

Newsletter

March 2021 Volume 2 / Issue 8



March 'Lock Down' Issue

Hi All,

Is it really 12 months since we had our last meeting in March 2020? Amazing!

Well things have moved on and the situation certainly looks more positive- well, as you know, I am an optimist!

We just have to keep our fingers crossed that we will soon be able to resume our regular meetings, perhaps in the Autumn.

So, the Newsletter continues as our principle means of communication and I will continue to produce a monthly 8-page Newsletter if I continue to have suitable content.

At this time, I have had a lot of support regarding suitable articles, but I am, of course, looking for more.

On the next page of this Newsletter, I have given initial information on the 2021 Heritage Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum, and a personal search for information by Lisa Hughes.

On page three there is a short article by Brian Thomas, who produces a history page for the Redditch Talking Newspaper, on the iconic Anglepoise Lamp made by Terry's in Redditch. Millions of this famous lamp were produced, many are still in use today and they fetch a premium price on the antiques circuit.

Pages four and five have a narrative by Elizabeth Simpson on growing up and working in Redditch from 1951 to 1974. For those of us who grew up in the town over the same period it is so easy to visualise the shops and areas described.

So much has now gone they can only be seen through photographs, mostly black and white.

On pages six and seven Derek Coombes describes the current situation with the Redditch Local History Museum and their successful campaign to create an archive museum in the town centre.

Obviously, there is much to do but they have certainly made a good start and we wish them well.

On the final page I try to give a little insight concerning early archives. When I volunteered at Forge Mill Needle Museum, nearly 15 years ago, I was particularly interested in giving tours of the needle museum. Jo Ann gave me a selection of information to give me a background of the industry at that time and a fascinating document was a copy of an article in the 'WORKING Man' of 1866 concerning a visit to a Redditch Needle Works.

I did not really read this at the time as Jo Ann gave an excellent introduction to the subject. The problem was that in Victorian times paper was expensive and so the word count was much higher than it is today. The document I looked at has about 2,000 words per page, today it is less than half that. So, the text, printed by ridiculously small lead type was difficult to read and when, with repeated printing this became 'somewhat' worn, then the text became a difficult to read.

Converting this to a modern digital document has its problems but is rewarding in terms of information. With the time available during lockdown, I have now spent that time. I have explained the steps required to do this and I now have a Word (and pdf) version of the document. I have given on Page 8 the initial text, which is as fascinating as the rest of the document. Collecting archives is only a part of the effort, using them makes them live!

I hope that you find this issue interesting, and I am pleased to say I already have sufficient content for another 8-page Newsletter in April.

I really appreciate the support from members and supporters and, if you have a short article which you consider may be of interest to members, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Take care and stay safe.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

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Redditch History Society <http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk/>

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Help Requested

This is a request from Lisa Hughes.....

I was raised in Redditch from the age of 4 (1970) until I joined the forces at 18. My parents were a big part of the church community. This year is my Dads 80th birthday and I was hoping that I could find some information or pictures about the church that played such a big part of my early life.

My parents ran the Sunday school and my father was a church warden at St David Church in Batchley. I know that the church was pulled down to make way for a nursing home.

However I wondered if you have or could point me in the right direction so that I may be able to find some information about St Davids. We spent many many happy hours in the comfort of this community

I do not, for reasons of security, give personal e-mail addresses in the Newsletter.

If you have information on this subject you can either e-mail me anthony.green@rhs2020.org.uk. or, if you prefer, contact me, I can put you directly in contact with Lisa.

Forge Mill Heritage Open Day - 19th September 2021

From the National Organisers...

'Spring is here with its topsy-turvy weather in a continuingly topsy-turvy world. We are delighted though to confirm that your festival will go ahead in September, registration is now open and resources for inspiration and guidance are ready to download. Of course, flexibility remains the watchword and we will update guidance as required throughout the year – remember, being part of a national festival means you are not doing this alone! We look forward to working with you in the months ahead and seeing what new stories and sites you have to share.'



I have registered our Forge Mill Heritage Day with the official Heritage Open Day organisation for Sunday 19th September and have begun to get supporters on-board and so far we have....

- A range of iconic motor bikes from the Royal Enfield owners Club
- Meticulously built model boats from the Little Radford Model Boat Club
- Live music from Indigo Arts, our local community charity supporting young people.
- An exhibition of art from local artists presented by the Redditch Art Circle.
- Display from AIR (Arts in Redditch), a charitable organisation promoting and supporting arts in the area from singing and dancing to painting and crafting.
- Presentation by Scour Arts who will put on the final exhibition of the Redditch arts project which was terminated in 2020 by Covid and will be showing some plans for what's next.
- A 'taster' display from the Redditch History Society previewing the proposed exhibition on early Redditch in the Museum Gallery in November.
- Free entry into the museum - the only existing water powered scouring mill will be operating on the day. (depending on regulations at the time)
- Tours by experienced volunteer guides of the Needle Museum and the Bordesley Abbey Ruins depending on regulations at that time.
- Free entry to the current exhibition in the Museum gallery (depending on regulations at the time).
- Refreshments will be available from the volunteer manned Coffee Bar (with our new coffee machine!).

Obviously, the way the event will operate will be dependant on the regulations at the time, and, it is possible, if required, to make it a mostly outdoor socially distanced event. All this can be decided closer to the event.

The Anglepoise Lamp

by Brian Thomas

Many of you will know that the famous Anglepoise lamp was originally made in the Terrys spring factory located in Redditch town centre.

The original Anglepoise design dates back to 1934. The Terrys factory, Millsborough House, is now divided up into industrial units and is close to the Aldi store.

These Anglepoise lamps are extremely robust and many made years ago still work well.

I have an Anglepoise lamp that it is about 50 years old and it still works perfectly well. An older example is featured in a display case at the Redditch Needle Museum.

Just how robust these lamps are is well illustrated by the following example from the the Anglepoise web site.

#When an Anglepoise lamp was rescued from a crashed Vickers Wellington bomber submerged in Loch Ness in 1985 it still functioned, after a minor repair, even though it had been in the Loch for over 40 years.

Riight

*Terry's Spring Redditch Carnival float
'Lighting through the Ages - Rushlights to Anglepoise'. Date unknown.*

The photograph was probably taken outside the Terry's building along Lodge Road.

(Image from a Terry's Spring exhibition at Forge Mill Needle Museum)

Below Right

Picture of the '1227' Anglepoise lamp. This was the original design which was released in 1935 by the Terry Spring Company.

There are still many thousands, or millions, of the original Redditch made product in use today

(Image from Wikipedia Commons)



The Anglepoise brand lamp is regarded as a design icon. Some of the older examples of this lamp are now much sought after and sell for high prices.

Some of the newest design Anglepoise lamps are made in the style of the lamps made in the 1930s.

The Anglepoise at that time would have used a 25-watt incandescent bulb and would not emit a strong light.

The day World War Two broke out press adverts featured the lamp as "The ideal blackout light"

These lamps were somewhat controversial at the BBC.

In 1949 the head of the BBC Variety Dept sent around a memo stating that staff should not use an Anglepoise lamp unless additional lighting was used as well.

The theory was that anyone using only a low wattage lamp would be more likely to have furtive ideas and produce degenerate programme materials. This edict was later rescinded.



Growing up in Redditch: 1951-1974

by Elizabeth Simpson

I was born in Redditch in 1951. My mother's family had lived near the centre of the town since the beginning of the 19th century and lived through the great expansion of the town during the last 200 years.

My parents moved into a new house in Vicarage Crescent, off Bromsgrove Road, which was built just after the war.

My brother was born in the winter of 1947, when heavy snow covered the town, making it very difficult to get out of the road with a pram.

My grandparents lived around the corner, near the beginning of Bromsgrove Road and their house backed onto what had been St Stephen's Vicarage, hence the name of our road.

The vicarage had been turned into a clinic, by this time and I can remember going there to the school dentist.

In 1956 I started at Bridge Street School, which faced the bottom of Britten Street.

I can still remember the first day I went, as we each had to wear a colourful name tag on our clothes, so that the teachers knew who we were. When we were told to get our coats on, in the middle of the day, I presumed it was time for lunch, so carried straight back home.

I hadn't realised that I should have returned to the classroom, which must have caused some consternation to the teacher, having lost me!

This was the same school as my mother had attended back in the 1920's. It was later renamed Holyoakes Field School, whilst I was still there.

Right

*Bridge Street
School
(Holyoakes
Field School)
today*



Below Right

*Mount
Pleasant
Shops*

Whilst I was still at primary school, I would often visit my grandma, who was managing my uncle's sports shop on Mount Pleasant during the 1950's, next to the barber.

It was quite a large 4 storey building with a basement accessed from outside, which is where she stored the maggots for fishing and I was often asked to go and fill a tin for a customer.

At this time my mother worked from home, by making fishing rods and nets for my uncle, to sell in the shop. I was able to earn my pocket money by threading the wire around the top of the fishing nets ready to put onto the canes.



In 1962 I passed my 11 Plus and started that autumn at Redditch County High School. Although I had been given a new bike for passing the exam, I was unable to use it for several weeks during the winter of 1962/3 due to the very heavy snow falls and ice which covered the town for many weeks.

By the time I was 14 I got my first part-time job, after school, at Dyers hardware shop in Alcester Street. I helped out in the office with the paperwork and got fairly proficient at filing, a skill which has been very useful throughout my working life. At times they got me to help with stocking the shelves and working behind the scenes, but not at the counters.

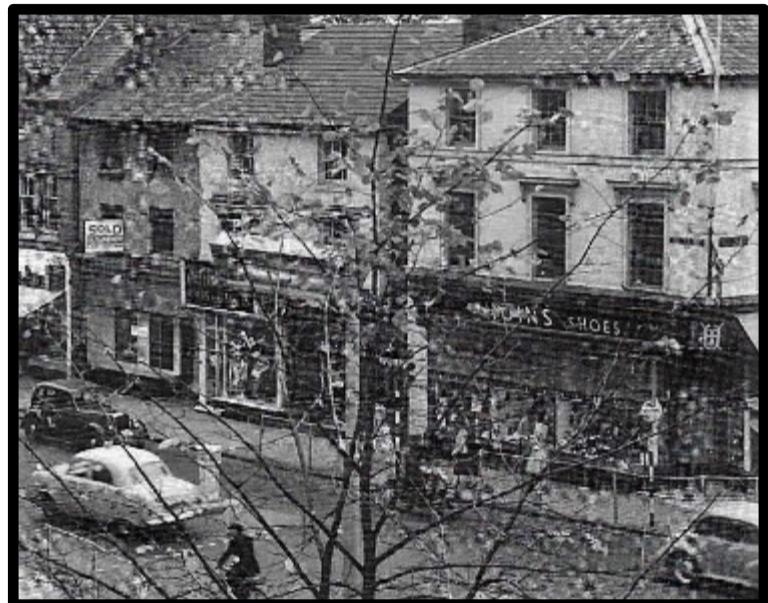
Growing up in Redditch: 1951-1974 Continued

I left the High School at 16 and moved on to Redditch College of Further Education in Archer Road.

This also incorporated the old Technical College, which my mother had attended and St Stephen's School where my grandmother had gone.

Whilst at the college I studied for my ONC in Business Studies for two years. The old school had become a common room for students and we would often be playing music there and discussing the latest tunes in the charts.

During this time, I would sometimes get the bus from Redditch to go to Birmingham for a concert at the Town Hall and listen to bands like Manfred Mann, The Kinks and The Move. It was a fun time and I would buy material off the large material stall on the market, to make new fashionable clothes to wear.



Whilst at the College I got a new part-time job at Huins shoe shop at the corner of Evesham Street, opposite the church. I was paid the princely sum of 30 shillings (£1.50) a day and this helped to pay for my driving lessons.

I got my first full-time job in 1969, which was in Bromsgrove working in an administration role for the NHS. At the time, I had to catch the bus to work, until I was able to save enough money to buy my first car, a second-hand Riley Elf.

I was very proud of that car, unfortunately I only found out that the sub-frame was held together by chicken wire and papier-mâché, when it broke down one day and had to be towed home.

After a year in the offices, I moved to a clerical job at Lea Hospital, also in Bromsgrove, before going on to a more senior role at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham.

So by this time I was spending less time in the town, which was just starting to change, as the new town was being developed.

I came back to work in Redditch in 1974, just before I got married, working for West Mercia Police. Where I helped to set up the new Divisional Office, in what had been the old Inspector's House at the end of Church Road.

The new town provided the opportunity to buy a new house on Winyates, as that part of the town was being developed.

This was a time when 'gazumping' was happening in the property market and we were lucky to secure a property directly from the builder.

There are some who moan about the changes made to the town in the last 50 years, but like my family before me, it is something to embrace and move with the times.

Top

Huins Shoe Shop on the corner of the town.

Right

Church Road pre-'New Town'



Redditch Local History Museum Progress Report

By Derek Coombes

In a previous article in the History Society Newsletter, we told you all about our plans for the creation of a Redditch Local History Museum.

I would like to give you and update on how we are progressing with those plans.

We officially launched the project at the beginning of November, you perhaps saw the write up in the Redditch Standard:

<https://redditchstandard.co.uk/news/hopes-are-high-for-new-local-history-museum-showcasing-redditch-achievements/>

As you will recall we formed the Redditch Local History Museum as a Charitable Incorporated Organization, a "light" form of charity.

This gives us many advantages including access to more grant funding opportunities.

Fundraising has been one of our main activities since November and our target was to raise at least £15,000 to fund the first year of operation.

Right
One of several documents recently donated to the museum archives.

As of the beginning of March we have raised about £12,000 and we are confident we can reach our target.

Our fundraising is based upon three streams, public donations, business sponsorship and grants.

Our funding so far has come from the first two, but we have an application pending with Redditch Borough Council for support from their Voluntary Community Sector scheme and we are also in discussion with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Heritage Lottery Fund proposal we are progressing is for significant sums to develop two themes.

Firstly, we are seeking funding to establish a professional Archiving system and secondly to provide a range of Community Outreach services. Still a long way to go but feedback from the HLF is very encouraging



Redditch Local History Museum Progress Report

continued....

Right

An example of archives transferred from Redditch History Society to the Redditch Local History Museum.

Consisting of two Deposit Ledgers from 1859 to 1889 and 1892 to 1927 both approx. 33cm high, 22 cm wide, 4 cm deep, plus three Notebooks of Minutes of Meeting 1872 to 1878, 1885 to 1890 and 1885 to 1899 each approx. 23cm high, 19 cm wide, 0.8 to 1.8 cm deep.



If you would like to donate and support our project, please visit our on-line donations page at www.donate.rlhm.uk.

The second important development is that we have identified a property in the Market Place/Church Green area suitable for the museum which has a 1,900sq ft to both store and display historic artefacts.

We are in negotiations with landlord on leasing the property for three years and they are sympathetic to our cause and have offered us discounted lease rates for the first 18 months.

Such a facility could be a key element in the plans for improving the Church Green Conservation area recently published by Redditch Borough Council.

We are also very grateful to the Redditch History Society who have supported us by transferring the extensive collection of artefacts collected by the society over to the museum.

This transfer both secures the archives for future generation to enjoy and gives us a head start in content to display in the museum.

We hope very much that the Museum and the History Society will work closely together to promote Redditch history and heritage in the future, so we welcome Redditch History Society members to join our team.

Derek Coombes,
Redditch Local History Museum Trustee
Web Site: www.rlhm.uk
E-mail: dc@rlhm.uk

The WORKING Man

A Weekly Record of Social and Industrial Progress

Vol 1 No 9 Saturday March 3rd 1866 Price 2D, Stamped 3D

There is nothing more interesting than contemporary descriptions of Redditch in early times as it helps to understand how the town and its industry was seen at that time. The article in the 'WORKING Man' of 1866, gives a description of needle manufacture in the town at that time.

For modern readers, used to the internet and modern printing methods, this is difficult to read due to the high density of text and the poor quality of printing at that time. So, to convert this to a modern document, other than retying the whole document, there are several 'short cuts' possible.

- Scan the document and produce an image file of at least 600 dpi.
- Pass the image file through an OCR (Optical Character Recognition) Program, I use the market leader ABBY FineReader, to convert this to text.
- Pass the text through Word to find obvious errors in the text produced by the OCR program.
- Finally, compare the Word text errors with the original text to resolve the final errors.

This is very time consuming but the result gives a fascinating insight into Redditch at that time and I have given a transcript of the initial text as well as an example of the scanned text.



One hundred millions a week! One hundred millions of needles made in the Redditch needle district alone, each week in the year, and distributed over the world from Kamchatka to New Zealand

At what date the manufacture was introduced into this place is uncertain—tradition says in Cromwell's time. However, one firm at least has existed from the year 1730; and during the last fifty years Redditch has been gradually growing in size, and the amount of its trade, until, from an insignificant village, it has become a thriving, busy town, leaving far behind in the race Studley, Alcester, and the adjacent needle districts, and making itself the chief emporium of needles for the whole world. It is beautifully situated, about twelve miles from Birmingham, upon the boundary line between Worcestershire and Warwickshire, but chiefly in the former county. Population, about 6,000.

The town possesses a handsome Protestant church, also one devoted to the Roman Catholics, and chapels in connection with the Wesleyan, Independent, Methodist Free Church, and Primitive Methodist denominations. It has also a newspaper, a literary institute, a working-man's institute (the latter well conducted and supported), good national, Wesleyan, and private schools, &c.

Nor are these means of education without their legitimate effect upon the community. There is a great and visible change in the habits, deportment, and modes of speech of the artisans. Thirty years ago, they were comparatively rude and uncultivated, and used an uncouth, broad, 'Worcestershire dialect, half unintelligible to strangers; but now all that is rapidly passing away. They are very neat and clean in appearance, as compared with the mechanics of other manufacturing towns, orderly in manner, and generally intelligent, whilst not a few evince powers of thought and intellect of no mean order.

We are indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Richard Turner, manufacturer, of Redditch, for the illustration of needle-making at the head of this article and will now proceed to describe the different processes of manufacture.

Redditch, the Metropolis of Needle-making.

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