

## November 2021 Issue

Hi All,

We had a total of 40 at the meeting which consisted of 32 members and 8 visitors. Our current membership is now 48, which is a very encouraging result with regard to the current situation.

Obviously, with only 3 meetings left before our 2022 AGM in April we do not expect many 'joiners' before that date as it is less costly to pay for each meeting than join (re-join) the Society.

Copies of our new leaflet and programme for 2022 were distributed at the meeting.

There will be further copies available at our December meeting and, the programme will then be put on our website.

### In this newsletter we have...

On page 2 is the 'Coming Events' section where we have.

- Forge Mill Needle Museum Christmas Craft Fair in the Cloisters. Forge Mill invites you to join them for some seasonal fun Sunday 5th and Sunday 12th December 2021 from 11.00am to 4.00pm.
- The new Redditch Local History Museum was recently officially opened by former borough councillor Pat Witherspoon and is now open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 4pm.
- Our December (Christmas) Meeting on Monday 13th December 2021 at 2.00 pm. will have a 'seasonal' presentation 'Redditch in the Snow- the winter of 1962/63' by Anthony Green followed by festive refreshments.

On the remaining 6 pages I decided to do something quite different to normal with regard to the presentation 'Redditch between the Wars' given by Sue Tatlow.

Sue gave an excellently researched presentation on Redditch between the end of the first World War to the beginning of the Second World War and so I asked Sue for her notes to allow me to do the write-up for the newsletter.

When I converted the printed notes it worked out over 6,000 words, which is enough, with pictures, for a small book!

To fit this into the 6 pages available, I reduced this, finally, to about half the original size which, with a few pictures, makes this a nice little article. I also spent some time researching suitable images to enhance Sue's text.

I am pleased with this departure from the usual newsletter, if there is such a thing as a typical newsletter, and I hope that you enjoy reading it.

### Next Meeting...

We hope to see many members and supporters at final meeting of the year on the 13th of December.

We will continue to conduct our meeting 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: [e-mail secretary@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk) Tel: 01527 61434

# Coming up.....

## Forge Mill Needle Museum Christmas Craft Fair in the Cloisters

Forge Mill invites you to join them for some seasonal fun Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021 from 11.00am to 4.00pm.

Browse for gifts in our covered cloisters area and enjoy some Christmas music alongside some festive refreshments.

- A variety of craft stalls offering unique Christmas gifts
- Festive music on both days.
- Light refreshments at the Mill Side coffee bar.
- Visit Father Christmas in his grotto (11.00am to 3.00pm)
- Make a decoration for the tree

FREE ENTRY



## Redditch Local History Museum Now Open

The new Redditch Local History Museum was recently officially opened by former borough councillor Pat Witherspoon cutting the ribbon.

Pat, who also chairs Redditch Older People's Forum, was joined by well-wishers, museum trustees and volunteers for the ceremony.

The museum is on Market Place opposite St Stephen's Church. It showcases archives from the town's past and includes valuable documents showing the development of the town through the centuries.

Redditch Local History Museum is open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 4pm and entry cost is £2.



Picture from the Redditch Standard

## Our December (Christmas) Meeting - 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021

When we planned the programme for the reopening of the Society meeting in August we had no idea what was going to happen. Would there be a new lockdown? Could we continue to the end of the year? So, we quickly put together a programme and left December as simply a 'Christmas Social'.

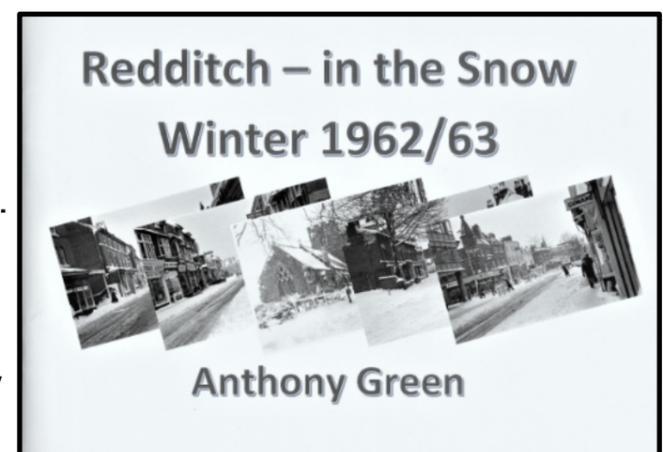
However, now it has arrived we need to do something!

Last December, we did a 'bumper' Newsletter and I did a short article using some of the pictures I took during the snow of 1962/63. I have since taken the best 21 photographs and turned them into a modest 48 page book of images and text.

So, for the December meeting I am converting the book into a presentation which we will have, as usual, at the beginning of the meeting.

This will be followed, as normal for our December event, with festive refreshments: tea/coffee with biscuits and mince pies.

The meeting begins at 2.00pm and is, of course, is at the Oasis Christian Centre.



# November Presentation

## Redditch between the Wars - by Sue Tatlow

After the end of the Great War it was impossible for Redditch to return to its pre-war state. The world had changed, the country had changed, and Redditch had changed.

The town and district had lost over four hundred of its sons and many more had returned broken in body and spirit. They needed homes 'Fit for Heroes', work, good health, good education for their children, and enjoyable leisure time.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1919 a 'Peace Day' was held to celebrate the signing of the peace treaty in Versailles. Following services of thanksgiving held in the local churches on the Sunday before, the day began with a peal of bells from St Stephens church and a civic procession was formed and weaved its way around the town.

The parade finished on Church Green at the west door of the church where a platform was set up and a short service was held. The council chair made a speech which was followed by a concert sung by the specially formed peace choir. For the rest of the day the town band and the volunteer band played at the kiosk.

The returning service men were treated to local 'welcome homes' through 1919, the largest one being the town's 'Welcome Home' which was held on September the 26<sup>th</sup>. A procession was formed at the Artillery Barracks in Easemore road and proceeded round the town finishing at St Stephen's church for a short service and speeches then the men marched down to the Royal Enfield for dinner in their canteen.

Even before the end of the war there was a growing need for people who had lost someone in the conflict to have a place to remember them. Not everyone could make a pilgrimage to France or Belgium to a name on a monument or visit a war cemetery where their relatives grave was. In the latter years of the war, there was a custom of setting up War shines in streets and churches. Redditch and area had at least two; one on the west wall of St Philips church in Webheath with the names of both the fallen and those still serving, and the other was in St Stephens set up to remember the members of the scouts that had joined up. There was a need to be able to have somewhere in the town, village, or parish where people could gather to mourn and remember.

Sambourne was the first village to have a war memorial unveiled on Boxing Day 1919. Soon other villages and parishes had their own memorials, Beoley's war memorial is located halfway up Beoley hill, and by 1922 most of the memorials had been set up. St Stephens, and Mount Carmel in Redditch, St Luke's, Headless Cross, St John the Baptist, Feckenham. All were Memorial Crosses with names carved on the base and stand in the churchyards.

At the end of 1919 a war memorial committee was formed, and a town meeting was held to find out how its inhabitants wanted to commemorate those who never returned. It was decided that a public hall for the use of all the inhabitant of the town would be the most fitting memorial. Two sites were looked at in the town, one in Easemore Road and the other in Walford Street. However, the cost was too high and after a year or two, two members of the committee had resigned through ill health, and so five years later a new committee and a new plan had taken root.

The council had acquired a piece of land fronting Plymouth Road from the Hewell Estate. Originally it may have been earmarked for an extension to the Plymouth Road Cemetery, however the plan was to convert this into Garden of Remembrance laid out as a park. This was also abandoned as too expensive and was taking too long to complete. The Earl of Plymouth resolved this by giving the triangle of land between Cemetery Lane and Plymouth Road, which was owned by the Plymouth Estate, to the town for the memorial.



*Public opening of St Stephens  
Memorial Cross in 1922*

## Redditch between the Wars by Sue Tatlow - 2

In May 1927, General Sir Frances Davis unveiled the town's official War Memorial.

The memorial was designed by the Bromsgrove Guild and was in the shape of a pylon with an opening at the top in which a bronze torch shone day and night.

This was an electric light; the pylon was built of Portland stone standing on a York stone base with words carved on the base.

A sizeable percentage of the town was in attendance at the unveiling including 500 ex-service men.



In 1919 and 1920 the returning service men were coming back to a town that was readjusting from wartime production to peacetime production. The speed that the government was demobilising its army was faster than normal peace time manufacturing could absorb them.

In November 1918, the men under arms were nearly four million, this was reduced to a million in 12 months and a quarter of a million by 1922. At the same time government cancelled orders they no longer needed leaving factories with spare capacity.

Six months after the end of the war the Birmingham Small Arms company closed a department and put over a hundred people on the dole. The council was one of the town's employers that promised to reinstate returning service men to their old jobs. One case was reported in the Redditch Indicator, two ex-service men too unfit to return to front had been employed by the council. However, they were 'sacked' when the original employees returned to their old jobs which brought letters to the editor.

Recent research into the Redditch Military tribunals evidence show the larger companies went to considerable lengths to hold on to their skilled workers, while smaller firms had to fight hard to keep their last few skilled military age men. Smaller companies were pared down to the bone and trades were hard hit.

All through the decade of the 1920s there was high unemployment in Redditch and in 1925, the number of the unemployed was 1,562.

There were delegations of the unemployed both to the council and to the Bromsgrove workhouse guardians for more help, dole money did not go very far. In 1928 there was another blow to reducing unemployment when BSA closed down completely putting most of their 1,500 employees out of work.

Mr Wadlow Milne, MP for Kidderminster and Redditch asked in the commons what steps were being taken to find new manufacturers to come to Redditch he was assured everything that could be done was being done!

Strangely, although there was high unemployment in the adult population, through the 1920s and early thirties there was a shortage of juvenile employees in many areas.

In 1928 the government introduced the special juvenile transference scheme, the idea was to move young school leavers from the distressed areas, the northeast ship building areas of England and Scotland, and the Coal mining valleys of South Wales, to areas where young people were in short supply.

Neville Land in his book, Redditch and its locality, tells the story of Frank Cardy. Frank was born in Port Talbert, he was 15 and going to the secondary school after winning a scholarship, he was studying for his oxford exam which he would take in the summer.

He had five siblings and his father was an out of work builder's labour. Returning home from school on Friday he found a woman from the labour exchange waiting.

They had found him a job and he was to start on Monday and if he did not accept, his father's dole money would be cut. Saturday his mother went round the second-hand clothes shops to kit him out. Monday morning, he had a travel voucher that would bring him by train to Redditch.

## Redditch between the Wars by Sue Tatlow - 3

He was met by a man from the labour exchange who took him to Britannia Batteries. His wages were fifteen shillings a week out of that he paid four pennies into the hospital Saturday club, his board and lodging were £1/2s. He had nine shillings and six pence grant to make up the money from the lord mayors of London fund but, as his wages went up the grant went down until he was eighteen when the grant stopped.

Between 1930 and 1937 About 500 young people from south Wales arrived under the Juvenile Transferer Scheme. 296 were girls and many stayed at the Young Women's Christen Association hostel at South Street run by Miss Ashley . The Social Service Centre in George Streets ran evening classes for the young people, the girls' nights were on Monday and Tuesday with keep fit, theatricals, dancing, games and cookery classes with Miss Ashley on Thursday night at the Hostel. The boys' nights were Wednesday and Thursday they had bookkeeping, boxing, physical training, first aid and football Saturday afternoon.

After the young people reached 18 years, no statistics were recorded so little is known how these young people fared. About three hundred stayed in the area most were girls; some had found work back at home and many boys had gone to London or Birmingham for work. These young people were the forerunners of the migrants that arrived from all over the UK and Ireland in the next few years to work in Redditch,

By the mid 1930s the industrial landscape of Redditch was changing. The traditional industries of fishhook and needle making still employed a large number of people , but through take-overs and mergers the number of independent companies reduced and out of these mergers grew ENTACO, the English Needle and Fishing Tackle company.

The newer business of springs and cycle making had grown in the first 20 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Royal Enfield had moved from Hunt End to a new purpose-built Factory in Redditch, the Hunt End factory was taken over by Nife Batteries. In 1929 the old BSA factory was taken over by Redditch's second Battery Factory, Britannia Batteries . Royal Enfield made bicycles and motorbikes and had enough room in their new premises to have a test track. Terrys Novelty Works expanded as did other factories in the thirties. Within 10 years of leaving the town BSA was back part of a new influx of companies.



**Left:**  
**Royal Enfield**  
**Test Track**

**Right:**  
**Royal Enfield**  
**Main Office**  
**Building**  
**Hewell Road**



In 1938 Neville Chamberlain came back from Munich with a piece of paper 'peace in our time', however measures were being taken for what seemed like the inevitable war.

The BSA Studley Road factory was built to produce the BESA machine gun based on a gun built in Czechoslovakia. The machinery to make them and the plans were rescued and shipped to England just before the German Army marched into the country.

Three other specialist factories established themselves in Redditch in the next few years. High Duty Alloys took the site of two 19<sup>th</sup> century water mills on Hewell stream, the land was boggy and ideal for the huge and very loud press that was sited there.

The HDA made parts for aircraft including spitfires and hurricanes. Reynolds Tubes and Monochrome were the other two factory that arrived in the last years of the decade.

Redditch's workforce was by now spread thin, Redditch had a good rail service and that could bring people in, but it could take people out and it did. More workers were needed for the expanding industries in the town, but where were these workers going to live?

## Redditch between the Wars by Sue Tatlow - 4

One way to expand both housing and industry was to change the boundaries of the town, and this had been under consideration since the end of the first war. Between 1911 and 1921 the town had grown by just over 2,000 people; some had arrived as war time workers and stayed.

The wartime problem of poor overcrowded housing did not improve much in the 1920s. It was thought that if the council's area could be enlarged they would be able to ensure new housing and industrial expansion. However, they had a long road ahead, for some of the neighbouring parish councils that would be impacted it was not a welcome prospect.

Under the Local Act of 1894, parish councils could take on their own governance with elected councillors, and they had been doing it for thirty years. Headless Cross, Crabbs Cross, Hunt End, Astwood Bank, and all the hamlets between were part of Feckenham Rural Parish. Webheath and North Redditch parishes occupied smaller areas of land.

A committee was formed with Representatives of Alcester, Bromsgrove, and Alcester Rural district councils, from this Webheath, Foxlydiate, Headless cross, Crabbs Cross and Ipsley were incorporated in 1929. Feckenham or the remains of the Parish fought for their right to remain independent hiring a barrister at £800 to argue their case.

He failed in his brief and Feckenham and Astwood bank become incorporated with Redditch 1933. The Towns acreage doubled from 12,000 acres in 1911 to 22,750 acres in 1939

The boundary expansion gave more opportunity for developers to build houses in the new areas, local builders soon took up the opportunity of buying Hewell Estate plots and other plots of land in Redditch, Headless Cross, Webheath and along Studley Road. Local authorities were encouraged to build homes.

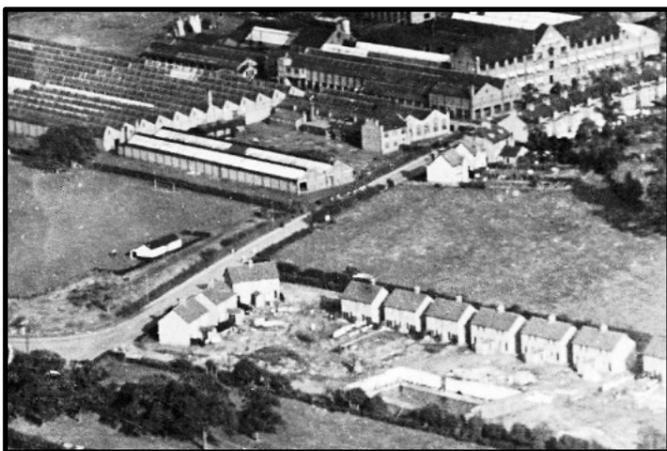
The 1919 Addison housing Act was the result of a report by the Tudor Walters committee, the one line in that became popular in the papers was "you cannot expect to have an AI population out of C3 homes" the phrase for this Act is best known for is 'Homes fit for Heroes'.

The Ministry of Health had plans for these houses. There were two types: the non-parlour two bedroom with bathroom house or the parlour house three bedroom a bathroom. Scullery living room and parlour for quiet study, family sickness or entertaining friends and family. Redditch council used these plans.

The Redditch council post-war plan was to build a garden village on Batchley Farmland. The houses would comply with the ministry plans. Councillor James thought 1,000 new homes were needed and an application for a loan to build houses was sent to the Ministry of Health. In 1919-20 there was a shortage of men and materials and the cost of materials had increased because of shortages. Bricks in 1913 were 24shillings a thousand by 1920 they had risen to between 55 and 80 shillings a thousand .

Tenders were put out but not one local builder applied, the master builders of Redditch were accused of combining to raise the price for building the houses. When the master builders came to negotiate, their quotes were £20 and £30 more than the surveyors estimate £740 for the two bedded house and £780 for the parlour house, the other problem was only one builder could start on his 12 houses at once, the other builders would start within the next two to six months depending on the work they had in hand.

These three Housing acts helped through grants and loans. The RUDC had 360 houses finished and occupied with two hundred more under construction in 1929 .



**Left:**  
*Post WW1 new housing in  
Hewell Road and  
Bridley Moor Road  
(Large factory is the  
Royal Enfield)*



**Right:**  
*Salter's Lane in 1930s  
overlooking  
Batchley Farm Fields*

## Redditch between the Wars by Sue Tatlow - 5

To erect these houses Redditch Council Borrowed money over a lengthy period of time. This was by an application to the Ministry of Health for money for a project which if approved could be paid back over number of years. The council had two public work loans to build, the first one was for twenty-four houses in Hewell Road for £9,050 to be paid back over sixty years. Then £7,895 to build eighteen houses on Birmingham Road with 40 years to pay it back, this would be through rent and rates. Each block of houses was financed this way.

Rent from the 308 houses brought in an annual income of £5,974, the rents for 2-bedroom houses was 7s/6d and three beds 9s/3d. Redditch had a few four bed houses, and they were 10s/9d a week. In 1924 the Wheatley Act gave both public bodies and private house builders the ability to apply for a grant for a new build. However local building firms could only do a small number of houses, compared with today's developers.

By the mid-20s Building firms such as C G Huins, FC Huins & Seden. George Huxley, C Harrison, H B Tarleton and T Newbold and Son, part of the master builders Association, were busy with both Council and private clients. Some worked on small developments of up to twelve houses. Redditch building Society would offer mortgages. New roads were being built and old ones developed.

Mr Bert Batty was enterprising enough to open a £495 show house on his 'Ipsley' estate of the Studley Road. It had gas appliances from the Redditch Gas shop and was dressed in furniture from the COOP in Evesham Street.

By the end of the thirties Redditch council had cleared some of its worse slums and nearly caught up with Mr Jameson 1,000 house figure but of course in the meanwhile the town had grown and there was still the need to have good cheap rented homes, even more so in the years to come as hundreds of workers arrived in Redditch.

In 1919 Redditch Urban District Council had a chair and thirteen councillors five of which were Labour councillors the rest were conservative councillors. All were men except Mrs Skinner who only remained on the council for a short time before stepping down and no women stood again until the 1940s. There were five wards in the town. And two of the councillors were also county councillors.

There were six officers the clerk, medical officer, surveyor, works manager and assistant clerk.

Redditch it could be said was an expansionist council, not only through wanting to stretch the border for a greater Redditch but becoming the largest landlord in Redditch. On the home front during the war the condition of much of the housing had been shown to be substandard, it had been put up quickly in the mid nineteenth century to house the growing workforce.

However, in the twentieth Century it was no longer fit for purpose. The RUDC had a plan to build a 'garden village' to rehouse and replace the towns slums. The 1919 Anderson housing Act helped with that project, but it would be after the next war that it would be finished.

In 1925 Pitcher oak Wood came up for sale the council bought it for £4,500 which they borrowed but this cost was offset by selling thirty-five building plots on the Bromsgrove Road frontage. Two plots at the entrance were kept to build two lodges for two groundsmen and their families to live in.

The council bought Stoneleigh the former Home of late Mr Smith as the new council House in 1932. It was large and had plenty of room for meetings and offices for the officials.

It also had a garden with a large greenhouse which became the council nursery where the bedding plants for the town's displays were grown.

The garden itself was useful for band concerts including the Black watch on tour, and fetes etc..

The original council house was sited on the top of Evesham Street and that was converted into five shops. First one on the corner became 'Smoky Joe's Cafe' in the 1960s.

The Council House was converted into flats and houses built on the garden on when the council moved to the new Town Hall in 1982.



## Redditch between the Wars by Sue Tatlow - 6

The Redditch town fire brigade had some equipment stored behind the old council house and when the move was made they needed a new home. The Red Lion, Red Lion Street became available, and the council bought it for £3,200 and spent another £2,600 converting the site to Redditch's first proper fire station.

This had enough room for four fire engines, an office kitchen and mess room with a billiard table. The brigade was part time retained. They trained and went to competitions and displays with neighbouring Bromsgrove and Alcester. They were not the only fire brigades in town. Each large factory had their fire brigade. The different brigades helped each other out, the town's brigade was called out about twice a month on average.

The council looked after the different parks in the town, in 1927/8 the parks increased from one - Beoley Road Recreation ground - to four parks. Three had been gifted to the town. A field in Headless Cross where the Cherry Wake was held every year, was given by Mr Smith in memory of his late wife. Mr Terry of Terrys springs gave several fields along Bromsgrove Road as playing fields.

The old show ground down Birmingham Road was given by the Earl of Plymouth and much later this became the Abbey Stadium. Beoley Road recreation ground was home to fun fairs circuses and other events, Crabbs Cross got their own park when the council bought the field next to the school. Each of the large factory's had their own recreation ground for their employees.

Redditch had many church groups, trade groups, friendly society's and fellowships, sports clubs, the Shelden society for the antiquarians, Dickens societies for those of a literary bent, Redditch amateur operatic society for the musicians, performing everything from pirate of Penzance to Tom Jones at the Palace theatre, one of the four cinemas, the Select or flea pit, the Danilo and the Gaumont both built in the art deco picture palace style.

The Gaumont was built on the site of the old public hall which had also been showing films.

In 1929 the trustees of the Art Collage and Literary and Science institution had a dilemma the membership and income had gone down so much that they could not continue.

The council agreed to turn it into a public library.

The library committee was chaired for 26 years by Mr Pinfield Wells, Mr Roy Vann was the first librarian and it took some time to get the library stock of books changed with a more balanced selection, including children's books.

In 1926 the institute was gifted by Walter and John Hill a large parcel of land next to it fronting the parade when it had come up for sale.

The library had 6,500 members by 1935 with over 8,000 books being borrowed each month.

The land was built on in 1954 for an extension to the library.

There was another small library in Redditch the Octagon circulating subscription library in Evesham Street.

The town was well endowed with pubs, inns and beer house's. The pubs and hotels had their own social scene, they had sport club's with attached darts, football and bowling greens.

There were and still are a number of sports clubs along Bromsgrove Road including the football club, the hockey, rugby and cricket club and the road and path cycling club. Redditch motorbike and car club did speed trials and once a year they piled six hundred children into their cars, side cars and a charabanc and took them to Stanway Court for the afternoon for a country ride.

On the third of September 1939 People gathered on church Green for a different reason when the Prime minister broadcast that the United Kingdom was at war.

Redditch had been changed by the last war; this coming War would see even greater changes.

but that, of course, is yet another story.....

