



Hold the date!

The Bromsgrove Society is pleased to be hosting the
WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY FORUM DAY
on **Saturday, 11th Nov 2023 from 9.30 pm to 4.00 pm** at
Bromsgrove Methodist Centre, Stratford Road, B60 1AS.

Topics and speakers for the day will be:

The Bromsgrove Guild’s Great War: Quintin Watt. The impact of the war on the firm and its employees, many of whom were craftsmen from the continent. Also how the war provided work for the company in the 1920s through the construction of the many war memorials that were erected in Britain and the wider world.

Bromsgrove at War on the Home Front: Pat Tansell. Life in Bromsgrove on the Home Front during both World Wars, with references also to the Boer War. During her research into the subject, Pat used archived copies of the Bromsgrove Messenger and information available via Ancestry, FindMyPast and other resources.

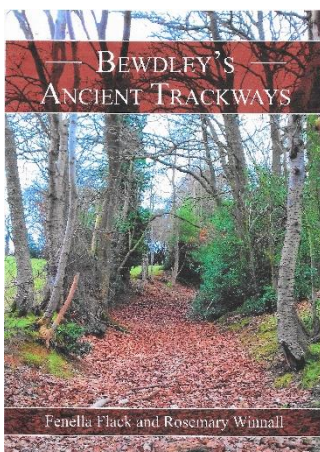
Broadway - Worcestershire’s Poshest Village: Julian Hunt – Broadway has one foot in the Cotswolds and the other in the Vale of Evesham. Its farmers grew wealthy from cultivating the rich soil of the vale and rearing sheep on the hills. Their rambling Cotswold-stone farmhouses have mostly been converted into country houses and Broadway's inns and tea shops now cater for tourists from around the world.

Entrance fee £10 to include tea/coffee. Hopefully, other Worcestershire groups will be present to advertise their wares!

Bookings will open in September. Please check back soon.

Searching for the past in the landscape

Bewdley is believed to have developed as an important settlement because there was a ford through the Severn. The river has (or had) many shoals, that is. shallow areas, but not all were suitable as safe crossing places. The shoal at the end of Lax Lane in Bewdley almost certainly was. Animals were the first to find the fords and humans quickly followed them. Thus tracks developed. Can we still find traces of them in the landscape?



Rosemary Winnall and I set out to answer this question. We looked at the shoals and also at the work of historians who had described some long distance routes. These trackways reveal their age by being on ridgeways (much safer and easier than valleys) and by the prehistoric finds discovered near them.

We have been able to build up a picture of “Bewdley Ancient Trackways” and we have put our findings into a pocket sized, spiral bound book. It costs £7.50 and is for sale at Wyre Forest Books and Bewdley Museum. We are also happy to talk to groups about this fascinating subject.

Heather Flack (aka Fenella Flack)

VALE OF EVESHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY (VEHS)

Evesham Historical Tapestry

Evesham has a very rich and exciting history and a project which has taken two years to complete has now been unveiled in the town. The brainchild of Sandra Capaldi, the Evesham Tapestry was made by Sandra herself with the assistance of VEHS chairman Carmel Langridge and a dedicated team of needleworkers who met every Wednesday. It includes pieces by Garage Art, Harvington First School and Evesham and Hampton Cubs – a real community effort.



The tapestry depicts the history of the town from neolithic times to the present day, the story being told over three banners, each fifteen feet long – 45 feet in total.



As well as events in the town's history (some well-known, others more obscure), along the bottom it shows the working lives of ordinary people through the centuries – the unsung heroes of our story through disease, hunger, hardship and war, as well as through the happy times.

It can be seen currently in the Evesham Abbey Trust's hub in the Riverside Centre every Wednesday between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm.

Heritage Open Day 9 & 10 September, between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at St James Church, Badsey

Come along and see our historic church, its monuments and Commonwealth war graves. The bell tower will be open for tours, and members of the Badsey Society will tell you about recently discovered medieval graffiti and the interactive Badsey and Aldington Trail, whilst members of the church will be on hand to point out the memorials and other points of interest within the main body of the building.

The churchyard contains several Commonwealth war graves, and visitors will be able to look at biographies of each soldier, and of other WW1 soldiers buried at Badsey.

Tours of the bell tower will be conducted by members of Badsey Bellringers. As well as a fine peal of six bells, the tower also contains a wide variety of medieval graffiti which was discovered during a survey by members of the Badsey Society last summer. Details are contained in the Badsey Society's exhibition in the church.

When visitors have finished looking around the church and churchyard, they will be able to explore the villages of Badsey using the Badsey and Aldington trail. This uses QR codes accessible via smartphones to give short pieces of information about the villages, their buildings and history, and flora and fauna. Visitors can determine their own route. This is suitable for people of all ages.

The Hill & Evans Vinegar Line and the Worcester Gas Works

Sept 16th – join Chris Wilkinson at 10.45 for his talk at 11am and a walk at 1pm for Heritage Open Days!

Find out more about the industrial history of the Shrub Hill area, now designated a regeneration zone. Two chemists founded the world's largest vinegar works in 1830, later producing 2 million gallons of malt vinegar annually. To aid distribution, in 1872 a railway track linked the Great Filling Hall with Shrub Hill station sidings, crossing Pheasant Street and the canal. The building is now Grade II listed.

Join Chris for a fascinating illustrated talk at 11am in the History and Heritage Pod in Crowngate Shopping Centre, above the bus station – he'll also lead a walk around the location at 1pm, meeting at Shrub Hill Station, outside the booking hall at 1pm. Just turn up and bring your friends...

Jan Scrine

Worcester Civic Society

www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk

John Wyer – A Motorsport Genius from Kidderminster

John Wyer (1909-1989) was a leading figure in motor racing team management throughout the 1950's, 1960s and early 1970s, a meticulous planner who could also think clearly and make smart decisions in the heat of battle. He applied his natural fastidiousness to preparing for every eventuality and his engineer's mind to suggesting improvements in car design, engines and components. A natural leader, Wyer assembled teams of the best engineers and mechanics around him and this gave him access to unrivalled information to shape his race strategies.

He was also known for his patrician air, razor-sharp one-liners, and ability to cut racing drivers down to size with the piercing stare which earned him the nickname "Death Ray". Wyer had, by his own admission, "an inability to suffer fools with any show of pleasure," but the results of his endeavours in the field of long-distance sportscar racing are unrivalled.

John Wyer was born in Kidderminster on 11 December 1909 into a reasonably affluent family; his father was a motor trade pioneer with connections to the Sunbeam Motor Company in Wolverhampton. As a small boy, John was initially interested in trains, but in his preparatory school at Saltburn in Yorkshire, he



had access to friends who were interested in cars and motoring magazines, so that his interests began to match those of his father. Whilst at school he witnessed the Saltburn Speed Trials and the exploits of Malcolm Campbell, Parry Thomas and Raymond Mays, so the racing bug "bit" at an early age.

Later, when it was time to leave school in the mid 1920's, John persuaded his father to use his influence with Sunbeam and he was taken on by the company as a pupil apprentice. It was a sound foundation for development of his engineering and management skills but in 1933, a year after completion of his apprenticeship, Sunbeam was taken over by Rootes and John Wyer left to join Solex Carburettors as a Sales and Service Engineer. He stayed with Solex

until 1945, rising through the ranks of that company with periods working in Paris, India, and London and providing support to the military during the war years.

Having acquired a Bugatti during his time at Solex, John left the company in 1945 to set himself up in business as a Bugatti service agent. Despite support for his venture from the Bugatti Owners Club, John found the post-war business world difficult on his own and when he was invited to become Managing Director of Monaco Motors, an established racing preparation business in Watford, he was happy to accept the offer.

John had tried hill-climbing his Bugatti and a subsequent HRG sports car and although he enjoyed competing, he realised that at the age of 38, it was too late for a career as a racing driver and his talents were better used in race preparation and team management. Monaco supported private entrants running Aston Martin sports cars in international events with John Wyer prominent in managing race preparation, transport and pit work support at each event. However, the business struggled to make a profit and John Wyer sold it at a realistic price to a Vauxhall dealer in 1950.

At this point David Brown invited John to become racing team manager at Aston Martin.

Throughout the years 1950 to 1959, Aston Martin gradually improved the standard of both their road cars and racing cars with John Wyer providing a significant input into these improvements.



Parnell.

The objective of the racing team was to gain a prestigious win at the Le Mans 24 hour race, also competing in the other domestic and international sports car events such as at Nurburgring, Sebring, Monza, the Mille Miglia, the Targa Florio, Goodwood and Spa-Francorchamps. However, despite some fine results in each season, a win at Le Mans eluded the team until 1959, when drivers Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby in their DBR1 car (pictured) finally achieved the victory at Le Mans sought by David Brown. John Wyer recruited some very fine drivers during the period of his management of the racing team including household names like Stirling Moss and Jack Brabham, plus Peter Collins, Tony Brooks, Peter Walker and Reg



Local boy Peter Collins, (Pictured in woolly hat with Reg Parnell, Tony Brooks and JW), was recruited by John Wyer in 1952, as a regular in the team until the end of the 1956 season, when his commitments to Ferrari took precedence. Peter delivered some fine results for Aston Martin including 3rd in Argentina (1954) 1st at Silverstone (1954), 2nd at Le Mans and Silverstone (1955) and 3rd at Goodwood (1955).

Apart from the Le Mans win in 1959, the team also won the World Sports car Championship in that year. After 1959, David Brown's objectives having been achieved, the Aston Martin racing effort was scaled down and John Wyer undertook the role of Technical Director and Chief Executive, overseeing occasional forays into racing.

In April 1963, during a visit to USA, John was persuaded by representatives of the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn and by his Texan ex-driver, Carroll Shelby, to participate in a project to build a Le Mans winning Ford sports car, the "GT40" project. He was employed as European Manager, Special Vehicles, to oversee the design and development work and to subsequently manage a race programme. This was initially based at Lola Cars premises in Bromley (Lola undertook much of the early design work), then at a purpose-equipped Ford Advance Vehicles ("FAV") headquarters in Slough.

The project was beset with difficulties arising from Ford USA's impatience with some indifferent early racing results in 1964 and from Ford executives interfering with the work in England. Also, it is probable that John Wyer's forthright nature and approach sat uncomfortably with the corporate politics at Ford USA.

From 1965, the main factory racing effort was switched to Shelby in USA, with FAV continuing to build production GT40 cars and to support private racing entrants. Ford USA was ultimately successful, having thrown huge sums of money at its factory racing effort, winning Le Mans in 1966 (the subject of a recent movie) and in 1967 with its mighty 7 litre cars. Ford then promptly withdrew from the racing scene as a factory team.

However, John Wyer was determined to prove Ford wrong, believing that with a bit more effort and patience, Ford could have won with standard 5 litre engined GT40 cars. In 1966 he reached a settlement with Ford, whereby he took over the remaining production of GT40 cars and European racing support and set up his own company JW Automotive Engineering ("JWA"). He also managed to persuade Gulf Oil to sponsor a racing programme. The rest, one might say, is history.

Initially the team raced lightweight "Mirage" prototype sportscars derived from the GT40, with some success. However, due to a rule change that came in effect for 1968, prototypes were limited to 3 litres, while sportscars could have 5 litre engines if at least 50 had been built.

This applied to the two-year-old Ford GT40s, which were then suitably prepared by the JWA Gulf team. Surprisingly, they won the World Sportscar Championship for Ford in 1968, even though the Porsche team were considered favourites at the beginning of the season. The superior power of the 5 litre V8 engines in the GT40s allowed them to win on fast tracks, proving to Ford USA that with patience, hard work and careful race engineering, it was not necessary to spend ridiculous amounts of money, or to use bigger 7 litre engines to be successful.

The team also won Le Mans two years in a row in 1968 with drivers Pedro Rodríguez and Lucien Bianchi and in 1969 with Jacky Ickx and Jackie Oliver, using exactly the same car, GT40 chassis No. 1075, which is now a priceless museum exhibit.



Having beaten the Porsche works team consistently in 1968 and 1969, John Wyer was approached by Porsche to run a racing programme using their new type 917, which had raced during 1969 and was very fast, but proved difficult to drive and unreliable. An arrangement was agreed for 1970 and 1971. Development work, particularly to the aerodynamics of the car, was carried out during the winter of 1969/70 and revised Porsche 917K short-tailed (Kurz) cars were ready to race in Gulf colours at the start of the 1970 season.



Battling with works Ferrari 512's and the other Porsche teams, the JWA Gulf-Porsche 917's, raced by Jo Siffert, Brian Redman, Leo Kinnunen, Pedro Rodríguez, Richard Attwood, Herbert Mueller, Jackie Oliver and Derek Bell, earned seven out of Porsche's nine victories in the 10 races of the 1970 season, and five out of Porsche's eight victories in the 11 races of the 1971 season. During this period, the team's best result at Le Mans was a second place in 1971, but the team won the 24 Hours of Daytona in both 1970 and 1971. Fictitiously, a Gulf-Porsche 917K won in the cult

Steve McQueen movie Le Mans, making the team and its illustrious pale blue and orange Gulf colours even more famous.

In 1972, 5-litre sports cars like the Porsche 917 were banned and John Wyer's team were forced to adapt to the new 3 litre engine regulations. JWA returned to building Gulf-Mirage prototypes again, using the Cosworth DFV engine. The successful F1-engine took some time to be suitably adapted for long distance sportscar use, but with reliability eventually proved by a win at Spa in 1973 and some good finishes elsewhere, Gulf drivers Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell achieved a further win at Le Mans in 1975 at the third attempt.

In 1976, John Wyer retired from active participation in motor racing at the age of 67 and lived for the rest of his life in Arizona in the company of his wife "Tottie" (pictured) until his death in 1989.



From the late 1950's to the present day, Britain's motorsport industry has evolved to a world leading position, due to the efforts of many people, including early Grand Prix pioneers like Colin Chapman, John Cooper and Cosworth Engineering's Keith Duckworth.

The unrivalled achievements of John Wyer, including world championships, four Le Mans wins and numerous other successes in long distance sportscar racing, added immeasurably to what is now a thriving broad-based UK industry. His work also led to many evolutionary improvements in everyday road cars.

David Simons

The Red Hill Milestone, Worcester

the incoming Mayor of Worcester Louis Stephen congratulated Debbie Branford, apprentice stone-mason at Worcester Cathedral at the ceremony to unveil the new milestone at Red Hill, on the A44 Whittington Road, beside the Oak Apple pub; this took place on Saturday 20th May. The milestone had been commissioned by Milestone Society member Jan Scrine, funded from the talks she had given topped up with a Local Partnership contribution from the Society, to raise awareness of the significance of milestones, especially with young people. The attached plaque commemorates the Worcester Turnpike Trust, which charged tolls to maintain and improve 160 miles of radial roads between 1725 and 1875, by which time the railways had taken away the lucrative long-distance traffic.



Debbie explained that she had enjoyed researching the variety of local milestones to determine the shape to sculpt for this unexpected commission. The Mayor noted the importance of the skills that she was learning, commenting that heritage is not permanent and our historic buildings such as the Cathedral, Guildhall and milestones require on-going restoration and repair; Debbie would be part of the future in keeping our heritage alive.

The new milestone also marks the WEG's Wild about Worcester Way and the Worcester Civic Society's Heritage Trail around the city. The sunny unveiling ceremony was attended by representatives of a wide range of organisations, including the WEG, the Civic Society and The Milestone Society, as well as former and current councillors, Worcestershire Highways and their contractors Ringway Co (UK) who helpfully installed the milestone. Lively conversations continued after the event, sharing local knowledge and raising awareness of the historic significance of these waymarkers, a reminder of the ways our forebears travelled for work, commerce or leisure. Long may the partnership with Ringway continue !

Jan Scrine, Worcestershire and Herefordshire Rep

Louis, Debbie and Jan on a Lovely Summer's Day