

# In Our Age

Herefordshire Lore : Living local history

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## Editorial

Many will know the delights of an unexpected visitor anxious to see old family photographs. Invariably, so many of us have reached for an old biscuit tin filled with treasured memories left sleeping in some cupboard or drawer. Then, perhaps just one picture stirs some memory and is brought to life.

Remarkably, given the choice of an entire photo collection at the Belgian National Photo Museum, sports commentator Frank Raes chose just one Hereford United football picture (see page 7) from well-known Hereford photographer Derek Evans.

This was an international biscuit tin where the original print has survived some seventy years and passed through many hands and endured many moves before being finally archived in the Belgian National Photo Museum.

Now of course we don't all have a biscuit tin but computers, the ethernet and 'the cloud'. Millions and millions of pictures but perhaps something of the magic lost of that almost secret archive with its shared moment of discovery.

An article in *The Times* newspaper on the 18th July 2019 quoted that Vinton Cerf, one of the founders of the internet and now a vice president at Google, had been warning for years that we're in danger of entering a digital dark age, where everything on computers will be lost. We may end up knowing less about the early 21st century than we do about the 20th.

All too easily we think that because we archive something on a computer or store it in a 'cloud' that the information is secure. When software moves on sometimes it is not backwards compatible and historic items are no longer 'seen' by the new system. He reminds us to ask, "Who can now access a floppy disk?"

This was his warning and he concluded the only safe custodians were paper and the printed word.

Many would say he forgot to mention an old biscuit tin.

*Keith James, committee member*

## Herefordshire Lore

Herefordshire Lore launched in 1989 and we've been collecting and publishing your memories ever since. We are: chair Julie Orton-Davies, secretary Eileen Klotz, treasurer Harvey Payne, webmaster Chris Preece, proofs Sandy Green, associate editor Bill Laws, editor Marsha O'Mahony, and committee Joyce Chamberlain, Keith and Krystyna James, Rosemary Lillico, Jean and Peter Mayne, Chris and Irene Tomlinson, Linda Ward and Betty Webb. Design: Pink Sheep. Print: Orphans Press.

## Hospital food at the General Hospital 1940s-style

A photo that featured in our *Little Herefordshire Histories Health* book brought back memories for one of our readers. Michael Young was a patient at the General Hospital in the 1940s when he was just ten-years-old, and remembers kindly staff, worried parents, and questionable hospital food:

'I was suffering from occasional stomach pains, which had led to some loss of schooling. Dr Wells from Moorfields Surgery was summoned and he diagnosed a grumbling appendix. It had to come out! He spoke with a gentle Irish brogue and was a kindly, affable man with a gentle bedside manner. He drove a much admired 1938 Triumph Dolomite, which had a highly stylised radiator grill, giving it a memorable appearance. At the General, I was quickly assigned to the Victoria Children's Ward and the operation duly performed. As evidence I still carry a three-inch scar and stitch marks; operations seventy-five years ago were a bit brutal but effective! On the day of my operation, and whilst recovering from the anaesthetic, I was conscious of a figure outside at the partially open window adjacent to my bed. It was my mother anxious to let me know the news she and my father had received that morning; I had passed my 11+ exam

## Hereford May Fair celebrates 900 years

In 2021 Hereford celebrates the 900th anniversary of its May Fair charter. Events and activities will take place during the year to mark this unique milestone and celebrate the vibrancy of the fair today. Visit [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/mayfair](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/mayfair) 900 for a full rundown of May Fair 900 events.

## Beaumont Trust

Herefordshire Lore is very grateful to the Beaumont Trust for also awarding us funding! This will go towards helping us continue to produce *In Our Age*. Thank you!



The Bishop of Hereford with Matron and her nursing staff at the General Hospital 1945. (Photo: Mike Brook)

for the High School. I responded to her whisper with a nod of my head. She told me later that her hasty, clandestine visit, and seeing my sickly grey-green pallor, had been most upsetting. For my parents, it had been a day to remember.

'I can't remember feeling any discomfort following my operation, rather the reverse for it seemed quite a jolly time. I do recall commandeering a wheeled basket (or similar) and propelling some of the younger patients around the ward at ever increasing speed, much to everyone's delight, except a nurse. I received a mild rebuke and an order to get back to bed.

'A memorable addition to the basic 1946 hospital fare was a gift of a box of chocolates, which must have cost my parents a month's supply of sweet coupons. Whenever I see Dairy Box now I'm reminded of The General. Also memorable, but for the wrong reason, was a dessert. Pink in colour, it looked both unappetising and tasted disgusting. Served far too often, it appeared to consist of lumps of latex mattress immersed in a slime of curdled, tepid distemper. I would eat as little as possible and spread the remainder around the dish in the hope that a nurse wouldn't notice. My ploy usually failed, and I would be urged to "eat it up", with the added emphasis of either, "it does you good", or "we mustn't waste good food". Known to kitchen staff and nurses as junket, it was appropriately named.'

*NOTE: Copies of Health Herefordshire are available direct from Herefordshire Lore. The £5 cover price includes postage. See back page for more details.*

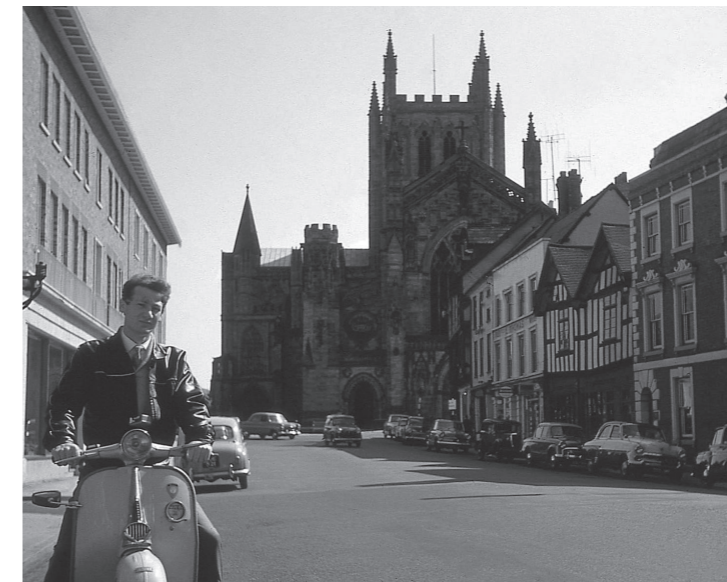
## Pride of place

Herefordshire Lore is delighted to announce its successful funding bid, 'Pride of Place', with Connexus Housing's Community Fund. Connexus is the county's biggest provider of social housing. We are looking forward to partnering with Connexus and its residents – past and current – in recording their voices. A special celebratory pull-out edition will be released with the *In Our Age* summer publication. If you have a story about social housing you'd like to share, please get in touch.

## Hereford welcomes refugees fleeing Hungary's 1956 uprising

On November 4, 1956, Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary's capital, Budapest, crushing a national uprising. The bloody result led to thousands of protesters either being killed or wounded, and many more (up to a quarter of a million) fleeing the country. It would take until 1991 for Soviet military occupation to end. In 1956, the Red Cross helped many of those taking flight find safe passage to the UK, and eventually Hereford. Redhill Hostel on Ross Road acted as temporary accommodation for some and their appearance made an impression on at least one little boy: 'I remember seeing people queuing for meals at the Redhill Hostel with their enamel mugs, outside the Hostel kitchen,' said Roger Catlow.

Among the refugees arriving in Hereford was Tim Wick's father, Tibor. Little is known about his time in the county

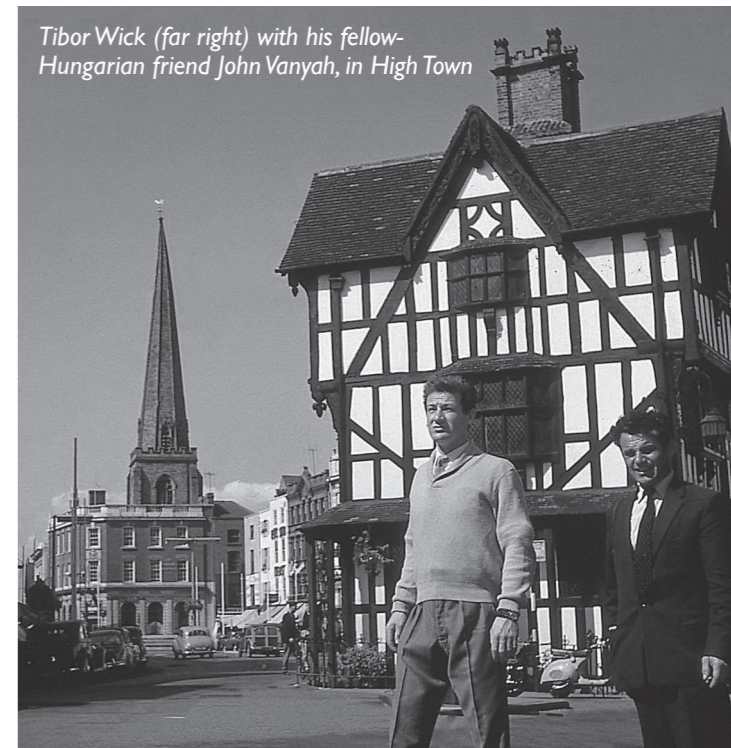


John Vanyah, sitting on his scooter in King Street, was a joiner at Anvil Enterprises. John fled Hungary with Rudolf (Rudi) Szantay, perhaps better known to many as one of Hereford's long-established watchmakers and jewellers, operating from his shop on St Owen's Street. (Photo: Tim Wick).

## Stars of stage and screen

**Reader Griff Loydd meets Gracie Fields**

'In 1943, when I was a 12-year-old living in Hereford, there was a resident Repertory company, where many famous performers would turn up at various times. One day my mum took me to the Imperial Hotel in Widemarsh Street, where the then famous singer and film star, Gracie Fields was due to visit for a short stay. At that time, she was the country's highest-paid entertainer. As we waited in the foyer, the famous lady arrived, and, much to our surprise, she promptly stopped to talk to mum and me for a few minutes. Then, as we were leaving, a front window opened right above us, and Gracie leaned out and sang a lot of her well-known songs to the appreciative crowd below for half an hour. I cherish those wonderful memories of a wealthy yet considerate and downright ordinary Gracie Fields.'



and Tim is keen to find out as much as he can: 'My father fled Hungary after the uprising in 1956. He travelled across Europe, into England and, as far as my research goes, was initially settled in a hostel in Staffordshire in early 1957, and was then moved to Redhill Hostel around May of the same year. He arrived with other refugees in coaches and I believe he was associated with Hereford for several years. If anyone can offer any information I would be very grateful.'

*Editor's note: Can you help Tim? Please do get in touch (contact details on the back page) and we will pass on any messages.*

## Matinée at Clifton Cinema

**Our feature on Leominster's Clifton Cinema prompted Robert Edwards of Hereford to write in with his own fond memories of matinées and the evocative aroma of tobacco smoke!**

'In your last issue (IOA 59) you carried an article about George Colley, manager and projectionist at the Clifton. In the late fifties and early sixties I used to go to the Clifton Cinema on a regular basis. I am 74 now, but then, as a teenager, I lived in the village of Eardisley, five miles from Leominster. I would take the local bus and travel in for the Saturday matinée films. There was always a main film and a support film. In those days there were lots of Westerns. The Clifton was the first cinema that I ever went to and I remember it fondly. In those days people could smoke in the cinema and I can remember there was always a heavy smell of tobacco. I was so disappointed when it eventually became a bingo hall. It would be wonderful if it was to one day become a cinema again.'

## Redcliffe Gardens' bandstand



In 1969 the newly-designed Redcliffe Gardens opened. (Photo: Williams-Hill collection)



An audience, some seated, some standing, listen to a military band at Redcliffe Gardens, 1969. Are you in there somewhere? (Photo: Williams-Hill collection)

Revamped in 1969, with bandstand, water features and bridges, Hereford's Redcliffe Gardens became a much-visited attraction for all ages. The bandstand was particularly popular, though it was not held in any great affection by Castle Green residents. In 1978, three local bands, Gruin, Celluloid Heroes and Teapot, raising funds for the Nell Gwynne Theatre, were given permission to perform by the city's leisure and recreation

committee. Mindful of complaints following 'pop music from the previous summer', Chairman of the committee, Councillor Derek Evans said at the time: 'We've put the facility there, but it's been sterilised by the attitude of the people living in the area!' However, the show did go on, and was enjoyed by many. By 1995, beset by a host of problems, the whole area was demolished and returned to grass. The end of an era.

## Folk music, brass bands and summer concerts

### Opportunity Knocks for The Bluestrings

One of the bands to play at Redcliffe Gardens in the early 1970s was folk group, The Bluestrings. The seven-strong line-up started out as music students at Bluecoat School. Their teacher, Miss Sheila Morris, was also their manager. Bluecoat School canteen assistant, Mrs E Watkins, sent off an entry form to the popular light entertainment show, Opportunity Knocks, after hearing them play. Band members, Jan Kilpatrick (née Howls) and Pat Garland-Smith would love to know where the other group members are today. They are: Pat Bridges, Susan Phillips, Linda Smale, Kim Edge and Shirley Anne Davies. Can our readers help?



The Bluestrings performing on stage at the Redcliffe Garden bandstand, early 1970s. (Photo: Gordon Salisbury)

## From bootleg Beatles to bootleg Deep Purple, heavy rock hits the bandstand

Hereford-born musician, Roger Philpotts, brought heavy rock to the bandstand at Redcliffe Gardens in the 1970s. Leaving school in Leominster aged 15, he joined his first band in 1961. 'We were called the Four Aces,' he said. 'There was Colin Jones, Bob Maddocks, Pip Bosley and me. *The Hereford Times* even called us the Herefordshire Beatles because we were playing Beatles songs. Nobody else was doing it then. Everybody else was still doing the Shadows. At the Hillside ballroom, when the Russ Allen orchestra played on a Saturday night, we would play in the break and play Beatles songs. There were 1000 people in that room. Incredible.

'We'd keep learning new material, moving with the times. One of our bands was Woodfall. We played Redcliffe Gardens and we went down a storm in the seventies. We did a Deep Purple thing. Once or twice we played the Winter Gardens in Malvern. We supported Cream, Manfred Mann, everybody from the sixties. I shared a dressing room with Eric Clapton. If you were a support band you shared with everyone. We played at Hereford Tech college in the 1970s a couple of times. I had bought a coffin from an undertaker for fifteen quid, painted it blue and the singer used to come out of the coffin on stage! It was pure madness. We blew the headlining band off the stage. Years later I went to a function at a hotel and met the guy who was in that band. Let's just say he went on to play in the Pretenders. He remembered me and said, "I remember that night; you blew us off the stage". We did!'

*Editor's Note: We would love to see more photos from Herefordshire's music scene. Please get in touch.*



A very chilled audience listens as Roger Philpotts' band plays on at Redcliffe Gardens. (Photo: Roger Philpotts)

## Guy's Hospital Estate

London-based landlords Guy's Hospital, finally sold its interests in the county in 1962 after over 200 years.

After a happy childhood in Bodenham, Ivy Manning left school aged 14 and joined the War-Ag, the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries. Her job was to work out the rations farmers were allowed according to their acreage, and the crops they grew; every farm was different. When she was twenty-one, she left and married Donald Manning, and a life in farming began, with an unexpected landlord:

'Donald and his parents and brother lived at Bigglestone Farm, Much Birch. It was owned by Guy's Hospital, London and they had an office at Kingsthorpe. They owned a lot of farms in South Herefordshire. Over the years, the estate had been owned by Sir Charles Clare and the Prudential Insurance Company. Some farmers have bought their farms, but a lot are now owned by the Duchy of Cornwall.

'When we were about to be married, Donald's parents bought a farm at Edwin Ralph and we then had the tenancy at Bigglestone. Bigglestone was a dairy farm of 150 acres



Ivy Manning's first Guy's Hospital event as a newlywed wife at the Estate's annual dinner in 1952 at the Three Counties Hotel. Ivy and her husband Donald are third and fourth from left. (Photo: Ivy Manning)

with 25 Friesian cows and their followers. But Donald yearned for something bigger and in 1955 we obtained the tenancy of Trelasdee Farm, St Weonards. Trelasdee was 330 acres, also on Guy's Estate. Guy's Hospital used to put on an annual dinner for its tenants. This was my first. We had only been married for three months.'

*Editor's note: There are 130 tenancies on the former Guy's Estate, including many farms that have passed down through the generations of the same family. Would you like to be interviewed for our Food and Farming project? Please do get in touch.*

## Centenary celebration of WWII heroine

Her life was cut tragically short, and, as the centenary of her birth approaches, efforts to keep her name and memory alive at a Wormelow museum continue. Violette Szabo's exploits as a SOE (Special Operations Executive) operative led to her being one of the most highly decorated female combatants in WWII, receiving (posthumously) both the George Cross and the Croix de Guerre. Her connections to the county remain strong.

Born in Paris on 26th June 1921, she moved to England with her parents. She met her Hungarian husband Etienne (a former Foreign Legionnaire) in 1940. He was killed just two years later at the Battle of El Alamein. His death prompted Violette to apply to join the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) as a bilingual courier. The average life expectancy in occupied France for a SOE radio operator was only six weeks. This was a vocation awash with risk and danger. On a parachute training exercise in the Scottish Highlands, she sprained an ankle badly and, in order to recuperate, spent time on her cousins' Herefordshire farm in Wormelow.

On her first assignment, she was parachuted into German-occupied France as a courier. Her second reconnaissance mission, however, was far more challenging and Violette was captured by the Germans and imprisoned first in Rheims, where she was interrogated and tortured, before being transferred to the notorious Ravensbrück concentration camp.

'La Petite Anglaise', as she came to be known, endeared herself to her fellow women prisoners when she organised a boycott of a detail to a local Heinkel munitions factory, telling her captors that the work contravened the Geneva Convention. It was all to no avail. Sadly, along with two other inmates, she was executed at Ravensbrück in 1945, aged 23.

Alongside the Violette Szabo GC Museum at Wormelow (created by Miss Rosemary Rigby MBE), there are another nine memorials dedicated to Violette. Her George Cross medal is on permanent display at London's Imperial War Museum. An extension to the Wormelow Museum, to be known as Violette's Reading Room, is due for completion this summer. For details of the museum's opening hours ring Miss Rigby on 01981 540077.

## Neat hand writers only

Dennis Norris, 92, of Oswestry received his rather unusual 'call to arms' during World War Two: 'I have lived in Oswestry for many years, but I used to live in Hereford in Highmore Street, Westfields from the age of seven in 1936 until 1963, when I moved with the TSB Bank, for whom I worked. I have lots of memories right through the war years. One of these was when I was ten-years-old and about six of us children from Holmer School, only the neatest handwriters, were taken to the Town Hall and sat in a basement room somewhere under the main stairway. There we spent time writing names and addresses on ration books. I still have the officially printed 'thank you' card from the then Minister of Food. Then at fourteen, I volunteered to be a messenger in the Civil Defence and used to be on all-night duty in the basement of the Central Police Headquarters. I still have the official card of 'farewell and stand down' dinner given by the Mayor.'

## Football ballet

Hereford Utd 'Football Ballet' image is a favourite at Belgium photographic museum.

When Hereford news photographer Derek Evans died, he left a vast photographic archive, numbering over 200,000 negatives and hundreds of exhibition prints. These are being painstakingly catalogued at HARC. However, some of Derek's images are also archived in other unexpected places: a photographic museum in Antwerp (FOMU). It was there that curators produced recently a video series 'De keuze van', in which seven TV personalities were asked to select their favourite image out of FOMU's collection. Of the many thousands available, top Belgian TV sports commentator, Frank Raes, selected a Derek Evans 1950s shot of a Hereford Utd match at Edgar Street, featuring one of the biggest Hereford Utd players of the day, Charlie Thompson. Keith James, Derek's former business partner remembers the image well, particularly Derek's chosen title for it: 'He called it *Football ballet*, and it's easy to see why.'

In a video interview talking about the photograph, Frank Raes said: 'I'm very involved with moving images, but I think



Hereford Utd legend, Charlie Thompson in action at Edgar Street 1950s. (Photo: FOMU, Antwerp, Belgium)

sometimes still images have a lot more to say. This photo by Evans is a footballing photo, but it has little in common with football photos of today. Normally everyone would be looking at the football, that's what makes it so atypical. It is such an intriguing photo. That's what I love about it.'

You can see Frank Raes talking about Derek Evans' photo by following this link. <https://vimeo.com/527204104> All interviews are captioned in English.

## Old Herefordians Cricket Club



Old Herefordians Cricket Club season 1948. Back row: Trevor Roberts, Michael Morris, Reg Davies, Anthony (Tony) Humphries, Ted Rees, Eric Williams and Ken Williams. Front row: John Upton, Glyn Williams, Don Wooldridge (Captain), Ernest (Randy) Langford and Norman Wooldridge. (Photo: Frank Halford)

Frankie Halford writes in following on from features on the Hereford City Sport's Club (IOA 58/59): 'Ray Williams referred to two rugby clubs in Hereford in the 1940s: the Hereford Rugby Club and the Old Herefordians. May I offer

that the Old Herefordians Cricket Club was formed from most of the boys/men in the Old Herefordians Rugby Club. The Old Herefordians Cricket Club played their first match in the Hereford Evening League in May 1948. The players wanted to continue playing sport during the summer and they asked one of their players to try and arrange a cricket team. The member of the Old Herefordians Rugby Club given the task was Ernest Randolph (Randy) Langford, and is one of only two still living.'



This 1984 photo was taken at Grafton Cricket Club. Can you name any of the players? (Photo: David Arthur Bradley)

# Parcel of Time

## History of Hope Mansell captured on film

A new film celebrating life across the ages in Hope Mansell, near Ross-on-Wye, is now available to view online. Film-maker, and Hope Mansell resident, Ian Lewis, has captured a changing village through some extraordinary interviews. One of them is John Margrett, who was born in the village in the 1930s, a time of poverty and deprivation for many, as witnessed by John: 'I can remember kids at school froze to the bloody marrow, their noses running, famished. There was one family who used to live under the bushes up on Dancing Green. They put bits of whatever they could find, bits of tarpaulin, and they'd live in there. Then Willie, the eldest, he went and got killed at Dunkirk. Didn't have much to die for, did he?'

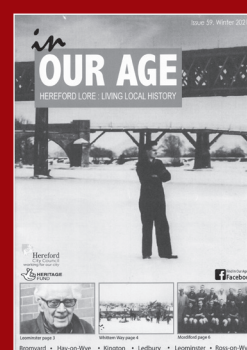
Mary Freeman's grandparents' milk round kept them busy: 'Grandfather milked the cows and grandmother took the milk around. Times were poor. People would maybe have half a pint of milk and then they didn't have enough money, and grandfather would rub it off the slate because he was sorry for people.' But there were ways of earning a little money too, especially for the enterprising, as Geoff Phelps remembered: 'Joe Roberts, he was a woodman and he would pay you for a fox's tail. For that you could have ten shillings and a cartridge. For a squirrel's tail you had a shilling!'

These stories and more, feature in this ninety-minute documentary, filmed over three years between 2017 and 2020. For details on how to see the film, please visit: <https://hopemansellhistory.uk>.

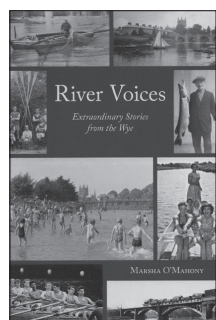


Meat Farm in Hope Mansell  
(Photo: John Margrett)

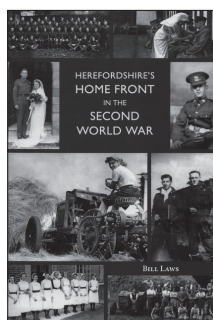
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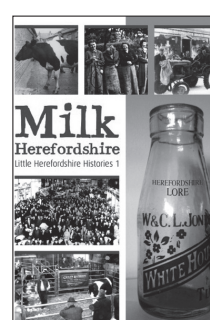
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