

FORUM FOCUS



MARCH 2024

‘REVISITING WORCESTERSHIRE’S PAST’

A Conference organised by the University of Worcester and Worcestershire Historical Society

Saturday 6 April and Sunday 7 April 2024 9.30 am – 5.00 pm
St John’s Campus, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6

This exciting conference is dedicated to the re-interpretation of Worcestershire’s history. It seeks to involve the broad community of those who are interested in the county’s past.



‘REVISITING WORCESTERSHIRE’S PAST’

The emphasis throughout will be on how the concerns of, and the methods deployed by, historians have changed over the years and upon sources and our approaches to them

Sixteen experts will deliver papers on a wide range of topics including vernacular architecture, landscape history, the liturgy at Worcester Cathedral, football in the county, Worcestershire peasants in the middle-ages, the origins of the Worcestershire gentry, Worcestershire parliamentarians in the seventeenth-century, printing and Worcestershire elections in the eighteenth-century, the history of Worcestershire ceramics, money in Worcestershire history, and Worcester in the 1950s.

There will also be an exhibition of local sources provided by the Worcestershire County Council Libraries, Archive & Archaeology Service.

For the full programme and booking details, please contact:
Joy Morgan whshonsec@gmail.com or 07872 138135

Pete Jennings

This story is absolutely true.

Back in about 2009 I was on my way home from Kinver, Staffs, driving down the lane past the church. Suddenly, out of the narrow turn into the church car park, a huge sow pig ran out in front of my car. I braked hard and managed to come to a stop without hitting it. As there was a danger it would go onto the busier road further down or on into the village, I put my hazard warning lights on and got out of the car. The pig was in a bit of an anxious state, so it took a couple of minutes to get around the far side of her, cajole her back up the lane and through the opening from which she had emerged.

There was a moderate-sized gated field on the right, containing several other large sows, so it was evident that this was where the pig had escaped from.

However, there was no sign of how the sow might have escaped from the field and the gated turned out to be securely padlocked. While I pondered what to do with my charge, she started sniffing the air and walked up towards the church. I followed her up and a largish mint green estate car came into view. As I got closer it was clear that the tailgate of the car was open. I called out loudly in the hope that this indicated that someone else was around. Regrettably, there was no response. I continued calling out as I approached the car closely enough to see that there were two large sacks of unopened pig feed in the back.

Suddenly it became clear that this was what the wandering sow had scented on the air. Her pace increased and with surprising agility she launched herself into the back of the estate car and started to rip open the first of the feed bags.

The sow was such a tight fit in the back of the car and she was tucking in with such gusto that it was obvious I didn't stand a chance of getting her out of there. I called out several more times, still with no answer. As I was already getting towards being late to meet my wife as arranged, I could see only one solution.

I shut the tailgate of the car, thus ensuring that the sow could not escape again. I then went back to my car, got in and drove home. My apologies to the owner, but what else could I have done?

I have often wondered at the astonishment the owner of the car must have experienced when he returned to his car and found one his sows shut inside.

I hope that the sow hadn't messed up the inside so badly that he had to drive home with all the windows open. However, I bet that in the years since, it has earned him a pint or two and proved to be a real good yarn in the pub.

From Film to Freedom: The "Leica Freedom Train"

I have been interested in cameras and photography since my teenage years and I have always owned and used the best equipment that I could afford. My hobby has taught me that the best cameras were those made in countries that were once our enemies in World War II, namely Germany and Japan.

Recently, I downsized my camera collection, getting rid of big, heavy Canon SLR equipment, which I replaced with a small digital Leica camera. The interest in Leica equipment then grew and I have also obtained a 1950's Leica film camera, pictured here.



I assumed that as an old German company, Leitz, the makers of Leica equipment, would have a dark history during the Nazi period of the 1930's and 1940's; "least said, soonest mended", (so to speak). However, I am pleased to admit that my assumption was quite wrong and I have researched the history of the remarkable Leitz family and their famous optical company.

Ernst Leitz I (1843–1920) was originally from Baden and arrived at Wetzlar in 1864. He entered service there at the Optisches Institut, a company started by mathematician Carl Kellner.

Leitz had been trained as an instrument maker for physical and chemical apparatus and had several years' experience of making watches in Switzerland. Initially, he was a part shareholder in the optical business (in 1865) but took over as sole owner in 1869 and continued it under his own name making optical instruments, particularly high quality microscopes. He introduced serial production, raising sales volume rapidly after 1871 and continuing to refine his microscopes to clients' needs.

By the end of the 19th century, the Leitz optical company had a worldwide reputation and its product range at that time included several other optical instruments in addition to microscopes, including levels and theodolites. In the

early years of the 20th century Leitz introduced eight-hour days and founded a health insurance society for employees. In 1913, the company produced the world's first fully functional binocular microscope.

After World War I however, the economic situation in the Weimar Republic deteriorated rapidly and severely affected the Leitz firm's trading position. Ernst Leitz died in July 1920 and the leadership of the company was then taken-up by his son, Ernst Leitz II (1871–1956). At this time, Leitz employed approximately 1,400 people.

In 1924 Ernst Leitz II decided that in spite of the weak German economy, a prototype film camera designed by his employee and friend Oskar Barnack (1879-1936), should go into production. From his experience of working on cinematic equipment, Barnack had customised 35mm film for photographic use in still cameras. Since he considered an image ratio of 2:3 to be aesthetically correct, the resulting format was 24mm in height and 36mm wide and most people who have used more modern 35mm film cameras will recognise this in their negatives and slides. To accommodate this format, he constructed a camera designed for casual snapshot use, in which the film was wound horizontally.

This design formed the basis of the original "Leica 0" camera, as presented at the 1925 Spring Fair in Leipzig and the success of the camera was instant and exceeded all expectations. The "Barnack Leica" 35mm film camera saved the company, became world famous and continued to be produced in improved versions (0, I, II & III), until the late 1950's. My Leica IIIf camera dates from 1955, at a time when Leitz employed approximately 6,000 people. In 2018, one of the original Barnack Leica 0 prototype cameras sold for an amazing £2.1m. (Oskar Barnack is pictured here working at his desk in the Leitz factory at Wetzlar).



The Leitz Wetzlar company had a tradition of enlightened behaviour toward its workers throughout its early history and on into the 1930's. Pensions, sick leave and health insurance were all instituted and Leitz depended for its work force upon generations of skilled employees, many of whom were Jewish.

As soon as Adolf Hitler was named chancellor of Germany in 1933, Ernst Leitz II began receiving anxious calls from Jewish associates, asking for help to get them and their families out of the country. As non-Jews, Leitz and his family were immune to Nazi Germany's Nuremberg Laws, which restricted the movement of Jews and limited their professional activities.



To help his Jewish workers and colleagues, Leitz (pictured) quietly established what has become known among historians of the Holocaust as the "Leica Freedom Train," a covert means of allowing Jews to leave Germany in the guise of Leitz employees being transferred overseas. Employees, retailers, family members, even friends of family members were "assigned" to Leitz sales offices in France, Britain, Hong Kong and the United States. Leitz's activities intensified after the "Kristallnacht" pogroms of November 1938, during which synagogues and Jewish shops were burned across Germany.

Leitz was an internationally recognized brand that reflected credit on the newly resurgent Third Reich. The company produced range-finders and other optical systems for the German military. Also, the Nazi government urgently needed hard currency from abroad, and Leitz's single biggest market for optical goods was the United States.

German "employees" disembarking from the ocean liner Bremen at a New York pier went to Leitz's Manhattan office, where they were helped to find work. Each new arrival was given a Leica camera, which could be sold if necessary and the refugees were paid a wage until they could find work. Out of this migration came designers, repair technicians, salespeople, marketers and writers for the photographic press. The "Leica

Freedom Train" was at its height in 1938 and early 1939, delivering groups of refugees to New York every few weeks until the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, when Germany closed its borders.

Unfortunately, members of the Leitz family and company suffered for their humanitarian efforts. A top executive, Alfred Turk, was jailed for working to help Jews and freed only after the payment of a large bribe. Leitz's daughter, Dr Elsie Kuhn-Leitz (1903-1985), a lawyer, (also pictured), was imprisoned by the Gestapo in 1943 after she was caught at the border, helping Jewish women cross into Switzerland. She was eventually freed but was treated roughly in the course of questioning. She also fell under suspicion when she attempted to improve the living conditions of 700 to 800 Ukrainian slave workers, all of them women, who had been consigned to work in the Leitz plant during the 1940's. Ernst Leitz II had to balance the interests of his business with his benevolent activities and like Oskar Schindler, he joined the Nazi Party. Many prominent people joined the party not because they agreed with Nazi policies, but because doing so allowed them to be left alone. They could continue running their businesses "under the radar" of Nazi scrutiny, thereby avoiding the unwanted attentions of the Gestapo. It is estimated that the Leitz family saved the lives of approximately 1,000 to 1,200 people, broadly similar to the number saved by Schindler.



However, Leitz family members sought no publicity for their heroic efforts, so the story was kept under wraps until after the deaths of everyone in the immediate family. They didn't want their deeds to seem like a publicity stunt, as Ernst Leitz considered that in providing aid to his Jewish associates, he was simply doing what he believed was right. His son Günther Leitz later said: *"He felt responsible for his workers, their families, for our neighbours in Wetzlar"*. Nonetheless, it is clear that a man with nothing to gain and everything to lose took a quiet stand against tyranny and got away with it for as long as he possibly could.

This humanitarian work came to light many years later, when Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith, a Californian student at Leo Baeck College, London and a keen photographer, saw Leitz refugees mentioned in a photography magazine. In 2002, having fully researched the story, he published a book entitled: *"The Greatest Invention of the Leitz Family: The Leica Freedom Train"*. He has also published a book about Dr Elsie Kuhn-Leitz entitled *"Elsie's War: A Story of Courage in Nazi Germany"* published in 2006.

Elsie Kuhn-Leitz received numerous honours for her humanitarian efforts both during the Nazi era and for her post-war work; among them the Officier d'Honneur des Palmes Académiques from France in 1965, the Aristide Briand Medal from the European Academy in the 1970s and a Courage to Care Award from the Anti-Defamation League.

Unfortunately, Ernst Leitz II died in 1956 and was long gone by the time his efforts in saving persecuted people from the Nazi regime became widely known. The family's reluctance to allow his benevolent efforts to be publicised probably explains why in the 1990's, the company ironically paid reparations for using slave labour during WW2, in response to a claim made by Holocaust survivors.

Nonetheless, in 2007, after Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith had published his books, Ernst Leitz II was also posthumously awarded a Courage to Care Award by the Anti-Defamation League.

David Simons

"WEBBS – A LOCAL SUCCESS STORY"

By Diana Clutterbuck

Edward Webb of Wordsley, Stourbridge, was related to the Glass Manufacturing family, although his father William was a farmer. He worked with his father but in 1844, aged 34, he went into partnership with a cousin, as flint glass manufacturers, taking charge of the commercial side of the business. The partnership ended c1850 and Edward remained in control of Holloway End Glassworks, employing 100 hands. He also had an interest in milling with his brother William.



When William died in 1866, Edward and his two sons, trading as Edward Webb and Sons, developed Ivy Mills in Wordsley, as malt, wool, hop and corn seed merchants, later branching out into vegetable and flower seeds. His younger son (Edward junior) managed the glass manufacture. The elder son, William George, also became MP for Kingswinford, and was Chairman of North Worcestershire Breweries.

The firm's buildings fronted Plant Street, off High Street, and extended northwards to Brewery Street (today's B4180), Trial grounds with 10 large greenhouses spread westwards behind the Wordsley factory across Mill

Street with access to the canal. In the 1870's Edward junior bought 1,200 acres at Hill Farm, Kinver, which became a specialist seed farm.

Fertilisers were vital to the nursery industry so in 1894 Edward Webb and Sons acquired [Proctor and Ryland](#), a bone manure works in Saltney, near Chester. About this time the firm were appointed Seedsmen to Queen Victoria. Hill Farm was enlarged to 1,500 acres between 1904-1908, and in 1911 Edward junior bought Highgrove Farm at Kinver to expand the trial grounds.

Webbs were awarded an RHS Gold Medal at Chelsea Flower Show in 1914. By the 1920's they were producing seed potatoes in Scotland, hops in Kent, and cereals in various places, and in 1925, developed a Garden Seeds Trial ground at Astwood and Walmer Farms, Wychbold. The head office and main factory remained in Wordsley, processing and packing seeds.

In 1935, Major William Harcourt Webb (son of William George), moved the firm to its present site on the opposite side of the A38, then a 27 acre gravel pit and very stony field, After an enormous amount of work, by summer 1937 people came on foot or bus to admire the sea of blooms adjoining the main road, where on Saturday afternoons an enterprising man with a tricycle sold ice creams outside the main gates. During WW2, the firm was the primary supplier of grass seed and fertiliser for airfields, chosen to withstand heavy aircraft traffic.

Harcourt Webb's son Michael Webb sold the seed business in the 1960's to Bees Seeds to make way for the beginnings of the garden centre, and in the 1970s Richard Webb (the founder's great grandson) and his wife Marigold spearheaded the development of the horticultural centre, visitor attraction and award-winning garden centre we know today, as well as two further garden centres at Hagley and Cheltenham. Now Richard's son Edward is in charge of the family business.

The 1871 census shows Edward senior at The White House, Buckpool, Wordsley, aged 60, a Glass Master, Miller, Hop Seed and Corn Dealer.

Grace's Guide: Webb's Seeds of Wordsley, Stourbridge (also includes two adverts)

c1850 [Edward Webb](#) set up his business as a seed merchant in Wordsley, near Stourbridge.

c1910 [William Webb](#), Edward's grandson, was now running the business.

1925 At Wychbold, Worcestershire, a seed testing ground was set up.

1937 Seedsmen and fertiliser manufacturers. ^[1]

1939 See [Aircraft Industry Suppliers](#)

1960s Company merged with [Bees](#), another seed firm and transferred to Chester.

2004 [Unwin's Seeds](#), which then owned the company, was acquired by [Westland Horticulture](#) based in Northern Ireland.

Ann Taylor

We have all now got used to the decimal system that was introduced in February 1971. But as this article shows way back, people were trying to persuade the government of the day that decimalisation would be a good idea for everyone. But as with all new introductions, there would have been winners and losers.

This particular article only refers to money, but at the time there were also people that wanted weights and measures included as well.

Worcester Journal

4 March 1824

WEDNESDAY.-- Sir J. Wrottesley moved an Address to his Majesty, praying that he would institute an enquiry into the best mode of adapting coinage of the realm to a decimal scale. The Hon. Bart's plan was, to abolish the existing shillings, pence and half-pence, and to reduce the current coin into pounds, double shillings, and farthings. In this way 100 farthings would make a double shilling, and 10 double shillings, or 1,000 farthings, would amount to a pound; and pounds would be (arithmetically) into farthings, or farthings into pounds, by

simply adding or subtracting three ciphers to the right hand. The convenience of such a mode of keeping accounts could not be doubted, and it had been adopted in France for 30 years. Mr Wallace opposed the motion.

The present coinage was adapted to the understanding and the habits of the people, who, if the change were made, would not understand the value of the coin and would not use it; so that it would be necessary to call it in again, and to incur the expense of a new coinage, which would be very considerable.- Motion negatived without a division.

In the 1850's this subject was discussed in parliament again; this time it was put forward that not only the coinage went decimal but weight and measurement as well.

WLH Forum Day on November 11th

BROMSGROVE SOCIETY LOCAL HISTORY GROUP
INVITE YOU TO A
WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY FORUM DAY
on Saturday November 11th 2023
from 9.30 pm to 4.00 pm at
Bromsgrove Methodist Centre, Stratford Road, B60 1AS

Speakers on the day are -

Quintin Watt - The Bromsgrove Guild's Great War - the presentation focuses on the impact of the war on the firm & its employees, many of whom were craftsmen from the continent... it also focuses on how the war provided work for the company in the 1920s through the construction of the many war memorials that were erected in Britain & the wider world. **Quintin taught history at South Bromsgrove High School for 39 years. He has edited 2 books, including The Bromsgrove Guild, and written several articles for local history magazines.**

Pat Tansell - Bromsgrove at War on the Home Front - Pat will speak about life in Bromsgrove on the Home Front during both World Wars & will also include some references to the Boer War. During her research into the subject, Pat used archived copies of the Bromsgrove Messenger & information available via Ancestry, Find My Past & other online databases & resources. **Pat has lived in Bromsgrove all her life and is a retired Library Assistant. Her interest in local & family history began when she was 9, following a school lesson, in which she was asked to draw her family tree. Pat has been involved with various Bromsgrove Society Committees since the 1990s. She is currently Vice-Chairman & has previously served as Chairman.**

and offer lunch a virtual trip to

Broadway - Worcestershire's Poshest Village with Julian Hunt - Broadway has one loof in the Cotswolds & the other in the Vale of Evesham. Its farmers grew wealthy from cutting the rich soil of the vale & rearing sheep on the hills. Their rambling Cotswold-stone farmhouses have mostly been converted into country houses for the local gentry & Broadway is still the home of the North Cotswold Hunt kennels. Its coaching inn (The Lygon Arms) now caters for American tourists & although most of its antique shops have gone out of business, there are plenty of tea shops remaining to keep the visitors happy. **Julian Hunt was born in Romsley, Worcestershire, & was a local studies librarian in Oldham & Aylesbury. He has written books on North Wales, Lancashire Cotton Mills & several towns in Buckinghamshire. He was co-author with Jenny Townsend on the recently published Bromsgrove, the Story of a Market Town.**

Entrance Fee £10 - to include tea/coffee
Hopefully, other WLH groups will be present to advertise their wares!
For more info, - www.bsoc.co.uk or ring 01527 877227

It is such a good thing in life, according to the A team, back in the day, when a 'plan comes together'!!

Well, it happened on Saturday November 11th, 2023. We are very lucky to have an A team on our LH Committee. Months and months ago, Bromsgrove Society agreed to host the WLH Forum Annual Day.

-We have access to a superb venue at Bromsgrove Methodist Centre for our monthly talks.

-We have a great committee who work willingly and enthusiastically together.

-We have excellent speakers amongst our members.

So, what shall be the subject for the day?

Then we looked at the date again - November 11th - so there could only be one subject!

Quintin Watt & Pat Tansell stepped up willingly with talks on 2 subjects that fitted the brief brilliantly. Quintin, an expert on The Bromsgrove Guild, would give a talk on

the Guild and WW1. Pat, a lifelong Bromsgrove resident and fount of local knowledge, decided to talk on Bromsgrove's Home Front in both World Wars and The Boer War. So some of the programme was very quickly sorted.

What about after lunch?

Our 3rd resident speaker, **Julian Hunt** is very knowledgeable on many subjects - he offered a talk on his latest research project - the picturesque village of Broadway - what a great contrast to the morning of war!



So, in the afternoon, we listened to Julian and learnt much about the history of the village, which is now a very popular tourist attraction in the whole country.

In between the 2 talks in the morning, we observed the 2 minutes silence at 11a.m. and remembered all the men and women who have given their lives in conflicts worldwide.



The day was also a great opportunity to enjoy chatting with members of the other societies that had joined us for the day – friends from Wyre Forest, Redditch, Droitwich, Bewdley, Malvern, Romsley and the Black Country.

It seems that life doesn't often give us time to just 'sit and chat', so this was an ideal opportunity and pleasure to do just that with like-minded people about common interests.

Thank you to all the other societies

from the county that joined us.

So, after all the hard work in preparation, it was a great day enjoyed by one and all.

Thank you to everyone – it was a plan that definitely came together!!

Chris Nesbitt

Chris is absolutely right; it was an excellent gathering and the Forum Committee would like to thank her and the Bromsgrove Society Local History Group for providing such an enjoyable environment and thoughtful education. Sincere and grateful thanks also go to all three speakers.....Norman

After a recent presentation from **Douglas Smith** to the Wyre Forest group, he wrote in to say that "You can catch me on episode 29 of the Cavalier-Cast podcast and also, we're hoping to be on the next episode of *Digging for Britain*. This is all because I wrote a book called 'Most Poorly and Cowardly', the story of Hartlebury Castle and north Worcestershire in the Civil Wars".

Worcester's Grasse Cross

In early medieval times, stones and possibly wooden markers were placed alongside tracks to mark the way, pilgrimage routes or saltways for example. Some were shaped as crosses such as the Offerton Cross now in the churchyard of St Nicholas Warndon. These often marked the routes between abbeys and their daughter churches, presumably erected by the ecclesiastical bodies. Some were used as boundary markers, such as at Pershore. There were also preaching crosses, where religious speakers held forth to gatherings.

But what was the origin of the Grasse Cross that stood at the junction of the ancient route across the Severn ford from the west, from Herefordshire and Wales, where it crossed the route along the Severn Valley used by the Romans from the Forest of Dean and from Droitwich? That junction is now called The Cross, where Broad Street meets the High Street.

The Chamber Order Books for Worcester meticulously document the preparations and events of the summer of 1575, for Queen Elizabeth's visit to the city. All inhabitants

were directed to 'white lime and colour their houses'. A great deal of gilding was also undertaken! The records also note that "the Grasse Cross and the cross without [outside] Sidbury to be set in colours together with the Kyngs pycure [a statue] at Sidbury Gate." Stages were also set up at the Grasse Cross and outside St Helen's Church, so the Queen could address her subjects and watch the pageants. However, the Grasse Cross so gaily decorated for the Queen's visit in 1575 was removed in 1578 as were many holy crosses, being zealously treated as part of the 'old religion'.

But why was it called the Grasse Cross? Was that a version of Grosse, large? Was it Grace, a preaching cross or a place where travellers prayed for safe journeys, hence its summary destruction? Or was it a market cross - maybe asparagus bundles were sold here? Asparagus was cultivated by the Romans, but the first Worcestershire reference as a crop seems to be in the 1700s; "Sparrow Grass" is a local term for asparagus.



The name Grasse Cross continued in use well into the 1800s. The Worcester Turnpike Trust (enacted 1725) used this as the datum point for their second generation milestones, the cast iron plates showing the miles to Worcester Cross, mostly erected in the late 1700s - early 1800s. The first generation milestones seem to have been measured from the city boundary, but being hewn from soft local sandstone their inscriptions soon eroded. So if you happen to be in The Faithful City, look for the

bronze plaque in the pavement, installed in 2014 as a joint initiative by the Milestone Society, Worcester Civic Society and the County Council – and ponder over the cross's name!

Jan Scrine

The Kidderminster Brewery by Pete Jennings



While out for a walk in 1973 I found an amber/brown half pint beer bottle near Stone Church. It was made to take an internal screw stopper and was embossed Kidderminster Brewery Company Ltd Kidderminster. (Pic no.1)

1.

It was the start of an interest that has lasted to the present day.

The company that was to become Kidderminster Brewery was founded by William Bucknall in 1807 in rented premises on Blackwell Street. He bought out the business where he had been working as a Maltster. It had been working on the same premises since at least 1763. (Pic No.

2)

2.

William's son Thomas (b. 1793) took over the business in 1815 after his father's death. Over the following years it gradually became more profitable to carry out the whole brewing process and sell the beer as a finished product.

For the first time, Thomas is listed as a brewer on the 1851 census. Thomas's two sons William (b.1823) and Thomas Silvester (b.1841) took over the business in 1863 when their father's health declined, and he died



in 1865. William & Thomas's partnership had renewed the lease on the Brewery in 1863 and they carried some alterations to make it suitable for brewing.

One of the site's main assets was that it stood over an artesian well that was properly tested and certified for its purity.

The business had begun to build up a chain of local public houses, notably the Black Star and the Britannia, both in Blackwell Street and about a dozen others.

William Bucknall died suddenly in 1885 and it would seem that Thomas Silvester didn't have the business skills of his brother and the business went into a slow decline. Some of the public houses were sold off and in 1896 Bucknalls brewery was amalgamated with the Delph Brewery to form a new company, The Worcestershire Brewery and Malting company. With some 126 pubs to its name. I am uncertain what part, if any, Thomas Bucknall played in the new company. He was a captain in the Territorial Army and led a volunteer battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment out to South Africa to fight in the Boer War. He was also a noted patron of Kidderminster Harriers Football Club.

In 1904 the Worcestershire Brewing and Malting Company went into liquidation and a new company was formed to save the business, The Kidderminster Brewery Company Ltd. In 1913 it was bought out by Wolverhampton and Dudley Brewery and all production of beer had ceased by 1914. The site remained in use as a distribution centre and storage area until 1960. It was all demolished in 1968.

In 50 years of collecting antique bottles, I have only ever come across one Kidderminster beer bottle. This may be explained by the fact that throughout the time the Brewery was making beer, it would very largely have been supplied in barrels and sold as a draught beer.

However, over the same period I have seen many bottles bearing the company's name that were never made for beer.

The Bucknall brewery and its later manifestations had responded to the desires of the church, the temperance movement as well as a desire on the part of the carpet manufacturers not have their employees turn up for work in an intoxicated state to work expensive and dangerous machinery and also on the part of woman and children who would want a refreshing non-alcoholic drink.

It would seem that the artesian well so proudly advertised for making good beer was also excellent for this purpose.

The earliest bottles suitable for containing these types of drinks were hand-made, expensive and not very effective.



The first design of bottle to have some success in this field was the Hamilton bottle patented in 1809 but it had to be stored on its side to prevent the stopper drying out, leaking the contents. It is likely that from the 1840's onwards that Bucknalls were selling some form of lemonade in the torpedo shaped Hamilton bottles but the earliest examples I have seen are from a lot later date.

3.

On 7th October this year I attended the antique bottle auction at Elsecar near Barnsley. To my surprise one of

the main lots of the day was a wooden crate containing 13 Codd bottles from Bucknalls Kidderminster Brewery. (Pic no.3)

A number of the bottles still had their original paper labels. I was delighted to successfully bid for the lot and get them for a reasonable price. On cleaning up the end of the crate an original Codd and Rylands logo was on the end of the crate as well as a burnt-in brand mark for Bucknalls. (Pic no. 4)



4.

The bottles, all identical Codd bottles had four different paper labels between them. Lemonade, ginger ale, soda water and lithia water.

5.



Lithia water was made by adding lithium salts to the carbonated water. (Pic no.5)

6



Lithia water drinks are extremely rare today. From the Bucknall title on the bottles and the Codd and Ryland's logo on the crate I was able to date the group to the early 1880's. (Pic no.6)

7.

The other bottles I have for the Kidderminster Brewery are from its post Bucknall times. Surprisingly 2 are of the earlier Hamilton type and date from the company was in decline so may have been used as they were a cheaper option than Codd bottles. (Pic no. 7)



8.

The best of the others is a stoneware ginger bottle from about 1910. (Pic no. 8)



It is likely that as the pure waters of the artesian well and the bottle filling machinery were at the Blackwell Street site the production of carbonated drinks continued there for some years after the manufacturing of beer had ceased. (Pic no 9). (9).



This photo from the 1930's is of the back of the Kidderminster brewery. At the rear can be seen a large stack of wooden drinks crates similar to the one shown earlier.

Credits and sources of information :
Various documents at Kidderminster Library
Historic Kidderminster Project ref:750
Saving the Fizz by David Jones.
The history of Codd and Rylands bottles.

The Extraordinary Funeral in Worcester Cathedral

This is an extract from the diary of Rev (Robert) Francis Kilvert, covering mainly the years 1870-79 as curate to his father Robert in Wiltshire and in Clyro, Radnorshire. It is likely he only visited Worcester once, but he left a vivid account of the funeral of Miss Frances Maria Kilvert, his father's wealthy elderly cousin. Miss Kilvert's father Canon Richard Kilvert, had been a Prebendary of Worcester Cathedral, a relative of Bishop Richard Hurd and Rector of Hartlebury. She died in November 1870 at her home in College Green, Worcester.

“Friday, December morrow (30 November 1870)

I had a comfortable dry warm bed and nice bedroom at the Star. I walked up to College Green and my **Father and Mother** drove up to 8.30 breakfast. At 10.30 the Canons and Prebendaries who were to be pall-bearers began to assemble with the other people who attended the funeral.

Cathedral morning prayer at 10.15 and as it was Litany Day they were not over till 1.30. Meanwhile breakfast, scarves and hatbands. Mr. Hooper the lawyer and Mr. Wheeler the Cathedral Precentor were there.

The coffin had been brought downstairs and was waiting in the hall covered with the black velvet sweeping soft pall, white bordered. Boom went the great bell of the Cathedral. Church was over, and someone said they ought to have used the tenor bell, but they were using the great bell and no mistake. Boom went the bell again. The coffin went out immediately and the pall bearers filed out in pairs after it, taking their places and each

holding his pall tassel on either side. My Father and I followed as Chief mourners in crape scarves and hatbands, - all the rest in silk.

The bearers had been selected not at all with reference to their fitness for the task, but with reference to the friendship entertained for them by the servants of the house. One of the bearers on the right side was very short, so short that he could not properly support the coffin level. The coffin seemed very heavy.

As the procession moved across College Green to the Cloister arch, the men staggered under the weight and the coffin lurched and tilted to one side over the short bearer. One very fat man had constituted himself chiefest mourner of all and walked next the coffin before my Father and myself.

The bearers, blinded by the sweeping pall, could not see where they were going and nearly missed the Cloister arch, but at length we got safe into the narrow dark passage and into the Cloisters. The great bell boomed high overhead and the deep thrilling vibration hung trembling in the air long after the stroke of the bell.

Clergy and choir came to meet us at the door, then turned and moved up the Cathedral nave chanting in solemn procession, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life saith the Lord'. But meanwhile there was a dreadful struggle at the steps leading up from the Cloisters to the door. The bearers were quite unequal to the task and the coffin seemed crushingly heavy. There was a stamping and a scuffling, a mass of struggling men swaying to and fro, pushing and writhing and wrestling while the coffin sank and rose and sank again. Once or twice I thought the whole mass of men must have been down together with the coffin atop of them and some one killed or maimed at least. But now came the time of the fat chief mourner. Seizing his opportunity he rushed into the strife by an opening large and the rescued coffin rose.

At last by a wild effort and tremendous heave the ponderous coffin was borne up the steps and through the door into the Cathedral where the choristers, quite unconscious of the scene and the fearful struggle going on behind, were singing up the nave like a company of angels.

In the Choir there was another dreadful struggle to let the coffin down.

The bearers were completely overweighted, they bowed and bent and nearly fell and threw the coffin down on the floor. When it was safely deposited we all retired to seats right and left and a vergier or beadle, in a black gown and holding a mace, took up his position at the head of the coffin, standing. The Psalm was sung nicely to a very beautiful chant.

The Dean (John Peel) had the gout and could not appear, so Canon Wood (John Ryle Wood) read the lesson well and impressively in a sonorous voice. The Grave Service was intoned by the Sacristan Mr. Raisin and sung by the choir, standing on the planking round the vault whilst a crowd of people looked in through the cloister windows.

It must have been an expensive funeral. Everyone had hatbands down to the Choristers who wore them round their college caps. And there was a heavy fee to the Choir for the Choral service."

Diana Clutterbuck

Heritage Open Day - Forge Mill Needle Museum

Sunday 17th September 2023: 10.00am to 4.0pm

It is now ten years since the Redditch History Society and the volunteers at Forge Mill Needle Museum (the organisers being mainly the same culprits!) began our involvement with the National Heritage Open Days Event and it has now become a regular annual event.

It was not obvious at the beginning, but we had tremendous support from the staff at the Museum and, from the start, we set out to involve local community groups. We also tapped into the resources of the National Heritage Open Day organisation, who supplied bunting, banners, and other marketing aids as well as inclusion in a national advertising campaign.



Although we have not reached our level of visitors before the Pandemic (over 550), we achieved a very respectable four hundred visitors on the day.

At this event, we had new contributors including the Redditch Photographic Society, who presented excellent work by their members.



This exhibition highlighted work by members of the Society and, I understand, that Forge Mill Needle Museum have offered them space in the exhibition area for 2024 - Great News!

Regulars, such as Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and the Royal Enfield Owners Club were there and, WWT had a good day with new members and promoting wildlife in the area.



The Royal Enfield Owners Club always attracts many visitors due to its historic links to the town and, although they are in much demand during the Heritage period, they always give us support.

The tours of the Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey, provided by the museum volunteers were successful and well attended.



The Royal Shakespeare Company outreach group had examples of costumes worn in their productions at Stratford.



Indigo Arts put on a preview of their production of Oliver, which was very entertaining. The talented Violettes were also there to entertain the visitors.

History Society member, John Newey, and his colleagues in the Little Radford Model Boat Club can always be relied upon to give a good display of their meticulously built model boats. They are all working models but, sadly, we do not have a suitable pool to demonstrate them in.

Arts in Redditch (AIR) are a local charity run entirely by volunteers, promoting, and supporting individuals and groups to help them get creative in many ways.

They had their display in the meeting room displaying art from various members. They also had a children's activity.

We were there, the Forge Mill Volunteers and the Redditch History Society, and the volunteers had a successful gardening stand to support the work on maintaining the plants and borders on the site.

We also had the 6-minute-long video of the Queen's visit to Redditch and the opening of the Forge Mill National Needle Museum in 1983, which was continuous running in the visitor centre, and it always had an audience.

There was, of course, free entry to the museum and the current exhibition.

Hampton Court Palace – The Great Hall and its Hammerbeam Roof

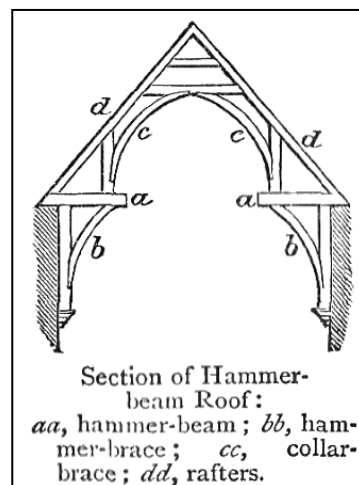
As a keen visitor to historic houses and buildings, I am often impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm shown by volunteer guides, typically in the accessible rooms of properties managed by the National Trust. It is part of the enjoyment of a visit to learn something of the furniture and artifacts on display and of the history of families that occupied the houses and castles in the care of the Trust.

After a 50 year career in the construction industry however, I find it irritating and sometimes annoying when guides say something along the lines of "...*the third Earl added this wing of the house...*", because taken literally, it simply isn't true. An architect might have designed the addition in question and the third Earl probably paid for it, but anonymous skilled craftsmen constructed it and what is still original and visible is their lasting legacy.

In the world of building conservation, organisations like the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) encourage the learning of traditional trade skills, so that our building heritage can continue to be preserved, repaired and maintained. Specialist craftsmen are scarce however, and whilst they can often find the marks left by their predecessors, the identity of those who carried out the original work is usually lost to us.

An exception to this is the wonderful Great Hall of Hampton Court Palace, commissioned by King Henry VIII and built in 1532-34. It has a magnificent hammerbeam roof.

Hammerbeam roofs were popular in ecclesiastical important buildings from the 14th Century through of the 16th Century. The roof system is made up of which unlike a modern truss or a traditional crown-have no bottom cord. The strength and span of a hammerbeam truss is made up of short timber bracketed with vertical or curved brace members sail each other on either side of the span to a point (typically) an arch is formed to connect both sides truss. In this way, large gaps between walls can spanned, with an optimization of open space the centre of the truss. The members making-up hammerbeam truss are typically adorned with carved (and sometimes painted) decorations. The roof is completed with rafters, purlins and tile, slate or sheet metal coverings in the normal way.



and other to the end trusses, post truss, beams, that over-where of the be beneath each beautifully

In the case of the Great Hall at Hampton Court, it is recorded that a small circle of royal craftsmen were engaged in control of the construction works. There were two senior masons, John Moulton and Christopher Dickinson, and two senior carpenters, James Nedeham and William Clement. Clement succeeded Nedeham as the King's Master Carpenter in 1532 after the latter became Clerk and Surveyor of the King's Works. Thus the hammerbeam roof was most likely designed, supervised and built by a team led by these two skilled men. James Nedeham in particular, played a leading role; records indicate that he was paid for riding from Westminster and spending 22 days in "...drawing of plats and making of moulds for the new hall."

The roof's exterior was in the process of being covered in lead during the summer of 1533, but it is its magnificent interior that impresses the visitor. The decorative pendants below the ends of the hammer beams and beneath the intermediate purlins, were carved by local mason and woodcarver Richard Ridge of Kingston, who also carved the famous "Kings Beasts" that adorned the Gatehouse bridge at the Palace. It is a particular feature of Hampton Court's Great Hall roof that most of the subsidiary structural timbers are concealed beneath decorative panelling, in common with other parts of the Palace previously commissioned by Cardinal Wolsey.

Overlaying every element of the roof is a wealth of carved decoration, including figures, crests, heraldry and Renaissance motifs. Another London carver, Thomas Johnson, created the spandrels with royal arms and the initials of Anne Boleyn, by then Queen of England. Accounts for the work reveal that the roof's interior surfaces and carvings were also originally brightly painted.



In the spring of 1534, a richly decorated louvred box structure or "Femerell" was added to the top of the roof.

The Femerell was removed in the 17th Century, but is shown in early drawings of the Palace, above the hall's traditionally located central hearth to let out smoke from the fire.

In the summer of 1534, Belgian craftsman Galyon Hone, who was the King's master glazier, installed the heraldic stained glass windows.

The Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace is clearly one important historic building where the names of the skilled craftsmen who created it have been recorded.

David Simons, November 2023

