

Redditch Local History Society

Late Summer 2020

Volume 2 / Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's Chat

It seems a long time since we listened to Dr Richard Churchley telling us about the poor and the connected workhouses. While it is only six months ago it seems like half a lifetime.

For us that rather shows that we are living in unprecedented times. Although others have been through much worse. The Spanish 'Flu epidemic of 1918 –1920 killed somewhere between 17 –50 million people worldwide. While the infamous Black Death of 1348 killed some forty percent of the English population. It would not be until the late sixteenth century that the country's population recovered to its thirteenth century level.

So now that I have cheered everybody up what have you been doing with your time?

Decorated the house out? Oh! cannot do that the DIY store were closed.

I have never been so busy doing so little. This lockdown certainly proves the law formulated by Cyril Northcote Parkinson which goes 'Work expands to fill the time available for its completion'. It rather reminds one of the song from the 1949 film, A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur, which was sung by Bing Crosby, William Bendix and Cedric Hardwick*.

Still I suppose free time gives us chance to improve our minds. read that book you were going to read five years ago. Take an online history course. There are some good FREE online courses available through Future Learn. As I say these are free, last for anywhere between two and six weeks, needing between two- and six-hours attention a week. Should you feel that you would like the course to be available 'for ever' and/or you would like a certificate of achievement the cost is of the order of forty quid. Put Future Learn into Google, apart from ignorance, what have you got to lose?

I cannot believe how much I am missing the Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey. I used to moan like hell when sat in the volunteer's meeting and the long list of societies requiring guides. One never appreciates anything 'til it's gone. recently I have had the odd walk around the Abbey site. Quite a few people were enjoying the sunshine and the abbey ruins. Nice to know that Redditch recognise that its still there. Will we get back to normal next year we can but hope.

Your erstwhile hon. Secretary asked my opinion about an object to do with the needle trade (idiot).

Any Ideas?

See page 6 for
the answer



Did I know what it was? No had a guess or two. However, when Jo-Ann at FMNM was available, the answer appeared at the speed of light. I must tell you folks FMNM is worth more than the rest of Rubicon Leisure put together.

Are you excited about the renovation plans for the Railway Station complex?

Might have been better if the planners etc. had included an upgrade or demolition to the 'bus station. Let us face it is a disgrace; dark, dirty and lacking in any information useful to the out of town traveller. Will this really entice visitors to Redditch? I doubt it.

The rot set in at the planning stage when the Kingfisher Centre was built in the middle of the old town. Lack of space necessitated multi-storey car parks that charge for the privilege. The town's empty and the out of town supermarkets packed, not rocket science is it?

* *I'm busy doing nothing, working the whole day through. Trying to find lot's of things not to do.*

Don Vincent - Society Chairman

Secretary's Stuff

It hardly seems like five months since our last meeting and the lockdown began. Margaret and I have been extremely careful during this time and have had everything delivered. We have found some amazing on-line specialist food suppliers which we will continue to use after the current situation has gone away (always the optimist!). I hope that you are all managing without too many problems.

I have not ignored Redditch History during this time. I have written three books, which are available online. The latest one is a collection of pictures which I took in the 'great freeze' of the winter 1962/63. There is more about this later in the Newsletter, with a link.

Forge Mill Needle Museum is obviously not open at the moment so we cannot have our Annual Heritage Day.

However, I have worked on producing an online event. Again, the details are later in the Newsletter.

I tried, in the last newsletter, to get a volunteer to be speaker organiser, but no-one rushed forward to take it on, and so I guess that I will need to organise at least next year's programme.

It is clear that the majority of members join the Society for a local history talk. In general each of our meetings are attended by 60-80% of our members, not all at the same meetings, and so as our annual membership cost of £15 is the same cost as 5 meetings, if paying at the door, members receive good value for their annual fee. In addition, during our last season, we had 80 visitors at £3, which goes a long way towards paying for 4-5 external speakers.

This is far in excess of any interest in our other activities and so I see this as a priority for the future. I am therefore planning a programme for next year April-December which I hope to have completed by October and I will be producing a Newsletter and programme in the late Autumn.

When we resume, hopefully, at our AGM in April, it is possible that a number of members may decide that they are not yet ready to return. So, we may initially be running at a loss. However, we have the reserves to cover our costs and, after the first four meetings, where we have already paid for the room, we can review the situation. We do not know, of course, what the situation is at Oasis Christian Centre and how they are managing at the moment.

My personal priority, as a founder member of the RLHS, is to ensure that the Society continues as a community project and I consider that the monthly meetings are the bedrock of the Society and need to be protected.



Anthony Green - Society Secretary

Chamberlain Highbury Trust:

Highbury Restoration, the story so far.

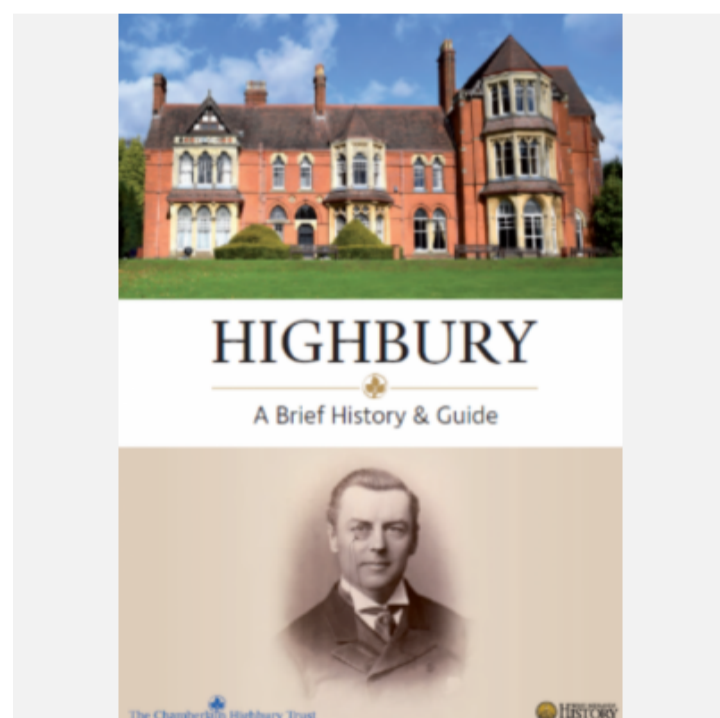
The house was built in Venetian Gothic style, richly decorated with images of animals, birds and plant life. After 140 years the roof needed major repairs.

This short film shows this work in progress, funded by Birmingham City Council and Historic England.

<https://www.historywm.com/films/highbury-restoration>

There is also a Guide to Chamberlain's Highbury. Which is available at

<https://www.historywm.com/shop/products/new-guide-to-chamberlans-highbury>



Treasurer's Topics

I hope you are all well and continuing to keep safe. My family are all well and my wife and I are now fully recovered from our exciting trip down under.

Our holiday of a lifetime – a 28-day cruise around Australia – was curtailed after just seven days.

We flew out in early March and our cruise started on 8th March. From Brisbane we sailed to Sydney, and then onto Melbourne.

Most of the time we were in a bubble with no contact with what was happening in the rest of the world.

We were then on our way to Tasmania when the captain informed everybody in their cabins at 5a.m. that we would be sailing to Tasmania, as planned, to visit Burnie and Hobart, but would then sail back to Sydney instead of onto Adelaide.



So, we were back in Sydney on 18th March.

We were lucky that our friendly travel agent was able to negotiate flights home, but it still meant a 12 hour wait at Sydney airport prior to a 22-hour flight home to Birmingham.

We have just received a generous refund from the cruise company and cruise credit for another cruise. But, as it does not look like there will be any cruises for the foreseeable future, all we can do is just dream!

Now down to business. I thought you might like an update on the Society's membership and finances.

Had we been able to hold our AGM in March I would have reported to you that we currently have 66 paid up members. As we have decided to continue membership for all until, we meet next April (hopefully) then that is the current membership. Whatever the date of our next meeting

I do hope you will continue your membership with us and perhaps even bring a friend along. Our current subscription means that if you attend all meetings it works out at £1.36 a meeting which I think is pretty good value for money.

Now for the finance part of my report.

At the end of 2019, the Society had a total of £1394.52. The February and March meetings gave us the only income for 2020: £103.50.

We have, of course, had some significant outgoings. The main one is the payment of £378 for the hire of the rooms at the Oasis Centre for six meetings.

We have, of course, only used the rooms for two meetings so we should be able to use the rooms next year for another four meetings.

Other expenses include payment for two speakers (£95), annual subscription to the Worcestershire Local History Forum (£10) and some administration costs (c£90). Our current finance total is £912.03 which is bank total plus petty cash.

We have one more item of expenditure due in September which is the annual subscription to the British Association for Local History; we are expecting this to be £75.00.

I believe we are well positioned, both in terms of our membership and our finances, to re-start the Society when the time comes. We will rely very much on your continued support and that of all the membership. I, for one, cannot wait!

Graham Smith - Society Treasurer

Redditch History Books and Publications On-Line

I have have added a new book to my Redditch History on-line publications.

The latest one is 'Redditch in the Snow - Winter 1962/63' and describes the winter of 1962–63 which was one of the coldest winters on record in the United Kingdom.

When the snow hit Redditch, I was 19, and I set out with my brother Vince to record the effect on Redditch at this time.

This modest book records a selection of the photographs I took with my first 35mm camera and I have added some descriptive text to give a view of the town at that time. You can find a flip-book and pdf download at

<http://www.exploreredditch.org.uk/publications.htm>.

You will also find some historic publications which I have produced in the same format at

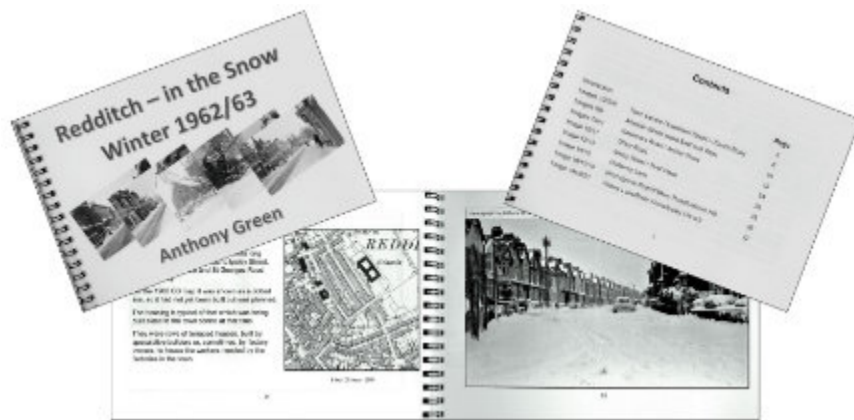
<http://www.redditchhistory.org.uk/publications.htm>

I am always looking for new publications to add to give on-line access. If you have any ideas, please let me know.

These are personal history activities and not related to the RLHS.

Please feel free to share and copy these publications and feel free to contact me at:

Anthony Green tony@exploreredditch.org.uk



Heritage Open Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum



It has been decided that with social distancing, even at 1 metre, it is not viable to open the museum and this will continue for some time, probably until the end of the year and so we will be unable to have our annual Heritage Open Day.

This is true of many historic properties and so the Heritage Open Days organisation has proposed that, for this year, those who are able to do so could produce a virtual event.

This we have done and our listing is on the Heritage Open Day website directory at:

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/forge-mill-museum>

The link to our interactive site will be live during the duration of the Heritage Open Days Festival which is from the 11th to 20th September 2020.

RLHS AGM 2020 and Talk by Prof Catherine Clarke

We are members of the British Association of Local History and they have had to postpone their AGM until September, delayed from the cancelled Local History Day on 6th June.

This AGM will be held virtually over Zoom, so members can join it from the comfort of their armchair!

To register to join via Zoom use the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlscemsqzluE9C4lVJZuc6pBPAnfJ5XorfM>

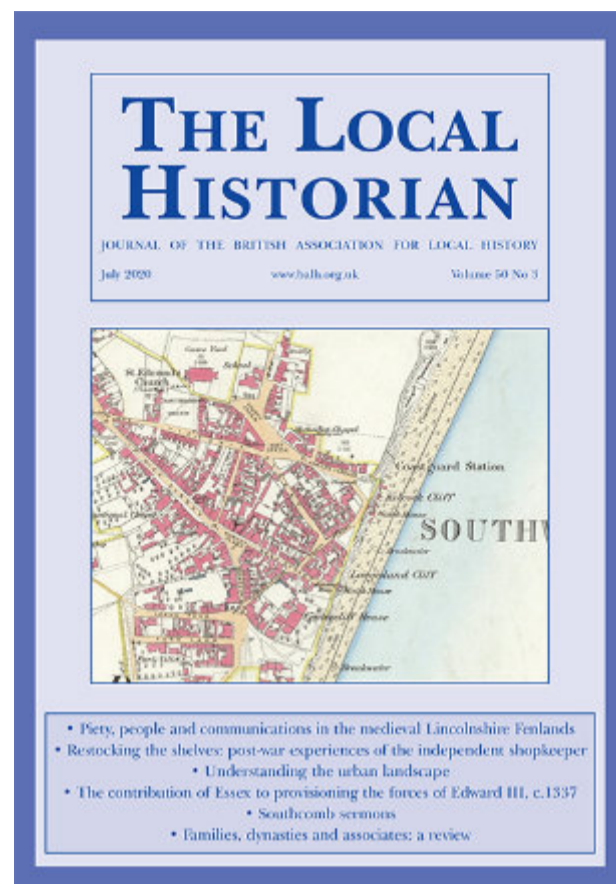
After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

If you are a member and wish to join this meeting and have any difficulties in registering, please contact me.

Anthony Green

Secretary, RLHS

anthony.green@rlhs.org.uk



The Future of the RLHS Archives

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those members who responded to our survey on the future of the RLHS Archives conducted earlier this year.

Of the 30% of our membership who did respond, there was overwhelming support for our policy to collect artefacts, for the retention of existing artefacts we have and the continued collection of artefacts. The problem we have, which has been highlighted by the COVID pandemic, is we need a permanent, secure facility to store them whilst improving access to display them.

Of the options put forward to do this, three-quarters of respondents were against paying for a commercial storage facility and 70% were against transferring them to the Hive in Worcester.

The most popular solution was that the RLHS should pursue the creation of a local Heritage Centre, possibly with other organisations like the Royal Enfield Owner Club to both store and display the collection. We have worked closely with the REOC but at the moment that option is not available to us.

The COVID lockdown has really prevented any meaningful progress on this topic but I am now making one last appeal for support to create a local Heritage Centre, the solution most people preferred. If that support is not forthcoming then negotiations will be with the Hive on their willingness to take them.

It is unlikely that the Worcester Archives will want all the collection and, possibly none at all, which would leave us with no option but to destroy the collection. This is not the option we want to be left with. Therefore, to resolve the issue of what to do with the RLHS archives we need members willing to get involved to progress the possible solutions outlined.

Please consider helping, or if you have any suggestion as to other courses of action we could take, which you are willing to actively support, please get in touch.

Derek Coombes RLHS Archivist
07860326582 archivist@rlhs.org.uk

New Books by Terry Meinke

Terry is a specialist on Avery Needles cases. She has a new book (in 2 volumes) entitled "Histories of the Redditch Area Manufacturers Associated with Avery Needle Cases" based on three years of extensive research.

These two volumes document the histories of the 25 Redditch, UK area manufacturers associated with Avery needle cases.

Volume I contains Avery, Bartleet, Booker, Croft, English, Gould, Hall, Harper, Harrison and Hayes.

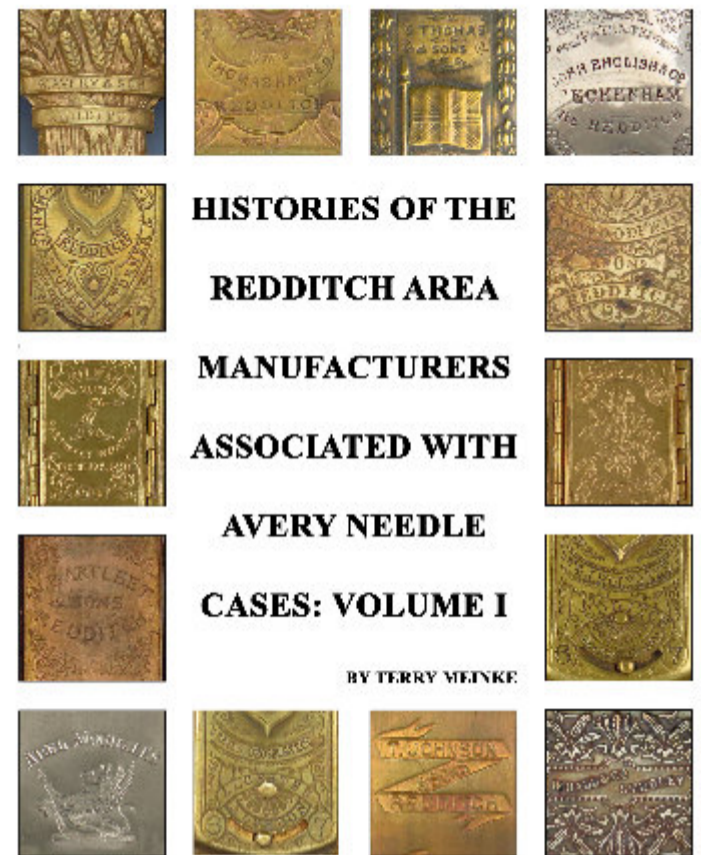
Volume II includes Holyoake, James, Johnson, Laight, Milward, Morrall, Newhall, Smith, Thomas, Townsend, Turner, Wacker, Welch, Woodfield and Wyers.

Information about all of her books can be found on her website at <http://www.coulthart.com/avery/book.html>.

For more details and how to order directly from the publisher in the UK (always check the blurb.uk.com webpage heading to see if there is a discount code you can use to reduce the price)

Volume I: www.blurb.co.uk/b/10187319-histories-of-the-redditch-area-companies-associat

Volume II: www.blurb.co.uk/b/10187332-histories-of-the-redditch-area-companies-associat



**HISTORIES OF THE
REDDITCH AREA
MANUFACTURERS
ASSOCIATED WITH
AVERY NEEDLE
CASES: VOLUME I**

BY TERRY MEINKE

The 'Mystery' Object

I received an e-mail from Terri James in the USA with the three images which are in Don's post on Page 1.

They were purchased (2 of them) in a 5 generation estate sale (which I assume is some form of archive sale). They came from Vevey IN.- on the Ohio river - which Terri thought might mean they could be fish net needles.

Terri wanted to identify the use of this large needle and the age. I had no idea, I asked Don, and he made some wild guesses, so, in the hope that Jo-Ann, the Curator at the Forge Mill Needle Museum in Redditch, might be picking up her e-mails (the museum is closed), I sent it on..

Jo recognised it immediately. It is what is called an upholstery regulator - you use it for getting the right amount of tension for the fabric coverings of, say, a chair.

She did not have a W Heath catalogue but supplied a page from a John James catalogue which shows the item just as well.

W Heath was in operation from about the 1870 - to the 1900s in Crabbs Cross, Redditch.

I sent this on to Terri, who was pleased with the answer, and the speed of response.


I have been a volunteer at Forge Mill now for about 14 years and during that time I have given tours of the Needle Museum to more than 200 groups, which means more than 3,000 people. Don, who has been a volunteer longer than me, has done at least as many.

All the time I keep learning new things about needles. It really is an amazing product and the range of variations which were produced by the Redditch manufacturers was quite incredible.

As Jo-Ann says to visitors 'After you've had a tour of the Needle Museum and seen how needles are made, you will look at needles with a new eye' – pause for groan....

Anthony Green

JOHN JAMES & SONS. REDDITCH



Coachtrimmers' Needles
FLAT BODY


Flat Body. Oval Blade. Ground to cut. Points of one Dozen. Boxes of one Gross.

Length	2	3	4	5	6 inches
Gauge	18	16	15	14	14
Price	71.3	71.3	80.3	93.0	105.9 per gross

Leather Needles

Curved. Flat Body. Surgical. Blade ground to cut. Points of one Dozen. Boxes of one Gross.


Length	2	2 1/2	3	3 1/2	4	4 1/2	5	5 1/2	6 inches
Gauge	18	7	15	16	15	15	14	14	14
Price	71.3	71.3	71.3	76.6	80.3	85.6	93.0	100.6	105.9 per gross



Art No. 4651

Art No. 5863 Upholsterers' Regulators

Length	6	8	9	10	12 inches
Gauge	6	6	6	5	6
Price	84.0	108.0	124.6	140.3	165.0 per gross



Points of one Dozen. Boxes of 1/2 Gross.

UNEQUALLED IN QUALITY SINCE 1860.