

August 2021 Issue

Hi all,

Well, we made it and what a relief after 15 months of closure.

It was really nice to see people again in a meeting after such a long time.

As it was in August and so many of our members would be taking advantage of the opening up of holidays, visiting children, grandchildren, and friends, we had no idea how many people would turn up for the meeting.

In the event we had 31 members re-joined, 3 new members and 4 visitors, which was 38 in all. This is fairly typical of an August meeting, which is a great result.

We put in place all the safeguards which were described in last month's Newsletter, and everyone abided by the requirements with regard to facemasks etc.

Our meeting started, as usual, at 2.00 pm and I gave a talk on the needle industry. This had a few glitches.

This was self-induced as, after 15 months, giving a presentation requires experience of how PowerPoint works.

The next day I gave a presentation to a community group in Barnt Green with no problems. Typical!

We did not have refreshments afterwards as the room we use for this is not suitable for social distancing, but this was not a problem.

In this newsletter we have...

On page 2 is the 'Coming Events' section.

- Next months presentation by Don Vincent, where you will always learn something new
- Redditch Local History Museum, which, after many difficulties, will be opening in the Autumn and should be supported
- Forge Mill Heritage Open Day, which is a free open day which attracts more local community groups every year and well worth supporting.

Page 3 and 4 is the report of the presentation I gave at the August meeting on the Redditch Needle Industry.

It is quite difficult to report a presentation given by yourself, so I have chosen to create it in the 'third person'.

Pages 5 and 6 concerns his memories of growing up in Redditch by Wayne Harris.

This is the concluding second part; the first part was given in last month's newsletter and covers the period from school to today.

Pages 7 and 8 is a look at place names by Don, our chairman. Always interesting and well worth a read.

Next Meeting...

We hope to see many members and supporters at our meeting on the 13th of September.

I will send an update before the meeting to outline the measures concerning Coronavirus in accordance with the government recommendations and the measures at the Oasis Christian Centre.

Take care and stay safe

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

E-mail: anthony.green@rhs2020.org.uk Tel: 01527 61434

Coming up.....

Next Meeting

The talk on Monday, 13th September is 'The Windsors' by our Chairman, Don Vincent.

He looks at the family who were forced by Henry VIII into giving up their lands and property in London and accept a swap with the Bordesley Abbey possessions.

Thus, the Windsors became our local aristocracy and had a big influence on the town for 400 years.

We will continue to ensure the well being of our members by requesting face-masks be worn and the Oasis Church will have social distanced seating.

No decision has yet been taken concerning refreshments and we will let everyone know before the meeting.

Redditch Local History Museum

The Redditch Local History Museum, is a charitable trust and is a separate organisation from the Redditch History Society, which is a community group with a different constitution but with the same aim of promoting Redditch history.

The Museum has been created by members of the Society and the Redditch History Society archives have been transferred to the museum to form the basis of the collection. The museum continues to collect archives which will be displayed at the museum.

The museum is a volunteer run organisation and so has a need for volunteers to manage the archives, create the exhibits and to run the museum on a day-to-day basis. Enthusiasm for local history is the key requirement.

The Museum is planned to open in September/October and the volunteers are working hard to make everything ready.



The site of the Redditch Local History Museum in Market Place.

Contact: Derek Coombes

Tel: 01527 404365

E-mail: dc@rlhm.uk

Heritage Open Day Forge Mill Needle Museum Sunday 19th September 2021

The leaflet for our volunteers organised Heritage Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor on the 19th of September has been updated.

Sadly the Redditch Arts Circle no longer exists but Arts in Redditch (AIR) will be offering a gallery in the Meeting Room where local artists can exhibit and sell their art. AIR will also have a gazebo with other events.

In addition to Indigo Arts we will have the exciting addition of Clem Dalloway to provide live music throughout the day.

In addition to our current leaflet, the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust will be on site with a stand to encourage young and old to be involved in our natural environment.

This is a free community event which is supported by the Redditch History Society and other local organisations.



After a difficult 2020, when we had to produce a virtual event, we want to make 2021 the best ever. We have had an amazing level of support from local groups and, provided nothing goes wrong regarding taming the virus, we hope to make this a real success.

Amongst the wide range of local activities activities which we will have are:

- 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.
- Additional live music from local musician Clem Dalloway
- Exhibition of art from local artists some of which is available for purchase.
- 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.
- Redditch Local History exhibitions
- 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 'A Journey into Marvel', an exhibition by Lee Bradley in the Museum gallery (the penultimate day of the exhibition).
- Refreshments will be available from the Mill View Coffee Bar

The Event runs from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm.

Heritage Open Days celebrates England's fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to places that normally have an admission charge. Our event has steadily increased in support from local groups since we began, and we, the volunteers at the Museum, appreciate the continued support given by 'Rubicon Leisure Redditch' to our efforts.

August Presentation - by Anthony Green

The Story of the Needle and how Redditch became the manufacturing centre for the World

The needle is possibly one of the first tools devised by early man, although the fishhook has an equivalent lineage, and the basic design is of a pointed device with a hole through which a fibre, made from suitable material, could be threaded.

Needles date back thousands of years and bone, and wood were popular materials as it could be easily carved with simple tools. The oldest needle found dated back 50,000 years.

The related knitting pin dates back from the 11th century but the complexity of the finds suggest that knitting is older than the archaeological record can prove. Finds from medieval cities all over Europe show the spread of knitted goods for everyday use from the 14th century onward.

The earliest metal 'quality' needles were made in Europe by craftsmen who made a needle from beginning to end.

This was semi-industrialised with craftsmen in workshops, but it still depended on very simple tools and no 'mechanisation'.

Needle-making began in England during the late Tudor period when protestants, often Huguenots from France, fled catholic persecution to settle in protestant states, bringing their trades with them.

They set up in London and, like many trades, had their own London Guild. The Worshipful Company imposed restrictive conditions upon the needle makers working within a ten-mile radius of London Bridge which were designed to protect their members, but they inevitably reduced innovation.

So, many began leaving the metropolis for areas less restrictive.

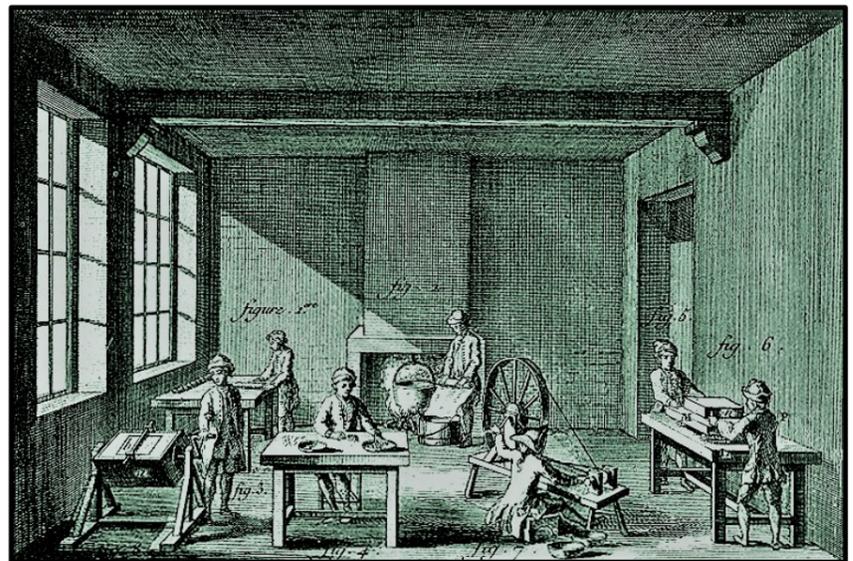
Possibly the earliest needle maker we know about in the area is William Lea (or Lee) of Studley. He may have learned his trade in London, then returned home and passed it on. He is recorded as being leader of a rising needle industry based at Studley and Sambourne.

However, this early industry was based on the cottage system and produced an expensive low volume product with limited availability.

Although many other areas in England, including Long Crendon, Chichester, Dorchester, Colchester and Much Wenlock, the Redditch district became predominant in the manufacture of needles and associated products such as knitting-pins and fishhooks.

There are a number of reasons why this occurred

- From about 1730, waterpower began to be used in the Redditch Needle District. Medieval corn mills along the Arrow were converted to needle manufacture and new needle scouring mills were built.
- The River Arrow was ideal for water mills as it was a 'well behaved' river, not subject to serious flooding, with the clay subsoil not susceptible to dry out and easy to control.
- Introduction of the Factory System, where each task was carried out by a skilled tradesman and mechanical devices were created by the innovatory skills of early Redditch manufacturers like Abel Morrall and Henry Milward.
- Redditch was close to important markets, such as glove making in Worcester and the wide range of industries in and around Birmingham.



An image of a needle workshop from *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers 1751-1772* - note the use of simple tools.

August Presentation cont

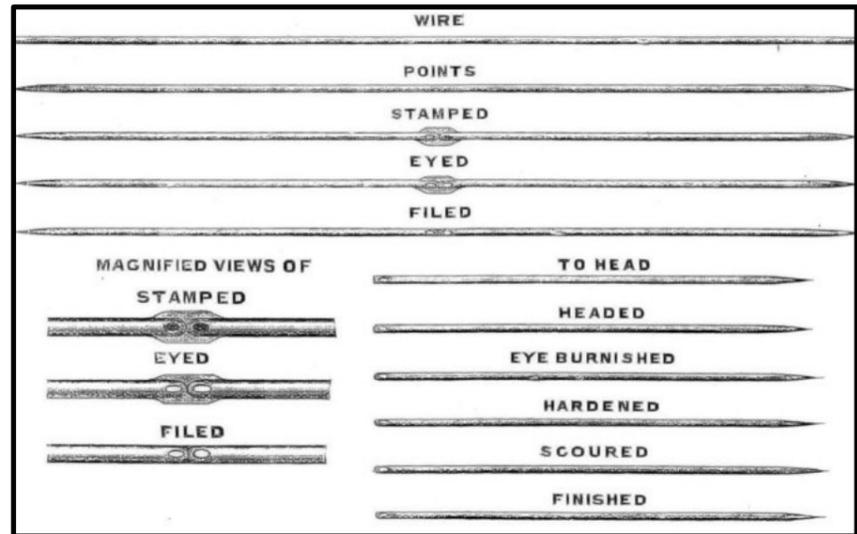
Gradually, the other needle making centres closed - London needle making was dead by 1750 and by 1862, Redditch was the only town in the country making needles on a mass basis.

The presenter then explained how needles were made in Redditch in the 19th Century using exhibits from the Forge Mill Needle Museum.

This included a description of the scouring process which was driven by the water wheel and cleaned, polished, and plated the needles.

This was an important final process and was a major reason why by the end of the 19th Century the Redditch Needle District produced 100 million needles a week which was 90% of the worlds production.

Redditch needles were exported all over the world to as far away as Jamaica and the Far East.



The steps in manufacturing a needle

Henry Milward and Abel Morrall were the largest manufacturers within the Needle District. There were many more including WM Bartleet and Sons, John James and Sons, The British Needle Company, P Spencer and Sons, George Moore, Jonah Warner, and others.

Every form of needle was produced from sewing needles to hypodermic needles. Some companies specialised; others produced a wide range of products.

Many of the needle manufacturers also produced fishhooks and knitting pins. By the end of the 19th Century the Redditch needle making district had a virtual monopoly of British needle manufacture and became to world centre of needle production

From the early 19th century onwards, the Arrow became less important as steam power allowed manufacturers to move away from the river.

The town expanded and, as well as Needles, Fishhooks and Fishing Tackle, Springs and Anglepoise Lamp, Royal Enfield Motor Bikes, Industrial Batteries, High Duty Alloys aircraft components, BSA, and many more, industries were based in the town, but the Arrow Valley was not involved and remained relatively unchanged.

The population steadily increased due to needle making and the new industries generated by the expertise created by the industry until when it was declared a 'New Town' it was about 30,000.

Henry Milward and Sons played an active part in the amalgamation of the needle industry in the town.

It absorbed some local companies and became the "English Needle and Fishing Tackle Company Ltd." (ENTACO) in 1932.

This company became Needle Industries Ltd., in May 1946 and, in 1961, following further mergers it became "Needle Industries Group Ltd. "

In 1973 the textile company "Coats Paton" of Paisley, Glasgow took over the structure. In 1984 Coats Paton also took over the second largest needle-making group in the area, the Aero Needles Group Ltd., formerly bel Morrall Ltd, forming the largest needle company in the world, and, at its peak, employing 15,000 people.

With the flooding of the world markets by low cost Far East products, Needle Industries began to suffer and quickly ran into difficulty. It was drastically reduced in size and was saved by a management buy-out in 1991.

This company moved to the Washford Industrial Estate and continues to manufacture Redditch made sewing needles under the John James brand.



The scouring beds at the Forge Mill Needle Museum

Growing up in Redditch - Part 2

by Wayne Harris

Conclusion of Part 1.....

My last speech day at the school was memorable because Mr. Jarvis, the Head Teacher, was retiring and all my friends in 5A would be leaving too.

It was really the end of my State School period of education and the beginning of my life in the world of work.

By the end of the Summer Term 1962 I had been offered a job as a laboratory assistant at Redditch Gas Works, provisional on my passing my GCE "O" Level Physics with Chemistry. When the results letter came I had passed that as well as English Language and Literature, too. Consequently, I left Lodge Farm on a Thursday and started at the Gas Works on the following Monday.

Right:

**Lodge Farm Country
Secondary School
Form 5A
1962**

**Photograph from Wayne
Harris**



My work there consisted of mainly quality testing of the Town Gas, which was made at the gas works and testing various by products produced by the gas making process.

I was paid the princely sum of £30.00 per month for the first year there, rising to £38.00 during my second year.

Out of this I gave my mother 30 shillings a week housekeeping, then 40 shillings. I was enrolled on a one day a week Science Course at Redditch College which consisted of Physics, Chemistry and Maths.

The course was the Union of Educational Institutions Senior Course in Metallurgy. I passed both the first year and second year of this course.

However, I realized that this particular job was not really fulfilling my interest in chemistry and began looking for another job.

I applied for and was accepted for the position of laboratory assistant at British Cast Iron Research Association in Rowney Green.

Growing up in Redditch - Part 1 ... continued

I duly started work in the Spectrography Lab in July 1964. After spending about six months there I moved down the corridor to the Chemistry Lab. Here I learned to analyse samples of cast iron for various chemicals which were added to the molten metal to improve its properties.

Once more I also went on day release to further my science education eventually passing "O" Levels in Maths and Chemistry. During my 5 years at the lab, I assisted in a number research projects as well as the training of various apprentices who were seconded to the centre from businesses connected with cast iron.

The training aspect of my work awakened an interest in teaching, and I decided to find out more about this career. As a result, I spent a further two years acquiring "A" Level English which enabled me to apply for a Teacher Training course at Westhill College of Education. I was accepted and started my first year there in September 1969.

After three years I passed the exams to become a qualified Junior/Secondary teacher, which was well suited to the new 3 tier system just becoming established. I applied to several schools in the Redditch area, but was surprised to be called for an interview at the then Alvechurch Junior School.

After the interview I was offered a post as a probationary teacher for science and general teaching. Having successfully completed the probationary year I was offered a permanent post at what was now Alvechurch Middle School and remained there until I retired in 2006.

Right:

Redditch College

1964

The main entrance was in

Archer Road

Photograph from Wayne Harris



Perhaps the events which are most vivid in my memory are the opening of the new shopping centre and the Queen's Jubilee. I have lived in Redditch all my life and observed many changes.

Although the town has its new shopping centre and considerable outlying expansion I do not consider that the destruction of the town centre, along with numerous dwellings etc has all been for the good. No doubt the majority of "new residents" are unaware of how much the original town has been altered.

Perhaps the most noticeable change from my childhood has been the lack of trust and loss of neighbourliness which seems a sad reflection of modern-day attitudes.

In conclusion I would like to see the town centre regenerated by means of a mixture of affordable housing, small independent shops, and places of entertainment catering for a variety of ages.

A short look at place names

By Don Vincent

I wonder if you have ever given much thought to the names of our villages towns and cities. Perhaps you just take them at face value. Yet they are quite descriptive. They can give an indication of site or situation. They can give an indication of purpose or ownership. They may give an indication of geographical and/or physical aspects.

Many have endings connected with the language of the different colonising tribes and nations. Ley or Leigh are Anglo-Saxon in origin indicating a woodland clearing or glade. They normally, then, have some connection with an ancient forest. Locally we have Bordesley, Ipsley, Beoley connected to the Royal Forest of Feckenham and Henley-in-Arden which obviously connected to the Forest of Arden.

Bordesley would therefore be Bord's woodland glade or clearing. While Ipsley could refer to a person's (Ippa) woodland glade. In the Domesday book it is spelt Epeslei and is the King's land. Well, if it is part of a royal forest, it would be.

Many of the endings are Anglo-Saxon. For instance, den -a dwelling place; trey- a tree; don- a hill; ton- a farmstead; ham- simply a hamlet. bury; comes from Burh meaning a fortified place.

Most of us know that wich shows a connection with brine e.g., Droitwich, Nantwich etc. The ending wich is not to be confused with wick which indicates a place used for a special purpose for instance Smethwick the place of the smiths.

We probably also know that cester or chester signifies a Roman station we might not know that it comes from the Anglo-Saxon ceaster.

Ford is pretty obviously signifying a crossing place on a stream or river.

A great many places in the Alne, Arrow and Avon valleys carry this as part of their name. An interesting one is Salford Priors. This shows it to be a crossing point on a river (The Arrow) for salt traders. They would have travelled from the Droitwich area probably on their way to Bidford to join up with the roman road (Icknield Street/Ryknild street) that ran from its junction, at Bourton on the Water, with the Fosse Way all the way north to Templeborough (S Yorks.), maybe as far as Tynemouth.

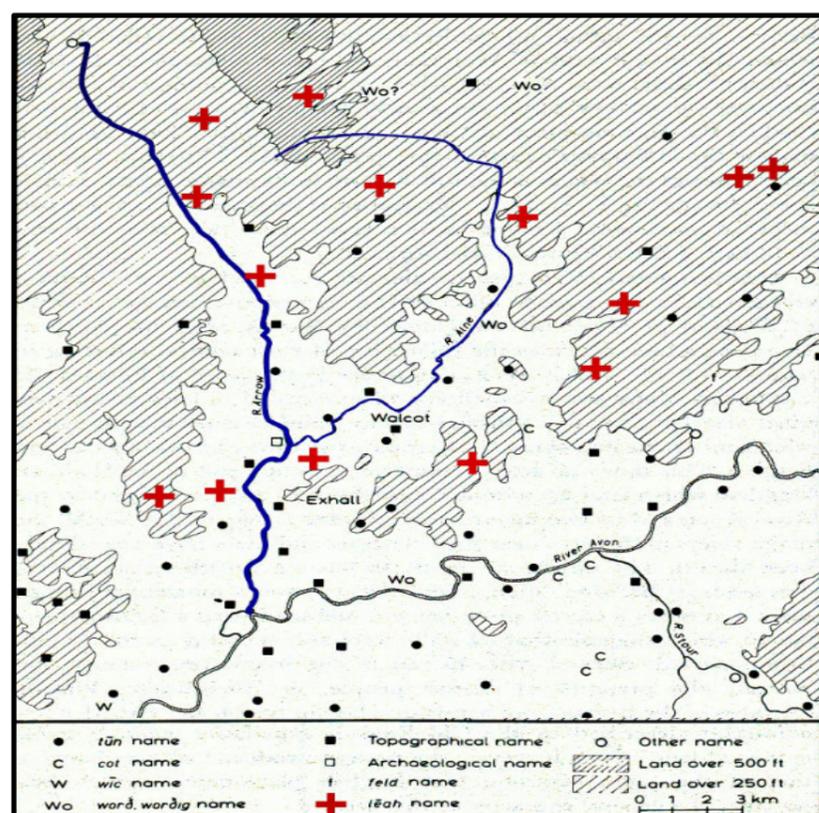
The 'priors' bit is due to the fact that the manor was gifted to Kenilworth Priory around 1125. This being the time of the establishment of that Augustinian community. The original priory would later, in about 1439, become Kenilworth Abbey. Near by Salford is another 'salford' Abbots Salford.

It is at Abbots Salford that the river Arrow flows into the Warwickshire Avon. Abbots Salford was gifted to Evesham Abbey in the eighth century.

Occurrence of the use of the Anglo-Saxon suffix leigh or ley for place names in the Arrow valley area.

This is not surprising as the area was within the Feckenham Forest and so the use of the term denoting a clearing was prevalent.

(Image from The Anglo-Saxon Landscape, The Kingdom on the HWICCE by Della Hooke.)



A short look at place names..... continued

Rivers always figure prominently in place names, perhaps because of the difficulty of travel over land. Thus, we have bridge; on; upon; mouth; ferry; as well as the aforementioned ford.

Church is another prominent ending the meaning being obvious and useful especially concerning the payment of tithes, burial taxes or other church expenses. Church would indicate the relevant parish.

Of course, it is not just in England that descriptive place names are found. Except that these are no longer related to Anglo-Saxon origin.

In Wales there can be found Aber the mouth of a river as in Aberdovey; the mouth or estuary of the river Dovey.

Then there is llyn a lake notably an upland lake as in Llyn Brianne. A man-made lake on the headwaters of the river Tywi in Carmarthenshire.

Like the English church the Welsh have Llan as in Llantrisant the church of the three saints. Which happens to be the home of The Royal Mint.

Wales is a land of hills and valleys, so we have cwm –a valley as in Cwmbran –the valley of the crows. A new town in 1949 to provide employment for those losing work in the South Wales coalfield.

Scotland is something of an enigma. if we take the Great Glen, it includes Loch Ness, as the dividing line then roughly north and west of that glen The Gaelic would have been spoken.

While south and east there would have been Scots or lowland Scots. The difference can be easily seen in the name of places connected with the mouth of rivers.

So, we have Inverness, Invergordon, Inveraray all referring to the mouth of that particular river. The Inver here is a corruption of the Gaelic Inbhir meaning mouth of the river.

We also have Aberdeen, Aberfeldy etc. Scots is a language very close to Welsh and also the language spoken in Ulster and the Isle of Man. This is why the prefix Aber appears in both places. Church in Scotland tends to be come Kirk. As in Kirkcaldy. Kirk also appears on the IOM e.g Kirkmichael

So why is Redditch so named? No idea! The ditch could refer to a drainage ditch or water course draining, into the river Arrow, low lying waterlogged clay. The 'Red' part? Was the land a rusty colour or was it a corruption of someone's name? Perhaps Reed. Or perhaps the ditch was very reedy? One pays one's money etc.

This has only been a short uneducated look at British place names. A subject that could be very interesting and informative.

