

In Our Age

Herefordshire Lore : Living local history

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Land Army girl Peggy

The teen who took up milking

"The dairy work (at The Flann, Peterstow) was mainly performed by Women's Land Army (WLA) girls," recalled Gillian Woodman Smith in IOA 50. **Peggy Webb**, now in her 90s, called IOA (07845 907891): "I was one of them."

Peggy was raised in Sparkbrook, Birmingham, but had moved to Weston-Super-Mare when, just after her 16th birthday, she joined the WLA. The year was 1939.

"I expected to be [working] with cows and sheep so I was a bit disappointed to be placed at a bed and breakfast house outside Bristol, filled with wives visiting their husbands at the nearby RAF station." Put to help with the vegetables, Peggy was quartered outside in the summer house: "I was frightened to death in there when Bristol was bombed."

She asked for a transfer, hoping for more demanding work and, after a spell at the now National Trust property, Tyntesfield (more vegetable growing), she landed up at a farm, Merebrook near Upton-on-Severn, managed by Bill Able.

It was the start of a life-long friendship. "I lived in with the family: Bill, Mrs Able and their children Bill or 'Boy', Paul and Rosemary." When the Ables moved to manage The Flann at Peterstow, living in the cottage by the old school, Peggy came too and was soon stuck in to hand-milking, hay-making, harvesting and all the other jobs she'd longed to do.

When war ended Peggy, now working for a Mrs Meredith and her coach firm based at the Swan Hotel in Ross, met and married Fred Webb. She soon found herself back in the garden: Fred was the son of Ida and Bill Webb, head gardener for Mr Maclean at Moraston House near Bridstow.

"We moved to a cottage at Ashe Ingen belonging to the Rudge family and Fred cycled every day to his new gardening job at Llangarron." They started a family and eventually moved to Yazor where Fred was head gardener for the Davenport family at Foxley.

Peggy, along with daughters Susan, Lynne, Elaine and Elizabeth, is still friends with the Able family children. And she keeps in touch with a fellow WLA worker, Dora Heathcote from Dudley: "We call each other every week."



Best friend: Peggy Webb and her shaggy dog, Pride.

Bulmers

'It was the place to work'

Readers, including **Ann Morgan**, **Graham Preece**, **Richard and Lyn Langford** and **Michael Young**, were quick to spot Ryeland Street and the Bulmers factory in Donovan Wilson's photo, (IOA 51, page 5).

Graham drove for the cider manufacturer for 40 years, making regular deliveries of Strongbow cider to Thwaites Brewery in Blackburn and Bulmers' Glasgow depot. He was persuaded to join the company by his brother Ron, already an employee, in 1963. It was a time when drivers' jobs were hard

to come by. "I never saw a driver's advert: vacancies only came up if someone retired or died. It was the place to work – fantastic employers."



Bulmers Yard, atmospherically photographed by Brian Croker. Graham Preece (left) with brother Ron, and preparing to head north for a delivery in his 38-ton Volvo truck.

Graham was also following in his father, Fred's, footsteps. "Dad drove for the Ministry of Supply ferrying munitions at the Royal Ordnance Factory in Rotherwas during World War Two and after for the Ministry of Works."

Michael Young writes that the company issued a set of twelve postcards of the Bulmers works in the mid 1920s. "The first showed a similar view to Donovan Wilson's except that a touch-up artist had 'removed' the sheds and painted in fields and gardens to give the impression of a sylvan setting!"

Welcome to Issue 52

After the success of River Voices we look forward to Herefordshire Home Front in the Second World War defining the events and bravery of local men and women during the war. This IOA also highlights the necessity of feeding a nation under siege, a role carried out effectively by the Land Army girls. These young civilian women stepped up to the challenge following the disappearance of the workforce with the enthusiastic learning of new skills such hand-milking, haymaking and harvesting.

Herefordshire Lore is assisting Rotherwas Together to obtain funds for a collaborative project, A Stroll through Rotherwas. And still on a Rotherwas theme, Herefordshire Lore was delighted to support Lin Mathias and her brilliantly organised International Women's Day's Canary Girl Bike Ride, which attracted 60 riders. A good time was had by all!

Julie Orton-Davies, chair, Herefordshire Lore

River Voices

Ghillie Charlie Pocknell worked the Fownhope beat along the Lea Brink stretch of the Wye for many years. He's pictured here with a paying guest on the river bank looking upstream with Fownhope Park and Cherry Hill woodlands in the background. The photographer was Marjorie White (1889–1975) from Mordiford and later, Overbury Road, Hereford.

Photo: (Marjorie White / HARC)

Catch River Voices author Marsha O'Mahony at Hay Festival: May 30, 2.30 tickets £8.



Dennis Francis, men's barber

Dennis, born in 1929, was 17 when he took over his father, Isaac Francis', barber shop in St Owens Street, Hereford. Isaac had opened his doors in 1895.

Dennis' sisters worked as lather girls or, in the case of Joyce, as the city's first 'court' hairdresser, working out of Wilson's Chambers in the 1930s. (Court hairdressers coiffured young ladies who expected to be presented at court.)

Three of Dennis' children, Helen, Annette and Catherine, became hairdressers. "He was really proud when we completed our apprenticeships with different city salons and at Hereford Technical College under Mrs Calvert, Myrtle Prince and Dianne Burgoyne," recalls Annette.

She took over the shop when Dennis died in 1988. "There was a bit of 'Oh my god! A woman!'" Annette remembers, but she won her customers over and is still clipping away 30 years later. In 1985 her sister Cath opened Streakers next door and their mum, Margaret, continues to keep a watchful eye on the businesses. Sister Helen moved to Australia to teach hairdressing and now Margaret's grandson Adrian has followed the family tradition and works as a hairdresser in Melbourne.

The Home Front 1939–1945

Eighty years ago Britain entered the Second World War. We're marking the event with a new book, *Herefordshire's Home Front in the Second World War*, based on readers' memories.

When the men left to join up, the women stepped in, making munitions, working on farms and in forests, in the WAAFs, Wrens and ATS. Local children and evacuees made friends while refugees, foreign soldiers and POWs poured into the county.

People endured danger, tragedies... and moments of light relief: Barbara Dawson and friend Gwen Lock were taught to jitterbug by wounded GIs waiting in the open on Hoarwithy Road.



Callow Home Guard take a break from helping with the harvest. (Bruce Leonard)



Long lasting: Fleet Air Arm Ken Hursey with his newly-wed wife and Wren, Margaret. 'I was only 19 and they said it would never last.' The couple remained together for the rest of their lives. (Hursey family)



On active service: The Women's Land Army in Herefordshire with, amongst others, Audrey Wilding, Doris Hayes, Jean McGaw and Eve Lichfield. (Ami Hartland)



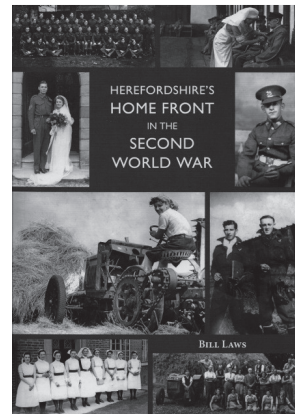
Recruitment girl: Topsy Price from Ross poses for a recruitment poster for the Women's Land Army. (Topsy Price)



Flight engineer: Marjorie Rosser, conscripted into the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, worked on Spitfires at RAF Rednall. (Marjorie Rosser)



Wounded GI: Leon Standifer (standing) from Baton Rouge was treated at the US army hospital at Foxley. He would later thank Herefordshire people for their "love and tolerance".



Out of India

Having escaped the Japanese invasion of Burma, **Romayne Peters' family settled in northern India. Then came Partition and Romayne's arrival in England.**

Romayne's father, Tikram Boldy worked for the British Burma government and the family lived on University Avenue, Rangoon. "There was an ayah, a boy for my brother, a cook and bearer for the tables, and someone to help Daddy when he went up country. My mother entertained and played bridge and mahjon with friends."

Then on December 23 1941 Japanese bombs rained down on the city. "I was petrified. We moved to a friend's bungalow with an underground shelter and when the air raid sirens went, we skeddaddled into the shelter, my brother standing outside in a tin helmet and ushering us in. The extraordinary thing was that our springer spaniel, Rex, would become terribly agitated before an attack and we'd know: 'There's going to be a raid.'"

The family fled Rangoon on New Year's Day 1942 leaving Tikram behind to keep the airport functioning for the RAF. When it seemed certain that Burma would fall to the Japanese Tikram made his way out as best he could to India. "He used to sleep in bomb craters because they'd say a bomb wouldn't hit the same place twice."

Thousands perished on the perilous march out of Burma, but Tikram made it to India, rejoining the family. The Burma government in exile was evacuated to the Indian hill station Simla (Shimla). "We stayed in an Armenian boarding house until Daddy got a house through the government."

Simla was full of evacuees and British and Indian army officers and their families. There were shows at the Gaiety Theatre and "high life was had by more than a few! Everybody was getting off with somebody!"

Romayne loved Simla, but shortly before her 11th birthday she contracted typhoid and had to be stretchered down hill to the Rippon Hospital where a Dr Sharman oversaw her recovery - without recourse to antibiotics. "There were none available in those days."

When Japan fell, the Boldy family joined the exodus to Britain, leaving India in the throes of its bloody partition with Pakistan. The fifteen-year-old Romayne duly arrived at Liverpool dock and was shocked to see white people doing menial jobs. "I couldn't get used to it! In India, if you were a white man you were a *burra sahib*. I felt embarrassed for them!"

The family moved to a Notting Hill Gate hotel ("Daddy said: 'Your mother can't cook - you'll have to go into a hotel to be catered for. We were there for four years!'") and Romayne was dispatched to a private Anglican school, Sandleford Priory, while her father returned to work in Rangoon. Tikram died of lung cancer in 1953, not long before Romayne met, and later married, fellow Armenian 'Bim' Peters. Bim's RAF career brought him to RAF Credenhill and, eventually, to open Peter's restaurant in the village. (Bim's story was told in IOA 51.)

Back to India: Romayne revisits her childhood haunts in Simla in 2005.



Broad Street

The senior secretarial course of 1958/59 met in lecture rooms at the rear of the District Bank in Broad Street with Mrs Barnes as tutor; "a lovely lady", writes **Liz Bateson** (top right).



Around & About

Holme Lacy

"Thank you for the brass candlesticks. The clergyman is giving them to the church in commemoration of the Bazaar," wrote Lady Enid Edith Chesterfield of Holme Lacy House to her father's chauffeur, Fred Parcell in August 1907. But what happened to the candlesticks, wonders Fred's grandson, **Mike Parcell** of Hartfield, Sussex? "Grandfather was chauffeur to Lord Nunburnholme of Warter Priory in East Yorkshire and this letter was hand delivered, presumably along with the candlesticks," writes Mike. "I don't want the candlesticks back, but am intrigued to know what happened to them."



Hentland

Reader **Charlotte Marshall** from Clehonger comes from a large family: her mother Olive Bishop is pictured with her thirteen sisters and brothers (above) at Kynaston Farm around 1928. Charlotte's great-great grandfather, John, lived above his hardware shop in Eign Gate, Hereford. His son, municipal road surveyor Henry Bishop, moved from Pool House, Hunderton to farm at Brook House, Wellington while his son, William, took over a Dilwyn hop farm. "William, my grandfather, lived at Field Place, Dilwyn with his first wife [also Charlotte] and their

three children. But when she died, he married an Irish nurse, Hannah Allan [she had nursed Charlotte] and moved to Kynaston near Harewood End with their growing family." Left to right, back: Roger, Jack, William and Burton; middle: Sonny, Gerry, Marion and Sidney; babies: Colleen and Laddy; front: Frank, Olive, Jestima and Paddy. Another child, Sinclair, was born later as the Bishops moved to Duckswich Farm, Upton-upon-Severn.

Are you researching your family history? Check out Herefordshire Family History Society at www.herefordshirefhs.org.uk

Barrs Court Road

"Two corrugated structures dominated our lives in the 1940s: St Barnabus Church (below right), built as a chapel of ease on Barrs Court Road in 1912, and the Anderson shelter in our front garden. It was a case of 'praise the Lord by all means, but put your faith in the Anderson shelter!'" **Michael Young** lived on Barrs Court Terrace, their house backing on to a Bulmers 'semi' in which lodged "a scary character in black robes, a long dark coat and a priest's hat", St Barnabus' Father Windle. St Barnabus was, according to Michael's mother 'high church' (a 1969 city guide describes it as "a noted centre of Anglo-Catholic worship") and while his sister attended Sunday School there Michael stayed away: "At All Saints primary school we were asked every Monday whether we had attended Sunday School. Everybody would shoot their hands up except me. It was so intimidating that, on occasion, I joined in, then lived in fear that some child would denounce me, or God strike me down." Michael recalls another tin church, the Apostolic Church in Monkmoor Street.



Looking back at Queenswood

We need plenty of what Brockhampton timber faller Charley Price once described as "them kind old woods with a bit of oak and ash in 'em".

Queenswood Country Park and Arboretum on Dinmore Hill is such a place. Now in the hands of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and New Leaf, Queenswood was purchased by public subscription in 1934. Lord Lieutenant Richard Cotterell then oversaw the planting of the Arboretum to mark Queen Elizabeth II's coronation.

Reader **Michael Griffith** lives nearby. He accompanied his father to watch Queen Mary when she dedicated a memorial stone there in 1937 (pictured right). Michael also recalls the genial forester at the time, "Mr Chamberlain, a happy-faced fellow". One of Chamberlain's successors, Mr Probert (pictured far right with Reg Davies), worked the Wood from 1959 to 1977.

Rose Farrington of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust wants to hear more of Queenswood's history for a new book. Can you help? Contact IOA (below) or Rose Farrington (01432 530088; r.farrington@herefordshirewt.co.uk)



Can you help with a history of Queenswood? Top, a traffic-free A49 looking towards Dinmore Hill (Michael Griffith). Above left Queen Mary visits in 1937 to dedicate the memorial stone after Queenswood was purchased by public subscription; and, above, forester Mr Probert, left, with Reg Davies on his pony (Herefordshire Wildlife Trust).

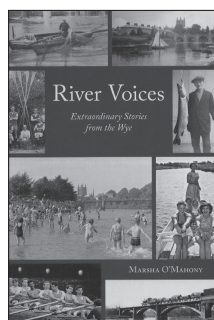
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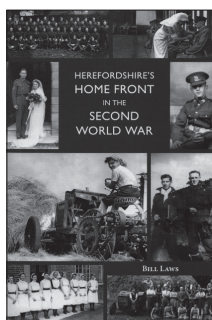
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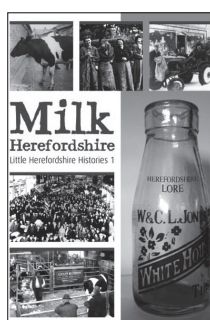
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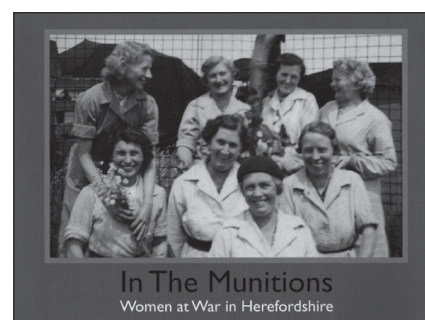
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