

in

OUR AGE

HEREFORDSHIRE LORE: LIVING LOCAL HISTORY

Issue 62
Autumn 2021

Indian Regiment at
Hereford Racecourse
Page 3

Hop picking Bromyard
Page 4/5

Howle Hill motorbike
scrambling
Page 7

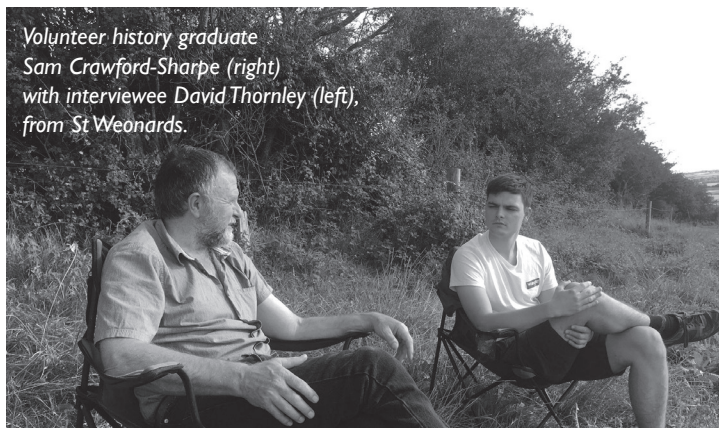


Welcome

Herefordshire Lore archive

It's been a busy time at Herefordshire Lore and we have some news to share. Firstly, we hope you like our new-look In Our Age. Thank you to our committee, whose input has been invaluable in the redesign and Pink Sheep for interpreting our ideas. We look forward to hearing your feedback. Secondly, a mammoth project this autumn has been organising Herefordshire Lore's back catalogue – in partnership with Herefordshire Records and Archive Centre and Herefordshire Libraries (herefordshirehistory.org.uk). Many of the fantastic recollections from Herefordshire Lore's 30-year archive of photos and memories are funny, sad, poignant, and a vital part of our history. For example, a farmer's boy from Kings Capse enlists for war in 1916: "We thought we'd be away on a month-long spree. Instead we were away for four years!" Or Hunderton's Edith Gammage recalling Sunday walks to the 'Bankie' at Belmont with "river this side, corn fields that side, and mushrooms, wild orchids and wood anemones". It was quite a different memory for munitions girl Adelaide, who is shocked when her workmate from Kington dies of puerperal fever:

Volunteer history graduate Sam Crawford-Sharpe (right) with interviewee David Thornley (left), from St Weonards.



"I never even knew she was expecting. We knew so little in those days."

It's a big task, and we are fortunate to have help from history graduate Sam Crawford-Sharpe, who has been on board helping organise all our material. Herefordshire Lore is self-funded and relies entirely on volunteers like Sam and subscribers like you!

You can help support us by subscribing to In Our Age. Fill in the form on the back page and help us keep going for another 30 years.

Bill Laws, Associate Editor

ON THE COVER

Retired BT (British Telecom) engineer Wilf Jones features on our cover. Dressed smartly in shirt and tie, he can be seen working down a manhole outside Hereford Cathedral in 1980. But this was not his usual work uniform: 'It was for a publicity photo,' said Wilf, 'so I dressed up smartly.' Wilf was among the first BT engineers to install the super modern optical fibres in 1980 from Tywyn to Abergynolwyn. "If I wasn't up a telegraph pole, I was underground," said Wilf of his working life. "In 1963, many of the boxes were underground and that meant digging down about six feet to do our work jointing copper cables. But afterwards manholes and surface boxes gave us far easier access. When I first started we were using lead cables, then it moved onto copper wires, then finally we had the new optical fibres, which were as thin as a hair and difficult to handle. Me and my colleague were the first BT engineers to joint optical fibres. It's taken for granted now, but then it made history." His job gave him access to a whole new subterranean world of Hereford: "On the other corner where the photo was taken, was a manhole. Once you were inside, steps led down to a tunnel under Broad Street. When we were working under there it was a bit strange because you could hear buses and cars passing overhead. I was lucky though, I loved going to work."



Herefordshire Lore

Herefordshire Lore launched in 1989 and has 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.

Digital stories from the work place

Do you remember your first work-place computer? Were you of the generation moving across from the typewriter to word processor? It's really important we record these stories and would love to hear from you and hear your memories and reminiscences. Please get in touch. (*Contact details on the right.*)

Contact us

Address:

c/o The Pavilion, Castle Green,
Hereford, HR1 2NW

Email:

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Website:

www.herefordshirelore.org.uk

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/InOurAge

Subscription:

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Telephone: 07845 907891

EDITORIAL

Editor: Marsha O'Mahony
info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Associate Editor: Bill Laws
info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

DESIGN:

Pink Sheep

PRINT:

Orphans Press

WEBMASTER:

Chris Preece
www.infinityunlimited.co.uk

ADVERTISING:

info@herefordshirelore.org.uk

Jousting and Tiger Moths at Hereford Racecourse

Rhajput Regiment set up camp

His home, backing onto Hereford Racecourse, provided an excellent playground for this young boy during WWII. Dennis Norris, 92, lives in Oswestry today, but his memories of wartime in Hereford remain vivid. The racecourse was quite a spectacle for a young boy: "We had a gate through onto the racecourse from our garden. The racecourse was used a lot by the army during the war, most of them living under canvas. There was an Indian regiment, the Punjabi I think, and they even had all their pack mules. But the officers had beautiful chargers, horses. Being just a young boy, I was able to mingle and they didn't take any notice of me. On their sports day they had this tent peg that was knocked into the ground, about four or five inches, and they'd get on their horses and they'd charge down with a lance and stick this peg. It was a bit like jousting. They were very nice people.

"The Royal Artillery searchlight battalion was there too. At night-time, they kept an old Tiger Moth airplane in the middle, in fact I used to help the pilot load it up with petrol.

If the weather was alright and clear, he would take off and he would be circling around, and the search lights would be having a practice at picking him up. 'On target', they would say. It was a great time for me.

"The sad thing was when they brought men back from Dunkirk. They put a lot of them on the racecourse and they went right along Highmore Street. They were in a sorry state. My father



Dennis Norris (centre) with a Rhajput soldier at the Hereford Racecourse.



While stationed here, several soldiers died during a very cold spell. (Photo: Derek Foxton Archive)

had been in the First World War, and he was quite upset that they hadn't got their rifles because he said the rifle was your best friend. They must have dumped them on their way to the ships. They were queuing all the way along for a wash or a shave and so on and they would chat to me.

I had all sorts of souvenirs; one of them was a Belgian bayonet, which I think I eventually swapped for a double-sided mouth organ.

"At the age of fourteen you could join the Civil Defence as a messenger boy. So I joined the messengers, and the headquarters was in the basement of the central police station, and I'd do all my duties there on a Friday night. The idea was if the phones

got demolished or anything, we would get on the pipes and deliver messages and say where bombs had dropped and all the rest of it, but we never had to do that. The only bomb that really dropped and did any damage was the policeman's house at the entrance to the ammunition factory in Rotherwas. I remember that. As messengers we were kitted up like the air raid warden's uniform, with the yellow lanyard. We would parade at the police station. The man in charge was Sergeant Harris and he would give us a task. We even used to have summer camps and used to go up to Breinton. They are good memories."



Maureen Beauchamp with Rhajput soldiers. (Maureen Beauchamp)

Women's Land Army – all stations alert!

Do you have a story about the Woman's Land Army in Herefordshire? We would love to hear from you. Please get in touch. Contact details on page 2.



Hop Harvest



Cribbing fun at Bromyard.



John Ridgway, front left, at Dormington with his family.



*Hop pockets at Pridewood, Ashperton.
(Photo: Pauline Andrews)*



Frome Valley transport with hop pockets at Bromyard. (Photo: Jo Chedzoy)



*Time for a cuppa in the hop yards
at Larport. (Photo: Derek Foxton Archive)*

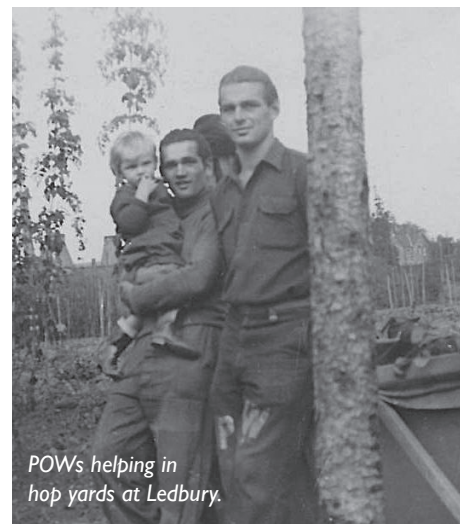


Bushelling at Carwardine, Lulham.
(Photo: John Griffiths)

The scratchy, pungent hop holds many memories for our readers. Hop growing, however, has changed. From boom time in the 1880s with 70,000 growers across the UK, as far north as Aberdeen, to a reduced number of growers in 1956, towards the end of the handpicking era, with just 2,600. At the end of 2020, however, there were only 50 growers UK-wide. Of these, only 27 continue to grow hops in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire – more than the South East.

Pre-mechanisation, the hop harvest was picked by hand, and it was calculated that – aside from local pickers – over 40,000 pickers arrived from the West Midlands and South Wales alone. Bishops Frome typified many hop-picking communities with its population swelling to over 5,000. One local described the village as something like the ‘Wild West’ during harvest time. There was drama, marriages, deaths, births, dancing, drinking, fighting, and of course, picking. It was an exodus of labour, a pilgrimage for some, often unremarked upon today. Here’s a selection of images from across Herefordshire’s hop-growing districts.

All photos taken from editor Marsha O'Mahony's new book Scratch of the Hop.



POWs helping in
hop yards at Ledbury.



Jeanette Stevens and fellow tyers
at Pomona. (Photo: Jeanette Stevens)



Ben Green on the left and his cousin Bill Went
at Pomona in the 1940s. (Photo: Pete Green)

Clothing coupons, wedding bells and cardboard cakes

One of our regular contributors, Doris Kershaw (née Townsend), recalls the creative preparations for her wedding day on September 11th, 1951, to Cyril, in St Peter's Church, Hereford.

"It was a lovely day, especially as rationing was still in effect and treats were generally rare. Clothing coupons meant that I wore my cousin Jocelyn's dress (it was a little too long; I was always the shortest!). Cousins Gillian and Bessie Marshall were bridesmaids. The blue fabric for their dresses had been bought from Augustus Edwards, the shop with concave windows on High Town, and my maternal great-grandmother Ruby Townsend's gown came from Greenlands in Hereford.

"Rev. Wragge Morley was vicar at the time, Rev. Luddington was curate and Mr Greville-Phillips churchwarden. Cyril's uncle, Vicar Fred Riley, officiated and was able to suitably reprimand his nephew when he knelt on the bridal veil! The flowers were largely gifted by Wyevale Nurseries in Kings Acre Road on account that a loyal employee, John James (who was in the RAF), sang in the choir with me. Rose bouquets and buttonholes arrived for the wedding party. Wyevale's owner, Mr Williamson, also allowed John to decorate the church, with stunning clematis climbing the chancel screen, where I had been a chorister for many years. Ross Fink was the choirmaster and organist, and deputy organist of the cathedral at that time, and the full choir sang for us.

"The reception was held at the Castle Pool Hotel thanks to the kindness of Mr and Mrs Snell. I had photographed their two daughters regularly, as part of my work at Vivian's studio, to send to their serving father, at one time a prisoner of war. Countless coupons had been saved to ensure that we had enough sugar to ice the cakes – luxury, as many wedding cakes in those early



post-war years included a thinly iced cardboard box! The menu looks frugal by modern standards but we were both delighted and grateful. Presents were largely utilitarian, with hand-me-down and homemade offerings – all very exciting and welcome. This photograph was taken by my boss, Miss Ada Durrant, on the lawn overlooking Castle Pool.

"My going-away outfit was a navy blue fine wool dress with two taffeta floating panels. Inevitably, there was a matching hat! We left for our London honeymoon from Hereford Station, with the 1951 Festival of Britain on our itinerary. As the train pulled away from the platform, the waving friends and family jumped out of their skins; Mr Penny, who was I believe the station master, had put some fog detonators on the line! Hardly surprising that they were banned (except for their proper use) shortly thereafter!"

Editor's note: If anyone has the photo Miss Durrant took of the full choir in the chancel, please get in touch.

New-fangled hair rollers at A. G. Evans Hairdressers

Yvonne Connors joined A. G. Evans Hairdressers in the 1950s. Before Mr Evans would take her on, however, she had to demonstrate a finger wave! "In those days, ladies had the old-fashioned perms, where their hair was strung up in the air. And then there was Janel, where you had your hair in clamps. The chemicals were quite strong smelling. I hadn't been there very long when rollers first came in. I even remember the first lady I did. She had red hair. Mr Walker, one of the bosses, came up and watched me, because even he

hadn't used them yet, so he wanted to see how they went in. But these curlers were lovely because they were something quite different and more natural than what we had used before. There were no blow dryers then, instead we had hood driers. You had to sit under it for half an hour or more and there would be a succession of people waiting: when you had one out from under the drier you would put another under. Then you had to comb that one out and the apprentice would take the rollers out of the next client's hair. If you weren't busy, Mr Evans had a block of hair on a model and you had to practise. It was very regimented. Our staff room was on the third floor and it was horrible: you were up and down all day long. And down in the cellar we washed all the towels. I had lovely hair and I remember one day Mr Walker getting the thinning scissors out on my long hair and it was coming out in handfuls. I could have cried."

Editor's note: sadly no pictures to go with this, but we would love to see photos from inside the salon! Please get in touch.

Subscribe to
In Our Age
for just £15 a year.
The ideal
Christmas gift!

When motorbikes ruled the road

The smell of Castrol R and the sound of a two-stroke engine are enough to bring back memories of a huge post-WWII sport: motorcycle scrambling. Before the age of mass car ownership, this sport was hugely popular. In the 1950s and 1960s the Ross & District Motor Sports Club organised the Howle Hill Motorcycle Scrambling events near Ross-on-Wye. They proved to be hugely popular, attracting thousands of spectators, many bussed in from miles around to enjoy the spectacle. Proceeds from parking fees earned the motor club enough money to buy a derelict old chapel in Kyrle Street, Ross and turn it into a club house. It is still the club's HQ today, one of only five in the country to own their clubhouse.

Motorcycle scrambling on the Howle Hill site became such a part of the local landscape that the venue even appeared on Ordnance Survey maps of the period. It attracted some big names in the sport, included Ross legend, Dennis Hitchins.



Motorcycling scrambling on Howle Hill. (Photo: Steve Wilden)

Between seventy and eighty entries – following ACU (Auto-cycle Union) guidelines and wearing helmets and gloves – regularly took part. And it wasn't just men either; women competed too on the notoriously difficult track.

It even attracted the odd TV celebrity, including Crossroads actress and Ross resident, Noel Gordon, who was invited to start the first race at a Spring Event. "She arrived," remembers one racegoer, "dressed in a floaty frock in spring colours, hat and nice shoes. It was, unfortunately, a bit muddy and as soon as she started the race, then she got splattered. She was a little surprised."

By 1966 the rise of the car and the advent of cheap motoring saw the popularity of the sport gradually fade. In its place road rallying began in earnest, and the club has been very much a car sport ever since.

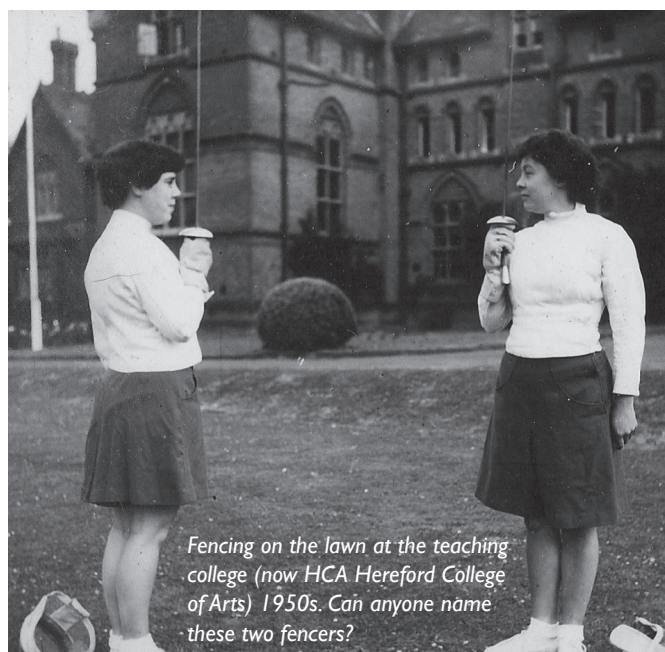


There were hundreds of spectators and dozens of competitors.



Women members of Ross & District Motor Sports Club selling programmes.

On guard!



Fencing on the lawn at the teaching college (now HCA Hereford College of Arts) 1950s. Can anyone name these two fencers?

NEWS ROUND UP

Moccas air crash

On Sunday 15th August, after a delay of over twelve months due to Covid, the memorial made of local sandstone in the shape of a Wellington tail fin was unveiled in honour of lives lost in the Moccas air crash. Six airmen died when their aircraft, a Vickers Wellington Mk X of 105 OTU (Transport Command) crashed whilst on a training flight on 29 April 1945 (see IOA 56-57). They were: Flight Lieutenant Harold Kenneth Crowther, 23; Warrant Officer Henry James Bays, 23; Warrant Officer Eric William Skelton, 22; Pilot Officer Geoffrey George Minchin Smith, 23 (RAAF); Flight Sergeant William Forster, 28; and Flight Sergeant Gwilym James Whitcombe, 24. Around 70 invited guests including relatives of some of the crew attended and wreaths were laid. The service ended with a flypast by a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. A donation of £1150.00 was made to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Photo by Shona Bonella whose great-uncle Henry James Bays, was a crew member.

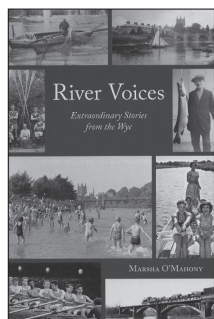
More information is available at: <https://dorstonehistorysociety.wordpress.com/ww2-wellington-bomber/>



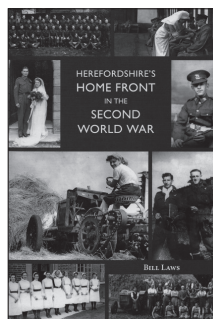
Local History speakers

From health to hop yards, from rivers to milk, from tales of wartime to women at work, the Herefordshire Lore archive is full of great local stories. Speakers Marsha O'Mahony (In Our Age editor) and archivist Bill Laws can bring a Herefordshire Lore talk to your history group. Call 07742 825 813 or 07989 733 870.

In Our Age Subscriptions and book orders



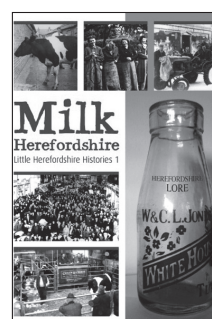
☐ *River Voices*
£10 + £3
p&p



☐ *Herefordshire's
Home Front in the
Second World War*
£10 + £3 p&p



☐ *In The Munitions*
£10 + £2.50 p&p



☐ *Milk*
£5 includes
p&p



☐ *Health*
£5 includes
p&p

Take out a subscription now for just £15 and get one extra issue free! ☐

(Ref page 6) To our regular subscribers - we will remind you when your subscription is due in the New Year.

Send a cheque made out to Herefordshire Lore to: **Herefordshire Lore, c/o The Pavilion, Castle Green, Hereford HR1 2NW.**

If you would prefer to pay by BACS our Account number is **65508835** and sort code **089299**.

New subscribers please fill in form below and put post code in reference box for Bacs payment.

Name:

Address:

Postcode: Contact number: Email: