

# Redditch History Society

## NEWSLETTER

November 2020

Volume 2 / Issue 4

### Annual General Meeting 2020 edition

#### Introduction

I hope you are all well and managing in this difficult time.

When we were unable to have our Annual General Meeting in April due to the lockdown, we assumed that we would have it later in the year. This has turned out to be wishful thinking!

As time has passed it became clear that we would not be meeting again in 2020 and we would not be able to have our annual AGM. However, our constitution demands that '*The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Society must be held every year, with at least 14 days' notice given to all members*'. In addition, Derek Coombes has advanced with archive storage and has established the Redditch Local History Museum (RLHM) as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to campaign for, create and operate a museum in the town.

We, the Executive Committee, therefore decided to have an AGM for 2020 which would allow us to conform to our requirement for an annual AGM. This has taken the form of an online Proxy survey, similar to those which are used by organisations such as Building Societies, Charities and Professional Bodies, where members are unable to attend the AGM. Members who were not on internet were supplied with a postal vote.

This AGM has followed the standard format of the physical AGM and I have presented the results on the same basis.

The current Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary produced annual reports (repeated here) and agreed to continue in their posts, and the same applied to elected members of the management committee and our Accounts Examiner. The resolutions ensured that all can continue in their roles. In addition to these standard items we have the specific matter of the transfer of the Society archives to a new entity - the Redditch Local History Museum - and the related changes to our constitution, website and Society name.

Your Management Committee recommended Approval of all the Resolutions.

We had 29 members who voted, which is about 50% of our membership and fairly typical of a physical AGM. The result was an overwhelming 'Approve' for all resolutions and the necessary measures are being taken to expedite this.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

#### Chairman's Report

2020 has been a very difficult year for all of us. We did manage to have our first meeting, when Dr Richard Churchley spoke to us. However, like all the rest of such societies we have been unable to have face to face meetings including the AGM. This restriction also applied to your committee meeting. However, we have remained in touch with one another discussing items of importance for the society. One of the items was the chance of holding some sort of 2020 AGM. By now members should have received information on how this is to be achieved.

Your hon. Secretary must have run an enormous electricity bill, plus all other sorts of expenses. Your hon. Treasurer has handled the accounts with the usual aplomb and balance sheet, audited by Gill Barlow is available. My thanks on your behalf go to those mentioned and all the other members of the committee

Hopefully, we may be able to meet up again in about April 2021. The committee are determined that your society will not fade away but continue with its regular monthly meetings on a variety of topics.

Don Vincent,  
Society Chairman  
October 2020



## Secretary's Report

We managed to complete our 2019/20 season (April 2019 to March 2020) and we had some excellent presentations and activities. We then came to an abrupt stop....

Since then it has obviously been difficult for everybody, and I hope that you are all managing in these strange times.

I have succeeded in producing three newsletters so far during the closure, and I hope to continue to produce one every two months until we resume. Then it will, of course, go back to monthly. I hope that you found them interesting.

In addition to our Newsletter, our online presence has been an additional method of keeping in touch and letting everyone know that we are still here.

During the closure website visitor numbers have varied considerably from over 900 when I produced a Newsletter, to about 500 visitors in months when there was not. Last month the highest number of visitors came from the United States (46.07%), UK (18.81%), Germany (8.25%), Sweden (4.80%) and France (3.84%).

Our Facebook page 'Redditch History Society' has 1324 followers (1103 in 2019, so a 20% increase). The number visiting posts has increased during our period of closure.

Anthony Green,  
Society Secretary October 2020

## Treasurer's Report

The Society's finances remain in a stable and healthy condition.

**Income** :Our main source of income is members' subscriptions. Membership was slightly up in 2019 with 66 members compared to 2018 (64) but short of the 2017 total of 75. However, revenue was slightly down as some people took advantage of the half yearly subscription of £7.50. We also depend on revenue from visitors and this was down on 2018 (83) with 67 coming to enjoy our talks.

Refreshments provides us with some extra revenue. Sadly there were no donations in 2019. Our Christmas raffle saw a contribution which was then made up to £100 and donated to the Oasis Centre's charity, Acts of kindness (See Expenditure).

Our total income for 2019 was £1271.00

**Expenditure** :Our main outgoing is room hire. We paid £60 for each meeting which the Management Committee regards as good value considering the comfort and facilities offered, and the improved entrance to the Reeve's Room has helped the enjoyment of our meetings. The room hire charge has increased to £63 from January 2020. The rest of the expenditure is self-explanatory and follows previous years' spending. We continue to be members of the Worcestershire Local History Forum which keeps us up to date with other history societies, provides us with ideas for talks and runs several competitions each year. The British Association for Local History provides us with magazines available to members and gives us our Public Liability Insurance for our meetings and events we attend.

There was small surplus of Income over Expenditure of £46.02. Our bank balance on 1st January was £1312.19. With the surplus of £46.02 we ended the year with a balance of £1358.21. With petty cash of £36.31 our total Society Funds on 31st December 2019 was £1394.52

I wish to thank Gil Barlow for giving his time to examine these accounts.

Graham Smith, Society Treasurer October 2020

REDDITCH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY Income and Expenditure Account For the year ended 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2019					
2018 £	INCOME	2019 £	2018 £	EXPENDITURE	2019 £
930.00	Membership 57 @ £15.00	855.00	300.00	Room hire (February to December)	660.00
15.00	Membership 9 @ £7.50	67.50			
249.00	67 Visitors to meetings:	201.00	85.00	Payment to Speaker(s)	40.00
95.40	Refreshments (banked)*	95.00	21.57	Refreshments cups	18.60
110.00	Donations	-	19.96	2 Scrap books	18.21
-	Christmas Raffle	52.50	43.14	Meeting flyers (for 2020)	30.84
			184.15	Printing & distribution on Heritage Matters (Jan - April)	47.48
			15.59	Treasurer's Expenses	-
			-	Secretary's Expenses	47.28
			54.98	Costs of Forge Mill Exhibition	165.67
			15.28	Christmas Social Refreshments	11.90
			70.00	Donation to Acts of Kindness	100.00
				SUBSCRIPTIONS:	
			10.00	WLHF	10.00
			75.00	British Association for Local History	75.00
					(1224.98)
			539.83	Deficit/ SURPLUS of Income over Expenditure	46.02
£1434.50		1271.00	£1434.50		1271.00

\*Refreshments: Income £143.12 Expenditure: £44.96 (inc. Exhibition) Profit: £98.16

2018 £	Balance Sheet as at 31 <sup>st</sup> December	2019 £	
772.36	Bank at 1 <sup>st</sup> January	1312.19	I have examined the Account Book, receipts, bank statements and vouchers presented to me by the Treasurer. I confirm that in my opinion these accounts show a true and fair view of the Income and expenditure of the Society for the year ended 31 December 2019. <i>G.R.T. Barlow</i> 27/10/2020 Accounts Examiner Date
539.83	Deficit/Surplus end of year	46.02	
1312.19	Balance c/fwd at 31 <sup>st</sup> December	1358.21	
1312.19	Bank Account at 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec.	1358.21	
33.13	Plus Petty Cash	36.31	
1345.32	TOTAL SOCIETY FUNDS	1394.52	

# Results of Vote at the on-line Annual General Meeting

**RESOLUTION 1: Approval of the Annual Reports for the Society from the Chairman and Secretary. These have been combined into one document.**

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 2: Approval of Treasurer's Report and Accounts**

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 3: Appointment of Don Vincent as Chairman** (Don is our current Chairman and has agreed to stand.)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 4: Appointment of Anthony Green as Secretary** (Anthony is our current secretary and has agreed to stand.)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 5: Appointment of Graham Smith as Treasurer** (Graham is our current treasurer and has agreed to stand.)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 6: Appointment of Pete Harris, Dave Spyer and Elizabeth Simpson as Management Committee members.** (Pete, Dave, and Elizabeth are currently members of the Management Committee and have agreed to stand. Derek Coombes is not standing as he wishes to concentrate on his other activities.)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 7: Appointment of Gil Barlow as Accounts Examiner** (Gil is our current Accounts Examiner and has agreed to continue in the post)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 8: to thank Derek Coombes for the work he has put in over the years as Society Archivist and to wish him well with his local history museum.** (Derek will continue as a member of the Society and we hope that, when everything returns to 'normal' that he will be able to give a presentation on progress with his project.)

Approve 28 Reject 0 Abstain 1 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 9: to move the Society archives to a separate organisation registered with the Charities Commission which is called Redditch Local History Museum** (This is a request from Derek Coombes who has set up the new entity.)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 10: to change the Society Constitution to reflect that we will no longer maintain an archive and that the aims have been suitably modified.** (This is a download from the website link <http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk/download/constitution2020.pdf>)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 11: to modify the website to reflect the changes.** (With the removal of the archives, the relevant pages on the website have been modified. <http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk>)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 12: to allow the Society to use the name Redditch History Society to separate it from the proposed museum organisation.** (This is intended to exhibit that the two organisations are independent of each other.)

Approve 28 Reject 0 Abstain 1 Result: **APPROVED**

**RESOLUTION 13: that the results of this AGM will apply until we have a 'physical' AGM in 2021.** (The current situation is that we cannot decide a date or plan an AGM for 2021. This agreement allows us the flexibility to recommence meetings with presentations without requiring the first meeting to be an AGM.)

Approve 29 Reject 0 Abstain 0 Result: **APPROVED**

The final section of the on-line AGM was an opportunity for members to make any comments they wished. I have placed these, in no particular order and without comments in the next section. All were positive, and I have not put names against the comments.



## Survey Comments

In the voting document we gave a space for members to make any comments concerning the working of the Society as we do in the live meeting.

Below are the comments received....

*Keep up the good work!*

*Perhaps we might look at history away from the strict confines of the town for our talks.*

*Just a sincere thank you to you all during this difficult time.*

*Well done to the Officers and Committee Members for their hard work in setting up this virtual AGM and for keeping the aims of the Society going during Covid19 restrictions. Also to Derek Coombes for establishing the Redditch Museum project.*

*Thanks to the committee for the work you are doing to keep the Society going. The Redditch Local History Museum project is welcome.*

*Thank you all for the work you have done and are still doing keep well stay safe*

*I believe we should consider increasing both our Annual and Entry fees to more effectively reflect on the time, effort and quality of the talks presented. Thank you for all the hard work you have all done over the years.*

*I have enjoyed attending the open meetings & listening to the speakers & talking to the members. I hope everything continues as before despite the Covid 19*

*It is important to ensure that our society survives and returns to "normality" once covid 19 is beaten. I am happy to continue supporting the society.*

*We would like to thank the committee for their help and support*

## Annual General Meeting Films

At the end of our normal 'live' Annual General Meeting, which normally takes 20 - 30 minutes, we always have some history films of the region lasting 30 to 40 minutes, to bring us to our '1 hour' presentation before our coffee break.

An excellent source of West Midland Films is History West Midlands <https://historywm.com/> which has a wide range of films related to our region.

So, I have selected 3 films, related to our region, which you may find interesting.

Mothers who waved goodbye: Evacuation in World War II (6 minutes)

<https://historywm.com/films/the-mother-who-waved-goodbye-evacuation-in-world-war-ii>



The Mappa Mundi at Hereford Cathedral is one of the great treasures of the Medieval World. (15 minutes)

<https://historywm.com/films/mappa-mundi-a-medieval-vision-of-the-world>



The Story of the Great Exhibition – Part 1  
The Great Exhibition of 1851 was a high point of Victorian Britain and its sense of Empire. (25 minutes)

<https://historywm.com/films/the-story-of-the-great-exhibition-part-1>





# Redditch Local History Museum

As you will have read elsewhere in this newsletter, the management team of the RLHS has used the enforced cessation of its activities to look to the future and how it can come back stronger and continue to flourish. A key element of that strategy was to establish a permanent solution to the storage of the archives the Society has acquired, and to make these archives more accessible to both members and non-members.

This was the key finding of the survey of members I undertook as Society archivist earlier this year. solution which has been agreed, and that you have voted on in the recent on-line AGM survey, was to create an independent organisation to pursue the creation and operation of a town-centre based local history museum.

To this end, The Redditch Local History Museum (RLHM) has been established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to campaign for, create and operate a museum in the town. Such a museum will cover all of Redditch history and heritage that is not within the scope of Forge Mill or the Redditch Cycle & Motorcycle Museum. The motorcycle museum group are treading a similar path to ours to focus on Royal Enfield and other cycle and motorcycle marques which figure in our town's history.

As Society archivist I have taken a lead in this significant undertaking and other members of the Society, who share the belief that a local history museum is needed, are also trustees of the new organisation. All members of the Society are welcome to join us and support both organisations as they feel appropriate.

Our first task is to publicise the new venture as much as possible and to seek support from other local organisations. We need volunteers to help us plan and operate the museum and also sponsors to finance the project.

We hope to mount an exhibition in the town-centre early next year - Covid restrictions permitting - and this will explain our plans and show how the museum will operate. This exhibition is being planned in such a way that there will be a lasting legacy from it for the town regardless of how we move forward from there.

With support and funding gained during this promotional period, our aim is to open an interim museum for a period of three years at a town-centre location. The contents of the museum will initially be based on the archives of the Society whose titles and ownership are being transferred to the RLHM CIO. We will also welcome new donations and collections from individuals who are willing to donate or loan them to the museum.

In the long term we will seek a permanent location for the museum, either in a converted historic building or perhaps a purpose-built Visitor's/Heritage Centre. As part of our campaign we intend to lobby Redditch Borough Council with the aim that Redditch history & heritage, and the museum, are included in their regeneration plans, for which they say they have government funding.

As well as your continued membership and support of the Society, we hope that you will support the museum's aims and activities. Those of you who are willing to do a little more please join us as one of our volunteers. Please visit our web site at [www.rlhm.uk](http://www.rlhm.uk) or email us on [contact@rlhm.uk](mailto:contact@rlhm.uk) to see how you can help.

Derek Coombes, RLHM Trustee

# Recent History Publications

## BALH Local History News

The latest edition of Local History News is published in January, April, July and October is now available.

The Redditch History Society is a member of the British Association of Local History, which, as well providing our insurance, also supply printed copies of their quarterly publications, The Local Historian and Local History News, which is available to borrow at our meetings,

Local History News is a magazine with topical articles of interest to local historians, plus reports from local societies, record offices, museums and libraries.

The latest, and all back issues, can be downloaded at <https://www.balh.org.uk/localhistorynews>



## It's Not About Shakespeare

### Aspects of ordinary life in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1775-1915 by Val Horton

*A great deal is known about Stratford-on-Avon's remarkable Elizabethan history but very little of its more recent past. Beginning in 1775 with an Act of Inclosure through to 1914 and the First World War, this book attempts to redress that imbalance. This is a concise and compelling read, presenting the reader with a rare glimpse of local life during the 140 years concerned. Being a period of remarkable change, it brought great improvement to the town.*

*Val Horton is a witty and diligent guide as she charts her home town's other life: a stuttering journey to modernity from the squalor of the poor house via the struggles for women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery. Suddenly, Shakespeare's town seems so much more.*

262pages, 60 B/W Images, Published: 1st Dec 2019  
Paperback, £12.99.

The book has been well received. Copies are can be ordered from Waterstones and is also available via Amazon.

Val contacted me concerning the book and I bought a copy from Amazon. I have dipped into it and it is well researched and well written. If you go to Amazon it has their 'Look Inside' feature, so you can look at pages from the book to have an idea of what is inside.



## BSA: The Complete Story by Greg Pullen

With the plan to create a Redditch Motorcycle Museum, which includes both Royal Enfield and BSA (who manufactured BSA motorcycles in Redditch as well as Birmingham), you may be interested in this new book by Greg Pullen.

*According to the 'blurb' This is an epic story of rise and fall, even by the precarious standards of the British motorcycle industry. With over 170 illustrations, this book recalls the founding of the company and its foray into bicycle and then motorcycle production. It describes the evolution of the various models of motorcycles including specification tables and discusses the diversification into cars, commercial vehicles and guns for Spitfires.*

It is a large format, 22 by 27 cm publication of 176 pages.

It was published in July 2020 and costs £17.06 in Hardcover.

I have not read the book and this is information, not a recommendation.



# Redditch 90+ years ago

## Introduction

I think that it is fascinating to look at early documents describing Redditch and how it was seen at the time. I am particularly interested by the town guides which were produced up to the 1960s.

The earliest one which I have is around 1928/29, when Redditch was younger, smaller (pop 16,231 in 1921) and had a higher level of civic pride than we have today.

I have included some sections from the guide but the guide also includes Railway Services, Motor Omnibus Service, Public Services, The Redditch War Memorial, Educational Facilities, Churches and Chapels, Places of Amusement, Interesting Places in the District, Sports and Pastimes, Walks about Redditch, Cycle Rides, Miscellaneous Fact and Figures, Representative Firms and many, many adverts. It is particularly fascinating to look at how, today, the walks described in the guide now pass through housing developments rather than the countryside imagined in the 1920s. All images reproduced here have been scanned from the original document.

When the guide talks about the town centre being replaced by 'modern buildings' it is actually talking about the Victorian buildings we now consider as our historic town centre. They are, in fact, no older at that time than the Kingfisher Centre seems to us today. I hope you find my extracts interesting.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary.

## Redditch

### OFFICIAL Industrial and Commercial HANDBOOK (circa 1928/29)

#### The Centre of the Needle Industry

*Redditch, the centre of the Needle District. The words convey little that is calculated to allure the holiday-maker in search of romantic scenery, or diversions of a more or less exciting nature ; yet the town and district offer much to the tourist or casual visitor that is exceedingly attractive and interesting.*

*Situated upon the eastern edge of the county of Worcester, Redditch has grown in a comparatively few decades from an insignificant village to a large township, the centre of three important and growing industries.*

*The brief description at the head of this article will bring to the mind of the average reader visions of mills and factories, and the expectations of the visitor will, in this direction, be amply justified. Yet mills and factories do not by any means complete the picture.*

*Redditch and the district around provide a curious mixture of attractions and present some interesting contrasts.*

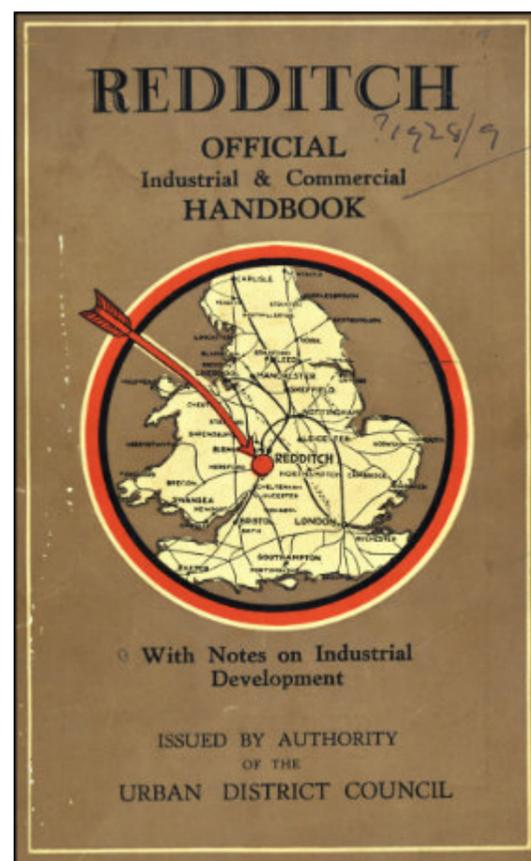
*The town prides itself chiefly upon its industries—needles, fish-hooks and fishing tackle, and cycles—and makes no claim to be considered primarily a pleasure resort, but it is healthily situated, is full of life and activity, and its immediate neighbourhood contains much that is of the highest archaeological and historic interest.*

*Standing upon the border line of well-wooded Worcestershire and Warwickshire, the scenery of the district is typically that of the Midlands—peaceful and pastoral, gently undulating for the most part, with narrow leafy lanes, fruitful fields and orchards and quiet farmsteads, presenting a marked contrast to the wild and rugged grandeur of the scenery in some parts of Wales and the northern counties.*

*Its charm lies, not in its impressive grandeur, but in its soothing restfulness, and the constant change of view it offers to the one who walks or cycles along its winding and sweet-scented lanes.*

*Within the past two or three decades much of "Old Redditch" has disappeared.*

*The quaint—but very insanitary—low-ceilinged cottages, where aforetime the outworkers plied file and hammer in the "handmaking" needle and fish-hook days, have for the most part gone, and have been replaced, in all parts of the centre of the town, with modern buildings, the change permitting of the widening of the main thoroughfares, amid which stands the commanding pile of St. Stephen's Church, with its well-kept churchyard and enclosures, and its tapering spire visible from almost any point for many miles around.*



## Redditch: OFFICIAL Industrial and Commercial HANDBOOK (circa 1928/29) cont...

### Redditch as an Industrial Centre

The local Council consider that Redditch is an ideal position for the establishment of new industries and are prepared to do all in their power to assist persons or companies desiring to do so.

Land is remarkably cheap, and good convenient sites are available adjacent to the railway. There is an abundant supply of labour of an unusually intelligent type, and the rates are amongst the lowest in the country.

There is a Development Committee appointed by the Council under the chairmanship of Councillor J. W. Hughes, who, together with his energetic Secretary, Councillor T. Hollis, are always ready to give information and service.

### Local Industries

The chief industry of the town and district is the making of needles of every sort, size, and quality. The industry was introduced from London at the end of the seventeenth century and at the moment Redditch is the acknowledged centre of the industry and its productions are met with in every corner of the civilised world. Next in importance is the manufacture of all kinds of appliances used in the fishing industry—fishhooks, lines, rods; in fact, every known device made to trap the wary denizens of the seas or rivers can be obtained in the town, not even excluding harpoons and lances for the killing of whales.

Nearly forty years ago the making of cycles was commenced and the local products have gained a world-wide reputation. It is only necessary to mention the Royal Enfield Cycle Works, which is established at Redditch, to make it quite clear that cycles and motor-cycles of the last word in efficiency and finish, are to be obtained here, and it speaks well for the energy and resourcefulness of the local manufacturers that they are prepared to meet the needs of the world in manufacturing small parts in metal to suit all requirements.

A coming industry is the manufacture of springs of all descriptions, which are now made on a large scale throughout the district.

### Public Buildings.

**The Temperance Hall**, in Worcester Road, serves the needs of the town for public meetings, concerts, etc. The Police Offices, conveniently arranged buildings, are in Church Road.

In this road also stands the **Literary and Scientific Institute** founded in 1850, and of which Colonel Hon. G. H. Windsor Clive is President. This building is to be handed over to the Urban District Council to become the Public Free Library for the town.

**Holmwood Convalescent Home**. Originally a private mansion with beautifully laid-out grounds covering 30 acres, was acquired in 1921 by the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (Grand Surrey Banner) as a Convalescent Home for its members. Several hundred of the members of the Order have already been in the institution and enjoyed its benefits. It is generally admitted to be the finest institution of its kind in the United Kingdom.

One of the most striking of the public buildings of Redditch, as it is also certainly one of the most useful, is the **Smallwood Hospital**. This splendid institution, which has accommodation for 28 in-patients—two main wards and a children's ward of eight beds each—besides dealing with a rapidly increasing number of out-patients and accidents, owes its existence to the munificence of the late Messrs. Wm. and Edwin Smallwood.

Mr. Edwin Smallwood, who died in 1892, left £5,000 for the building of a Cottage Hospital. Mr. Wm. Smallwood, his brother, residuary legatee, generously supplemented this with a gift of £15,000, and from the total fund the present commodious and well-equipped Hospital was built and was opened by the Countess of Plymouth in May 1895.



W. Terry & Co. Photo.

THE SMALLWOOD HOSPITAL.



By courtesy of H. Milward & Sons Ltd.

MODERN STAMPING AND EYING MACHINES.



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE ROYAL ENFIELD CYCLE WORKS



W. Terry & Co. Photo.

CHURCH GREEN, REDDITCH.



J. Valentine, Photo.

THE INSTITUTE, REDDITCH.