

in

OUR AGE

HEREFORDSHIRE LORE : LIVING LOCAL HISTORY

Issue 70
Winter 2023

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Bromyard • Whitney-on-Wye • Kington • Ledbury • Leominster • Ross-on-Wye • Hereford

Welcome

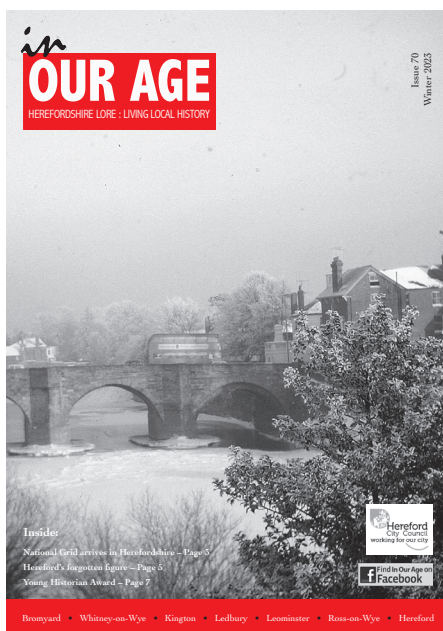
A very warm welcome to Issue 70. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who supported our Hereford History Day at the Town Hall in September. With an estimated 1,000 visitors on the day, there were several highlights to the event. BBC's Who Do You Think You Are? Researcher Nick Barratt made a popular guest appearance. We acknowledge the acoustics were not great and aim to do better next year. The Betty Webb Young Historian Award was named in honour of our much-loved and much-missed committee member, who died earlier this year. It was generously sponsored her family. Our first Young Historian Award was a delight. It was won by Riverside's Joe Brown. His pharmacist family ran Steward's, now featured in Worcester City Museum. Second up was another Riverside lad, Jake Raynor. His ancestor served – and died – at Monte Cassino serving with the German army. Last but not least was Harley Watson's collection of Good Attendance medals from Stretton Sugwas School in the early 1900s. Thank you to all our stallholders for making the day special and to Hereford City Council for funding the day. Also special mention to our sponsors, Bill Jackson Properties and Wye Valley Brewery.

Make a note in your calendar for next year: Saturday, September 21, 2024.

Associate Editor Bill Laws

Cover Story

Thank you to Derek Foxton for sharing this image with us. It is from the early 1970s and the scene is suitably seasonal and chilly, as a double-decker Red bus crosses the old Wye Bridge. In the big freeze of the winter of 1962/63, it was another Wye Bridge that brought spectators. In the Hereford Times of April, 1963 the spectacle was reported at Wilton in Ross-on-Wye: "A sight never before seen even by those with a lifetime's experience of the Wye provided a spectacular aftermath of the severest winter of the century. The Wye had been frozen for two months until last Wednesday when the ice broke and came roaring downstream. Throughout the morning the ice floes, some estimated to weigh the best part of a ton, packed the river. The unforgettable sight drew nearly as many people to the riverbanks and Wilton Bridge as are to be seen on a summer's day." Photo credit: Derek Foxton Archive.



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Local author releases new book

John Kinross' latest book, 'Country Houses of the Marches', should prove fascinating to anyone with an interest in these architectural splendours that dot our landscape. It covers a number of counties, including our neighbours, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, and Monmouthshire. In his Herefordshire section, this pictorial guide takes in many well-known examples, including Croft Castle, Burton Court, Hellens Manor, Kentchurch Court, and Sufton Court. It is available from Amberley Publishing for £14.39.

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 and Linda Ward.

National Grid arrives at Dormington

In 1935, the commercial operation of the national 132kV electric power transmission grid (the National Grid) began in the UK. It was the first integrated national grid in the world. But it didn't reach Herefordshire until the 1950s. One of the team erecting the towers was Mike Pullen. Mike is best known for his tremendous efforts with St Michael's Hospice Angels, raising huge sums. But in the fifties, newly demobbed from his National Service with the RAF, he came to live with his parents in Ledbury. He joined a team of mostly Polish men, to erect the grid system from Worcester to Dormington, but joined from Ledbury. He was the only English man on the team.

He had initially joined the company as a works clerk in 1957, but when he discovered how much tower erectors were being paid – far more than the average wage at that time – he decided it was time for a change and he joined the team. Some of the towers are still in use.

"When we arrived on site, four legs were already sticking out of the ground. The stub setters, as we called them, were a team of Irishmen, and on each corner of a concrete pad they would dig holes for the steel legs."



Mike and his team had to make sense of a massive pile of bits of steel and sacksful of nuts and bolts that were to form the giant tower. These pieces would be put together on the ground – rather like a giant Meccano set – and then hoisted up.

"We had a safety belt, but we never wore one because it slowed us up when we were climbing up, which was often 120 or 150 feet high. We didn't have helmets either. But we did wear Wellington boots. We would arrive in the middle of the countryside somewhere with a couple of buckets. One of us would make a fire while someone else went off in search of water. When they came back, we would pour the tea leaves in the bucket and put it on the fire. That was our tea."

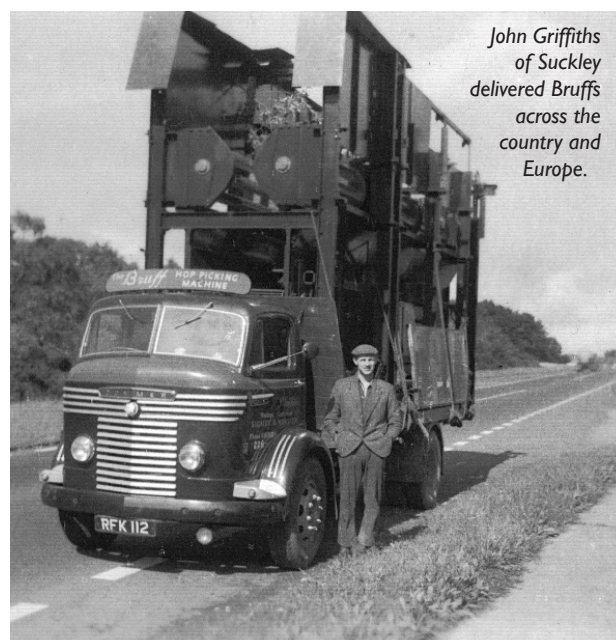
"They were amazing grafters. Working in all weathers in all conditions. In summer we wore shorts, and, in the winter, we often had to knock the ice off the metal."



The arrival of electricity was a close call for some hop growers

The lack of electricity in some outlying areas posed problems for growers eager to move with the times and install a new hop-picking machine. Many villages remained without mains power into the early 1960s. It was a close call for Edward Lewis' family at Upper Eggleton. Their Bruff arrived in 1957, but the power had not.

Edward: "In 1956 we had told the pickers that we wouldn't be wanting them the next year because we knew we would be getting a machine. I think about ten days before picking was supposed to start, the mains electricity poles hadn't even been put in, so we didn't have any electricity supply at all. Eventually, they came and put them in, but they had a good bollocking to get them up! It was a bit close, especially as we had cancelled the pickers."



Liverpool boy learns the way of the countryside

Part 2 of George Disley's life working in agriculture in the Golden Valley.

George started work in Herefordshire as a farm labourer in 1951 aged 15, working for Verdun Lloyd. In 1954 the family moved to Cothill Farm, Turnastone. George and his fellow worker John 'lived in' and had breakfast and lunch with the Lloyds but the divisions between employer and worker never faltered.

"Breakfast would be seven in the morning, and finish by half-past. Lloydie didn't rush his breakfast – he'd sit there and eat his breakfast, but we had to be out by half past seven. A lot of the farmers round here in them days, if you weren't there on the dot, they would dock your wages or send you home even and tell you to come back the next day. And if you did it twice you got the sack! Lunch was always twelve o'clock.

"You see it was their rules, not yours. It was seven in the morning to five at night. That was the rules, and we didn't come back in till five o'clock. In the wintertime when it's dark, we'd be doing the cattle, we'd get 'em all done perhaps by about quarter to five, we'd just sit in the Landrover waiting till five o'clock. Oh no, you didn't just walk in when you felt like it. Aye, you never knocked off early.

"Tea would be put on the table. It was a loaf of bread and butter and jam.

"The only time we ate with Lloyd and Mrs Lloyd would be breakfast and lunch. Tea they always went in the big room, and they had supper in the big room. We didn't have supper, we used to have a cup of tea or something. Me and John, we used to go and buy a few cakes off the baker – we were hungry lads in them days, weren't we?

"It was a funny set up in one way, how we ate meals and that. And if they threw a party we were never invited. They always had a New Year's Eve party, and we were never invited. We used to feel a bit miffed, but this was the way of separating the bosses from the boys, wasn't it?"



George had learnt many agricultural skills growing up on the hill farm in Wales where he was evacuated, aged 5. But moving to start work for Verdun Lloyd on his Herefordshire farm, aged 15, he had to learn to do some things differently.

"The biggest shock I had when I went down was lifting the straw bales because up country, we didn't have bales of any sort. All our straw and hay were loose. When I took the bale of hay for the sheep it was a bit of a lump, but when I went to get a bale of

straw to litter the cows, they were wired, and they were long, and they were packed. I remember pitching a fork into it and it nearly lifted me off the ground! I did struggle until I got used to it.

"I had to learn the Hereford style of working. Verdy showed me how to plough with a tractor. Up in Wales there were no tractors except on Noyadd Farm and I'd ploughed with horses and a swing one-furrow. Well, I came down to a Fordson Major, and a two-furrow plough. It was a trailer-drawn, two-furrow plough with this Standard Fordson Major. I learned how to start it. That was a tricky affair. I remember going down to the gate with the trailer behind and knocking the gate post! There was me, so excited, driving along then, BANG! Hit the gate post – oh dear...

"I learned to do crop and pleach up country, but when I came down to Hereford, I had to learn stake and pleach. I taught myself watching an old chap by the name of Ted Powell. He was laying a hedge between us and the boundary with Cothill. I was working out in the fields there and he was hedging, and I was watching and that's where I picked it up. Lloyd said to us one day he wanted a hedge laid down in the Pikes. There were hedging lessons at Chanston Court, so he said he was going to send John down for some lessons. While he was down, I was out laying a hedge! Lloyd came down and he said, 'Well, I don't think I need to send you!'. That's how you learn a lot of things. You watched first, you remembered, and then you did it. All the jobs I ever did were self-taught."

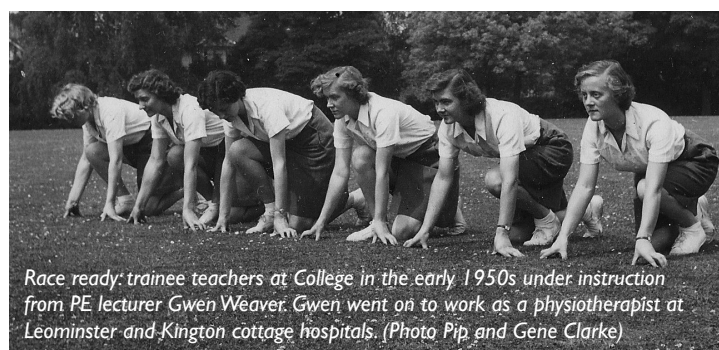
A dip into Herefordshire Lore's archives

Eggs for victory at Hereford College of Education

Eighty years ago, in 1943, lecturer Miss Shrubsole started a new war-time horticulture course at Hereford College of Education. She was assisted by two Land Army women, a sty of pigs and a flock of hens housed in the College gardens and orchard.

The all-women institution, opened in 1902, was adapting to its wartime role. As the College cellars were turned into air raid shelters, teams of fire watchers (one lecturer to three students) started their nightly vigils. Children were drafted in to 'play hurt' for gas warfare courses and the College garages were repurposed as a gas-cleansing post.

Former student Miss G. Meredith opened a day nursery for the College Estate mums making munitions at Rotherwas while volunteers with the Housewives Service Scheme held demonstrations on dealing with incendiary bombs (they



were to be smothered with sand mats) or toured the town collecting money for the Red Cross Penny-a-Week Fund and War Weapons Weeks.

The hens remained popular with the College's 140 students. As one visiting lecturer pointed out: 'Anyone can give a lecture, but only a hen can lay a breakfast egg.'

These notes come from our extensive collection of over 200 face-to-face interviews, several thousand photographs and many, many memories currently being archived for the Herefordshire Record and Archives Centre at Rotherwas.

The Betty Webb Young Historian Award

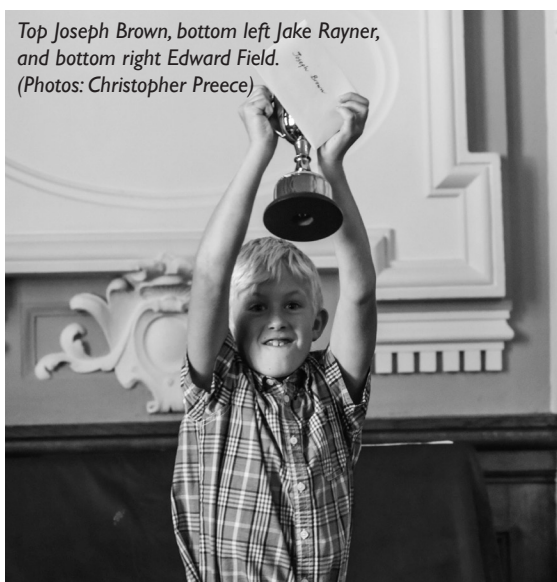
We were delighted to award prizes for our Young Historian Award at the Hereford History Day. Some of the stories were extraordinary. Here is a snapshot of our top three.

First Prize: Joseph Brown (year 4, Riverside) on his great-grandfather, another Joseph – Joseph Steward, 1918-1956. His Worcester family pharmacy is now on show at Worcester Museum.

Second Prize: Jake Rayner (Riverside) writes: "We are not proud of my great-grandad's actions, but he is family after all." This was 23-year-old German soldier Fritz Hartman, killed in the bitter battle of Monte Cassino. Fritz's wife was Jewish and had to hide from the Nazi authorities after Fritz died.

Third Prize: Edward Field is remembered in Harley Walton's entries (Stretton Sugwas). Edward is pictured at Stretton School and later, serving with the Home Guard. Five Good Attendance medals are also on show from Harley

Top Joseph Brown, bottom left Jake Rayner, and bottom right Edward Field.
(Photos: Christopher Preece)



– his great-granny never missed a day's school!

Other entries included:

Callum Parkin's (Stretton Sugwas) grandfather Nick fell for Indian-born beauty queen Patricia after seeing her photo in a newspaper. He arranged to meet her ... and they were soon married!

Michael Parkin (Stretton Sugwas) tells us how his dad George survived being attacked by a crocodile on a fishing trip!

Noah, Toby and Otilie Hicks (Stretton Sugwas) were especially proud of their family relation Graham Roberts, Hereford's fifth – and final – city surveyor, Freeman of the City, author, and the man who oversaw the building of Greyfriars Bridge and the opening of the inner ring road.

Christmas presents ideas from Herefordshire Lore



Take a look at the back page to see the list of our publications. Signed copies available. If you would like to buy a subscription as a gift (£15 per year) we can provide a special card.

Cara-Diane (Stretton Sugwas) and Sgt Frank Lloyd. Former Bulmers' man Sgt Frank Lloyd became a wireless operator and rear gunner on Halifax bombing missions, Cara-Diane tells us. Frank had six brothers and sisters – and they all served in the Forces.

Harry Francis (Stretton Sugwas) celebrates the life of Birmingham-born grandad, Gordon Wade. The Leading Aircraftman, captured by the Japanese, survived dreadful conditions as a prisoner-of-war. He survived to tell the tale. Unlike so many comrades.

Congratulations to all our young people for their entries.

Forgotten Hereford figure who helped bring down wartime government, is remembered by his American granddaughter

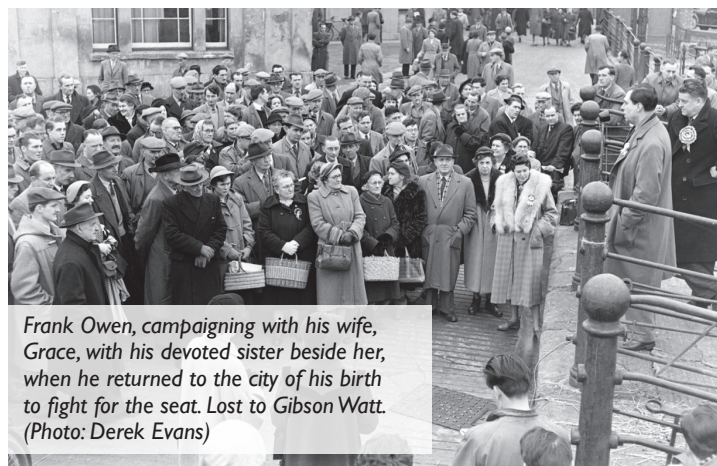
Frank Owen (4 November 1905 – 23 January 1979) was a British journalist, writer, novelist and radical Liberal Member of Parliament. He was Liberal MP for Hereford between 1929 and 1931. He was also an editor of the Evening Standard and the Daily Mail and was awarded the OBE in 1946. At the age of twenty-three, he became the youngest Member of Parliament ever elected. He was an enigmatic fellow most known as being one of a secret group of writers who exposed and brought down Neville Chamberlain when they wrote the book *Guilty Men*, a vehement retort to the government's Munich Agreement and appeasement. The book sold hundreds of thousands of copies as soon as it hit the stands.

Frank's granddaughter, Mallory O'Shaughnessy, recently visited Hereford to scatter her mother's ashes (Patricia, Frank's daughter) at the site of the Black Swan, where he was born, where Frank's father was a publican and brewer. A Cambridge graduate, he enjoyed the 1920s in London, mixing with the likes of Douglas Fairbanks Snr.

He married a Boston woman, Grace, but was known to have a number of girlfriends. Patricia's mother was one of them, and he remained in touch for much of her life.

Mallory: "Frank was my grandfather. My mother, Iris Patricia Owen was her birth name, was born to Margaret Florence (Madge) Baker in 1931, and Frank was the father. He is listed on her birth certificate and was involved on and off in her life, but he and Madge never married.

"She and Frank dated throughout the late 1920s and had a very tempestuous relationship, nearly marrying twice. Frank



Frank Owen, campaigning with his wife, Grace, with his devoted sister beside her, when he returned to the city of his birth to fight for the seat. Lost to Gibson Watt. (Photo: Derek Evans)

and Madge continued to have a relationship even after he was married to Grace, and Madge was married to another."

Patricia, however, had her own extraordinary life: "She fell in with a group known as the Paris Beatniks. Soon the Beatniks would migrate to the US, as would she. In her early twenties, she went over to the US to study Dianetics. She was sent to study with the aid of Frank. She met her first husband, Ted Phoenix, at the Dianetics headquarters. Ted and Patricia became part of an inner circle of the writer L. Ron Hubbard during the time when Dianetics was shifting to Scientology, a religion they helped transition Dianetics into. It was short-lived, however, and in later life, she discovered transcendental meditation." *Editor's note: Mallory would love to hear from anyone who has any memory of Frank. Please do get in touch and we can pass on your messages.*



Mallory O'Shaughnessy with her husband, Michael, from Maine, USA

LETTERS

Edgar Street Road widening.

I was so pleased you included my memories and photographs of the secretarial course at the Hereford College of Further Education. I am now on a roll. I have found an old photograph of my father standing just inside his garage, Lewis's Garage on Edgar Street in around the early sixties. The garage was quite near the traffic lights and crossroads. I wonder if any of your readers remember it? The building looks very run down and shabby because it had been compulsorily purchased, together with adjoining shops on each side for road widening and showing the old city wall. I lived with my parents in the flat above the garage, the entrance was in Wall Street.

The other properties along there, going from memory, an antique shop, a hairdresser, a newsagent, and Dean's Grocery store on the corner. The other side of the garage were Foster & Impey Photographers, and Davies Dispensary.

As a child I remember animals being driven through the street on market day and on one occasion half a dozen young bullocks ran into the garage and it was very difficult to steer them out. I think all the buildings were demolished in approximately 1965.

Name supplied, Shropshire.



Hereford's bowling green is the oldest in the country



Len Higgins Snr and Jnr.

The oldest bowling green is continuously used.

Richard III was King of England in 1484, when bowls were first played at Hereford Bowling Green and Club. The game has continued since then without a break, making it the oldest continuously used bowling green in the country (some hint it could be the world, but that needs to be substantiated). This makes the club an astonishing 539 years old. A youthful Phil Holland is the longest-serving member today. He got involved with the club through his father-in-law and his father-in-law's father, Len Higgins Jnr and Snr. In his time as a member, Phil has seen significant changes. "One big change has been the etiquette around the dress code," he said. Men had to wear grey trousers, a tie, a shirt, and blazer. Ladies, when they were eventually permitted to play, had to wear skirts. But that has become more relaxed in the last 20 years.



Phil Holland back left standing in front of his father-in-law, Len Higgins

Up until 1971 it was a male-only club, and women were only permitted to make the teas! Cynthia Jones joined in 1976, a few years after women were permitted to play. She used to accompany her husband in her early days as a member, and was restricted to refreshments only, until the club moved with the times.

It was a very popular club, attracting local businessmen in their hoards, with membership boasting upwards of 150 members. "There was a waiting list to join in those days," said Phil. Past members included some well-known local characters, including hairdresser Vernon 'Teasy Weasy' Jones, Len Oliver, the funeral director and taxi driver, and Stan Whittle, the local bobby.

The club would love to welcome new members to their bowling club in the middle of Hereford. A little piece of history worth preserving.

Wiggins' Christmas Party 1954



Barbara Preedy sent in this photo from Wiggins' Christmas party of 1954. Barbara is seated in the middle of the front row. Can you name any of the other women?

Bulmers' cider cellar



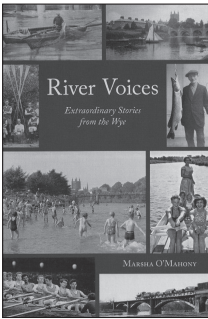
Who can enlighten us on the comings and goings of the Bulmer Vaults? Please get in touch with your tales and anecdotes.

Cattle market at Ledbury

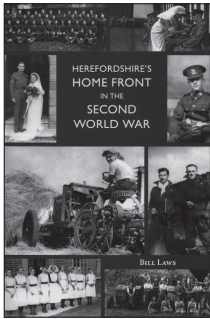


Ledbury's cattle market was opened in Market Street in 1887 by the Ledbury Markets and Fairs Company. Auctioneer Jim Large (who shared this photo) can be seen holding an auction in the middle of the picture. It was also used for hop root sales. The Market closed and the site was sold for development in 1999.

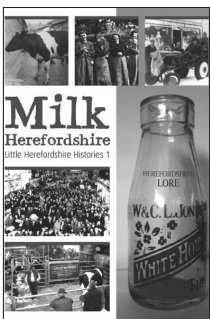
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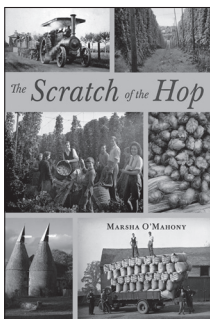
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