse and fellow students at Hereford Teacher Training College step out to study at Dale Fort in Pembrokeshire with their geography lecturer, far right. (Photo: Rosemary Whitehouse)



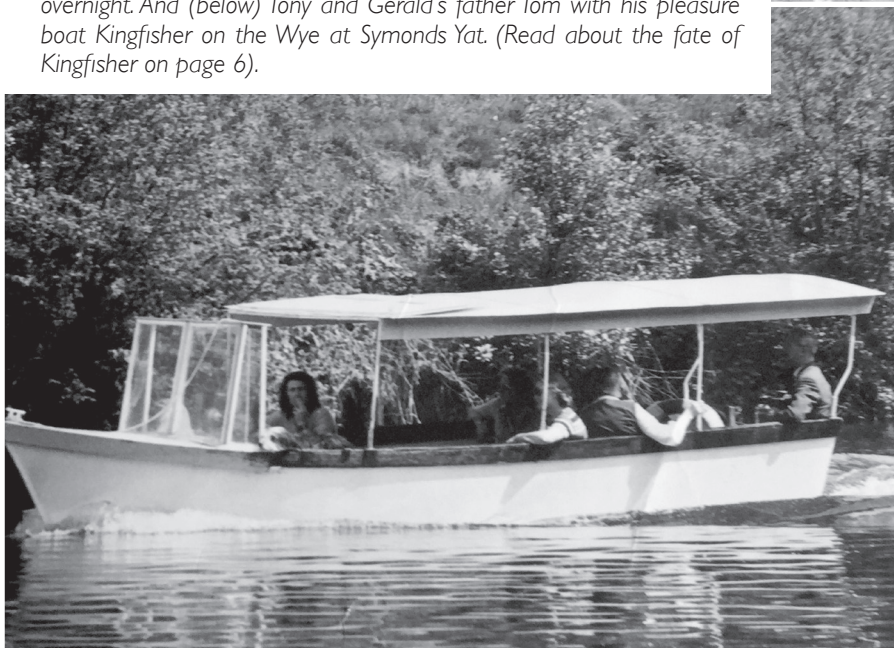
Ross-on-Wye: a steam launch on the river front.



Autumn hopping: picking hops provided many post-war children with their only annual holiday. The photo comes from the Marjorie Wight collection at Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre. Marjorie, from Overbury Road, Hereford, had worked at Vivian's studios in High Town. Her country scenes were widely published in the 1950s and 1960s.



Salmon's leap: brothers Tony and Gerald Gardiner with Billy Choules holding aloft a giant salmon that had thrown itself into their boat overnight. And (below) Tony and Gerald's father Tom with his pleasure boat Kingfisher on the Wye at Symonds Yat. (Read about the fate of Kingfisher on page 6).



The Home Front, World War Two

Eighty years ago on September 3, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced: “This country is at war with Germany.” While few of the combatants are with us now, readers such as *Cyril Ingram* still remember those days.

“I was born in June 1938, but I can recall German prisoners at the Camp at Bradbury Lines. We were a family of ten – I used to feel sorry for my mother! – living at 28 Hoarwithy Road and I used to talk to this one German who had very good English.

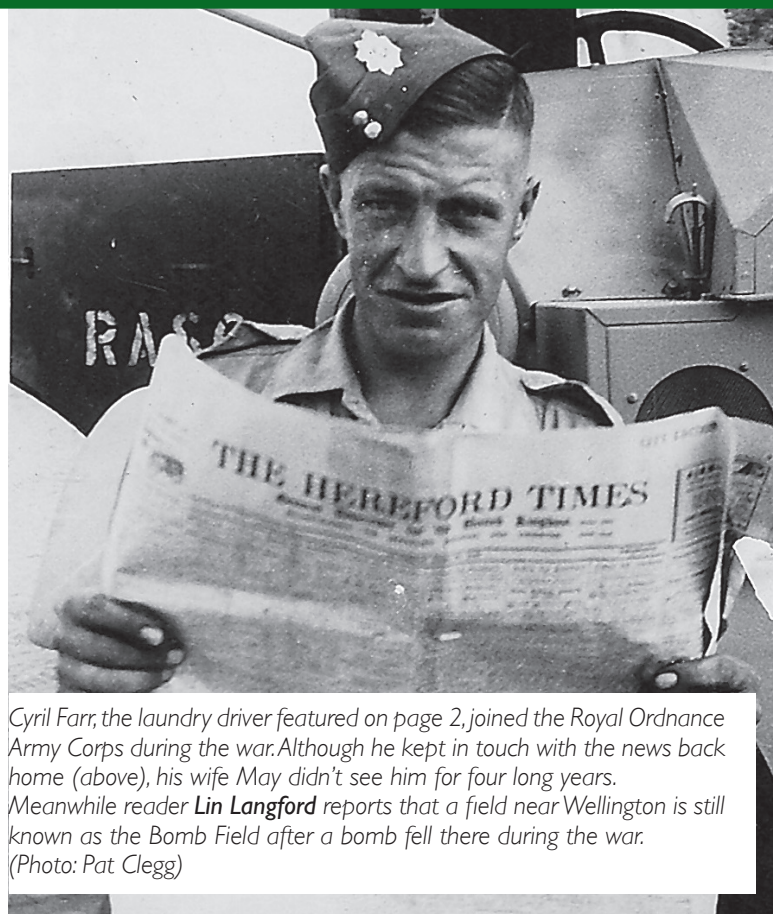
“When we heard on the wireless that we were probably going to win the war I went out to him, feeling a bit cocky, and said: ‘Who’s the best now? Winston Churchill or Hitler?’

‘Oh,’ he said, ‘Adolph Hitler. And when we win the war I’ll take you back to Germany with me!’

“I stood back and looked up at him: ‘Oh no you won’t!’”

Cyril’s family were embroiled in war. “My eldest brother Bill was in the Royal Navy, protecting the Arctic convoys taking munitions to Russia. Later in the war Bill’s ship was torpedoed by the Japanese. The ship made it back to port, but a lot of men were killed. Bill and a shipmate were thrown into the sea along with a third shipmate who’d lost both legs.” When he was picked up Bill was the only survivor. He spent the next five years in a Malvern hospital recovering from his injuries. Another brother, Ken, served as an engineer and later, as an army reservist, fought in the Korean War.

Cyril’s father, William, was a First World War veteran, then working on the munitions at Rotherwas. Educated at the Cathedral School, William was not a typical public school boy. Brought up in London he and his brother had fled the family home (his father was an alcoholic) and holed up in an allotment



Cyril Farr, the laundry driver featured on page 2, joined the Royal Ordnance Army Corps during the war. Although he kept in touch with the news back home (above), his wife May didn’t see him for four long years. Meanwhile reader *Lin Langford* reports that a field near Wellington is still known as the Bomb Field after a bomb fell there during the war. (Photo: Pat Clegg)

shed, living on stolen market food. He was caught and sent to a Herefordshire approved school where his gift for learning was noted and he was transferred to the Cathedral School.

“When war broke out he went into a Welsh regiment. He was leading some men over the top when they were being machine gunned and somehow Dad got through and put a grenade into the machine gun post and killed them.” William refused his bravery medal: “He said the men that gave their lives deserved it more than him,” says Cyril.

Symonds Yat Three generations on the river

A river tours exhibition at Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre (HARC) features, among others, **Gerald Gardiner** and his family. Gerald and wife Ros moved to Hereford after retiring as boat master and crew in 2007, ending three generations of running pleasure boats at the Yat.

Gerald joined the boats as soon as he left school at Ross in 1957. He was to follow in the footsteps of parents Tom and Dorothy, grandparents Tom and Alice, and great-grandfather Edwin. Over the next 50 years he witnessed the falling fortunes of the pleasure boat business (more than 20 boat owners plied the river in the 1950s) and oversaw the move from rowing boats (‘rowers’) to the steel-hulled water buses of the 1960s.

“One of our boats was the *Kingfisher*, built by Jet Taylor at Gloucester, but it went over the rapids in a flood and I didn’t see it again for years. Then I heard that some Boy Scouts had dug it out of the river near the Biblins. They brought it back here, much the worse for wear, one evening.”

By 1988 Gerald and Ros were running a new *Kingfisher*, a 32-seater made by Crickhowell’s Lawrence Hand, which had been in service on the Norfolk Broads.

And what of the original *Kingfisher* (featured on page 4)? It passed to another boat master who, having restored, refitted and rechristened it the *Wye Princess* ran river trips on the Wye at Hereford. Today the *Princess* lies under the water line by Hereford’s Old Bridge.

Symonds Yat – 200 years of Tourism on the River Wye runs until October 18 at HARC.



‘Cork’ Gardiner, Gerald’s great uncle, poles a rower up to the Yat. (Photo: Gerald Gardiner)

Around & About

Hereford



Former post office engineer Bert Daniels was reckoned to be the oldest allotment holder in Britain in the 1990s, writes IOA reader **Peter Holman**. Bert began with a Great Western Railway allotment in Moorfields (annual rent one shilling a year) before moving to Rockfield Road allotments. When in 1999 his shed burned to the ground, Tudor Garden Buildings stepped in with a new shed and fellow allotment holders chipped in with tools to replace the ones he had lost. The Rockfield Road allotments are among the 400 city plots managed by Hereford Allotment Society. Many others, including these mentioned by **Pat Clegg** at Portfield Street, have disappeared under housing: “Mum (May Farr), a munitions worker at Rotherwas, took on an allotment in Portfield Street, Hereford during the war – even though she’d never gardened in her life. After an old boy showed her what to do, she kept herself, another munitions worker who lodged at the family house in East Street, and her parents in vegetables through the war.”

Hampton Park

“My father Roland Ede, now 87, tells me that, as an evacuee in Hereford around 1940, he swam across the river and, on the other side by a bridge, walked up the grass bank to a very big house where wounded soldiers were. Do any readers have any idea where this might have been?” asks **Lynn Ede**. Could this be Hampton Park? And **Carolyn Baxter**, secretary of the Great Western Court tenants’ committee asks if readers have any photos or memories of the Canonmoor Street site before it became Great Western Court?

Almeley

A First World War memorial to city post workers has been rededicated at the Hereford Sorting Office by Colonel Andy Taylor from the Herefordshire Light Infantry museum. The 17 names include 32-year-old driver Jo Deykes from Pembridge; Edward, the 26-year-old husband of Ethel Maddox from Letton School House; and two Almeley men, Albert Cooper and Sydney Southgate, “husband of Mary Mokler of Spearman, Almeley”. Their names can be found online at herefordshire.gov.uk listed under ‘war graves and war memorials’.



Dinmore: in a curious ceremony marking Herefordshire and Worcestershire’s ‘divorce’ and the setting up of the new Unitary Authority in 1998, Hereford Bishop John Oliver walks a Hereford bull to the View Point at Queenswood. Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Herefordshire Lore are currently working on a history of the woods. Can you name the bull?

Hereford Cathedral

As Hereford Cathedral explores the history of its Vicars Choral, IOA recalls the radical chorister Herbert Davies and his wife Ethel. During the First World War Herbert supported pacifist Edmund Jones’ request for exemption from service on the grounds of conscience. Herbert would later attack the Tribunals for their jingoistic approach to such cases. In a letter to the *Hereford Times* he wrote: “For Tribunals to taunt such men with cowardice (of all things) is surely quite beside the mark.” On another occasion his wife brought court proceedings to a standstill during the sentencing of 31-year-old unmarried mother Lucy Carter for the manslaughter of her baby: “I protest as a woman and as a mother,” she shouted from the public gallery before being thrown out of Court by Mr Justice Avory. She followed up her courtroom appearance with a letter to the *Hereford Times* arguing that fathers were equally guilty and should be brought to justice.

Memory aid

My mother has dementia and is in a nursing home,” writes one reader. “But when we read through the *In Our Age* magazines together, Mum can talk about some of the articles with confidence. It gives us topics to talk about and makes her feel less isolated. Thanks you so much for producing such an interesting, useful magazine.

Bulmers' bonded warehouse

After giving up his tenancy at Mears Farm on the Garnons Estate in 1962, Ted Edwards moved his family to Ryeland Street and joined Bulmers. Daughter **Joyce Chamberlain**, then in her final year at Kington Grammar School, takes up the story: "Dad worked for a few months at Rotherwas Munitions factory then joined Bulmers loading lorries – as a farmer he knew all about how to sheet and rope a lorry. Dad moved to the bonded warehouse, where the brandy and wines were kept, and finally retired in 1980."

Joyce's father-in-law Len also worked at Bulmers as did other family members. "There were three gates into Bulmers on Ryeland Street and he was the man with the keys to all three. He used to lock and unlock the gates for the dinner time breaks." Memories of Bulmers? Get in touch!



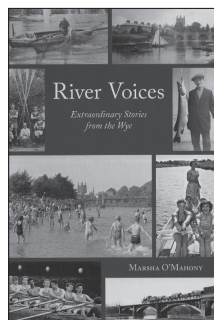
Former tenant farmer Ted Edwards at Bulmers; and a truck leaving the bonded warehouse behind Ryeland Street.



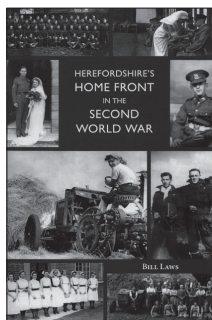
Where is it?

It looks like the garden of a country house built a little too close to the river. The year is 1960 and the photo was taken by a *H* – but where is it?

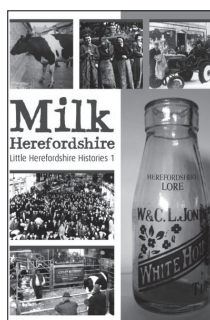
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