



Hi All,

Here we are in 2022 and a Happy New Year to everyone.

Let us hope that this year we will be able to have a full series of meetings and 2022 will return, if not to the status quo, to a situation where everyone can have some level of normality.

### **In this newsletter we have...**

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

- Our first meeting of 2022 will be on February 14th will be a presentation 'Redditch - Mtwara: History in the Making' by David and Jackie Morgan.
- An update on activities at Forge Mill Needle Museum and in particular of events of our interest, the Heritage Open Day, and the return of our annual history exhibition in the Museum Gallery in the autumn.

### **On the remaining six pages we have the following three items.**

- Pages three and four is a Press Release from Alcad International concerning a 99-year-old battery produced by Batteries Limited at Hunt End. This is an amazing tribute to manufacturing at Redditch and adds to the material which I continue to accumulate as the self-appointed archivist, of Alcad in Redditch material.
- Pages five and six is by Sue Tatlow and describes the work, of many years, which produced a tapestry of Redditch and the River Arrow. This was created by the Redditch Remembered through Art Group, to commemorate one hundred years since the end of World War 1.
- Pages seven and eight is by our Chairman, Don Vincent, who, with his always carefully researched work, gives an overview of the change of year from Christmas to the New Year. This is typically in the style of Don, and we are grateful that he continues to give a significant level of support to the Society.

### **Next Meeting...**

We begin our meetings in 2022 on February 14th, our first meeting of 2022, with a presentation 'Redditch - Mtwara: History in the Making' by David and Jackie Morgan. This will begin at 2.00 pm and will be, as always at the Oasis Christian Centre; Plymouth Road.

We are not sure at the moment if we will reintroduce the refreshment break. I will give an update shortly before our February meeting. 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

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# Coming up.....

## For February 14<sup>th</sup> our first meeting of 2022 is the presentation Redditch - Mtwara: History in the Making by David and Jackie Morgan

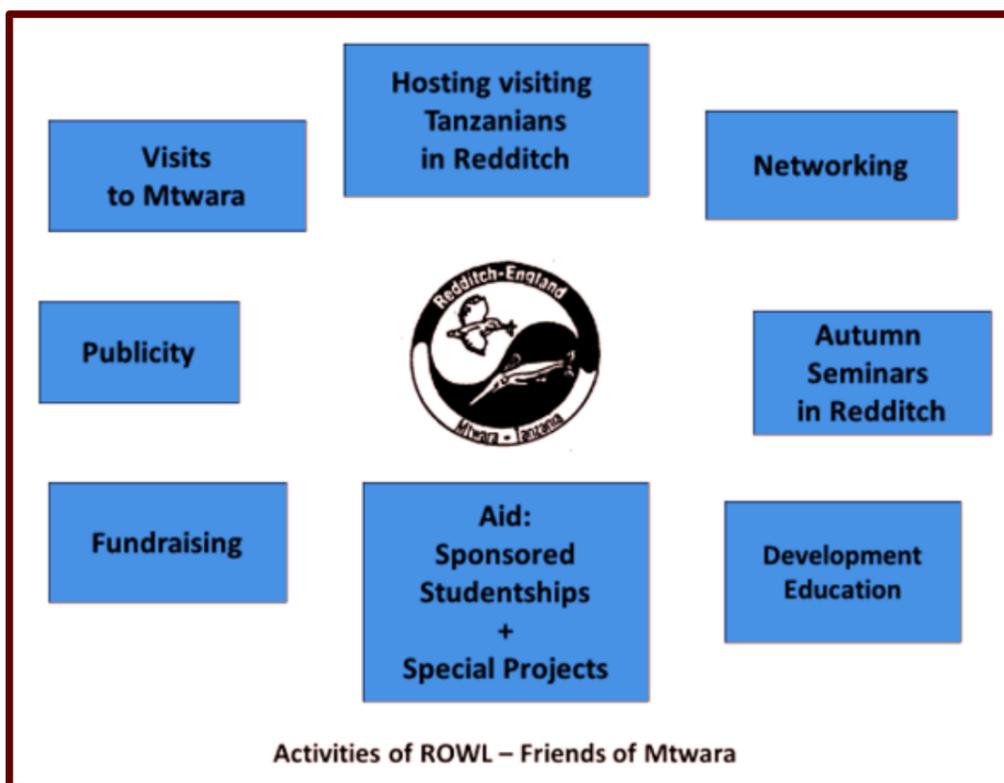
In September 1970 we came to live in Redditch after 4 years in Tanzania teaching sciences at Minaki Secondary School near Dar es Salaam. I settled into a chemistry teaching post at the County High School, soon to become The Abbey High School, and four years later became Community Tutor at the Leys High School, with additional adult education and community responsibilities.

Redditch One World Link/Friends of Mtwara (ROWL) came into being in 1985 and four years later, we decided to celebrate our Silver Wedding by making our first return visit to Tanzania. A week was planned in Mtwara as part of our itinerary and we were so warmly received that we resolved to become active in supporting ROWL. Soon Jackie took on the role of Secretary.

Our links with Mtwara have not only generated friendships, but also a clearer understanding of what life is like in our coastal Twin Town in East Africa. From an educational perspective, the link has been of great significant to both Redditch and Mtwara, especially to the younger generations.

The chart shows the range of activities taking place between Redditch and Mtwara.

David Morgan



## Forge Mill Needle Museum in 2022

Forge Mill Needle Museum is currently closed and will reopen on the 1st of February with a full range of EVENTS and EXHIBITIONS throughout 2022. However, the site is not completely closed as the GROUNDS and COFFEE BAR are open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10.00am to 2.00pm during January. More details can be found at:

<https://www.forgemill.org.uk>



Of particular interest to the History Society for 2022 is that:

- The Heritage Open Day Festival for 2022 runs from the 9th -18th September. I have agreed with Jo-Ann that we can have Sunday 18th September as our Heritage Day. This is really organised by the Friends, but the History Society is always represented. I will begin contacting the usual supporters and look at inviting other local community groups.
- It will be twelve years since I did my/our first exhibition at Forge Mill Museum. This was on the History of Alcad in Redditch. Since that time, as the self-styled archivist of Alcad, Redditch, [www.alcadhistory.org.uk](http://www.alcadhistory.org.uk), I have gained much additional information and I have good contact with the current Alcad organisation. It is therefore time to have an updated exhibition and Jo-Ann has agreed to let me have the last 4-5 weeks of 2022 to mount this in the gallery at the Forge Mill Museum.

# Redditch NiCd Batteries - Made to Last!

## Anthony Green from an Alcad Press Release 2021

In the early part of the twentieth century, Redditch, Worcestershire, England was unique in having two alkaline battery manufacturers within its area. First, a company called Batteries Limited, which was established in 1918 in Hunt End and the second Britannia Batteries set up in 1929 with its factory located on Union Street. The two companies merged in 1947 and became Alkaline Batteries Ltd based at the Union Street site.



*Photograph: Enfield Road, Hunt End, Redditch, which was the site of Batteries Limited.*

In 1991 a cell, part of a time capsule, was discovered under the floor of the 'old canteen' of Alcad Ltd., Union Street, Redditch. As the site wasn't developed for battery production until 1929 and the cell is from March 1922, it was manufactured in the original factory in Hunt End, Redditch (about 5 km away).



*Photograph: The first nickel-cadmium cell produced by Batteries Limited in 1922.*



*Photograph: A stainless-steel commemorative nameplate affixed to the front of the cell.*

The Hunt End site came about because of 3 major reasons:

1. During WWI, the British Admiralty suffered battery supply issues, as they were purchasing from Varta, Germany, prior to 1914.
2. Redditch was at the heart of the needle industry, which is still essential for making the perforated plates.
3. There was a water tower with good supply near to the site, which is used during manufacturing.

Therefore, in 1918 the British Government negotiated a licensing agreement with NIFE Jungner, Sweden, to manufacture its products in the UK. Martin Dybeck started the UK subsidiary (c. 1919) of the Swedish battery

## Made to Last! Cont.....

company AB Jungner, under the name Batteries Ltd using the brand name NIFE, and located at Hunt End, Redditch.

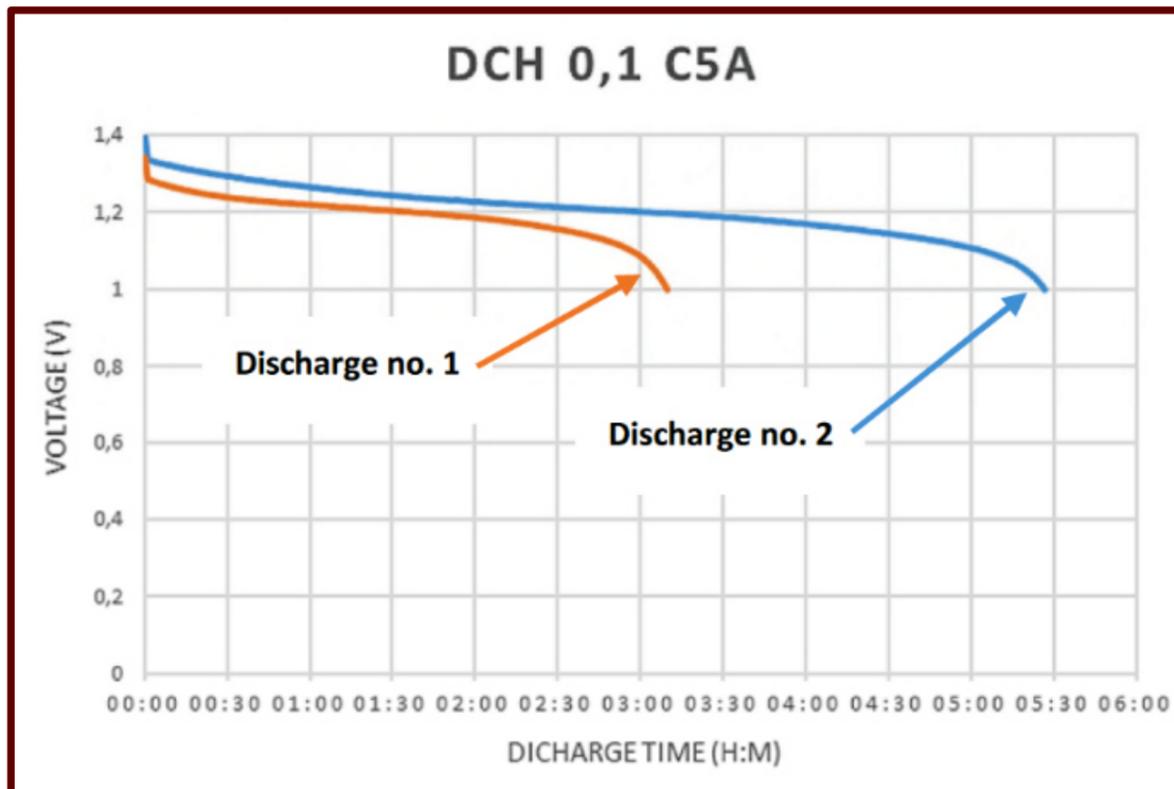
The time capsule was unearthed in 1991 by accident, during renovations. The cell was prepared for evaluation at the Union Street electrical test laboratory . It looked almost exactly as it does today, except it's now 99 years old!

The cell was received discharged and empty, marked with 'A4' on the top with an estimated original capacity of approximately 20 ampere-hours (Ah) and general performance.

The evaluation process comprised:

- Filling the cell with standard potassium hydroxide + lithium hydroxide (KOH + LiOH) electrolyte.
- Performing three charge/discharge cycles.
- Emptying and refreshing the electrolyte.
- Performing three additional charge/discharge cycles.

Upon completion, it measured close to 15 Ah capacity, which was impressive for the 68-year-old cell.



In 1993 Alcad's Redditch facility closed and manufacturing of its products transferred to its highly automated factory based in Oskarshamn, Sweden. Alcad's UK sales were located to Hampton, Middlesex and the international sales moved to Sweden.

Now in 2021, Alcad performed a new evaluation:

- Refilling the cell with new (standard) electrolyte.
- Performing two charge/discharge cycles.

Both discharges are plotted in the graph above:

- The first discharge shows the available capacity of 6.4 Ah.
- The second discharge shows an improvement in available capacity of 10.9 Ah

Amazingly, at 99 years old, more than 50% of the initial capacity is available!

This is testimony that Alcad nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cd) pocket plate cells still perform well, nearly a century later.

*I have reproduced this press release issued by the International Sales team in 2021 virtually word for word, as there seems very little to add. More work including a reverse charge (a killer for lead acid batteries, but no problem for NiCd), followed by two full charges, would have increased the capacity even further. However, this is academic and the result illustrates the high standard that manufacturing in Redditch achieved and why the brand name, although no longer manufactured in Redditch, still retains a world-wide reputation, and is sold where batteries of high reliability are required.*

Anthony Green.

# Tale of a Tapestry by Sue Tatlow



The tapestry was unveiled at Redditch Library on Monday 6 September 2021 where it shows the town's history to visitors to the Library.

The 'Redditch Remembered in Thread' tapestry was given to the library by the Redditch Remembered Through Art Group, who created it to commemorate one hundred years since the end of World War 1.

The design and idea began in 2014, to commemorate one hundred years since the end of World War 1 and the men of the town who never came home.



At the unveiling, Michele Campbell, library manager at Redditch Library, said: "The tapestry is now proudly hanging in Redditch Library, and we're really pleased to have it here where all of our customers can see it and really appreciate the work that has gone into creating a real celebration of Redditch."

The story began when, in 2014 a group of ladies (Redditch Recorded Through Art Group) got together to stitch a community wall hanging, to commemorate the century since the End of the first World War. The project took a little longer than the six weeks envisaged, seven years in fact.

The wall hanging also encompasses the coming of the new town 50 years old in 2014.

The hanging has changed from vertical to horizontal in those years too. In its early vertical format it was displayed at the 'River Arrow running through Redditch history' exhibition in 2018 (right) in the gallery at Forge Mill Needle Museum.

The main features are

The river Arrow in all its beaded glory, the river stitches together the old town and the new, whether they like it or not,

The river runs through history and a rough time line follows this history. The wall hanging has the districts that make up greater Redditch and many of the people, places, clubs', groups and societies that make up the town.



## Tale of a Tapestry Cont.....



Above top: the group working on assembling the tapestry.

Above: Individual memory bubbles, embroidered in a hoop. These were drawn, traced and embroidered then stitched on to the wall hanging.

Right: Elise Anna Burton (with the KINGFISHER ) is our oldest member and started an Embroidery course after she retired and became proficient in her graded colour work. Her flowers can have up to forty separate colours in them. She had an exhibition of her work at Forge Mill when she was eighty-three. She embroidered the Kingfisher and the Clover Leaf when she was ninety-nine. She is now 103 and her great grand daughter Else May stitched the swift that is seen flying away above the kingfisher, the original bird on the coat of arms.

# Reflections on Christmas and the New Year by Don Vincent

Happy New Year—why? Who says January 1st marks the start of a new year? Everything from here on really applies only to the northern hemisphere. It was at one time the known world. January 1st isn't the shortest day or the longest day. Nor necessarily the hottest day nor the coldest day. That it is the first day of the year is partly due to Numa Pompilius (715 –673) who decreed that January should replace March as the first month. Thereby replacing March. Britain finally adopted January 1st as New Year's Day in 1752 which accounts for some documents and transcriptions bearing 2-year dates. Saying that we might note that HMRC starts its tax year around the 5th of April.



*Left: Janus -  
the two faced god.*



*Right - Mars  
God of war*

January is named after the Roman god Janus who is the god of beginnings, passages, doorways etc. Janus is normally depicted as having two faces. (No jokes about politicians please).

March, which is named after Mars the god of war, remained the first month until 153 b.c. when Julius Caesar created the Julian calendar with January 1st as the first day.

March had originally been the first month because it had been decreed that all wars should cease in that month, so that they didn't interfere with the feasting.

Actually, having New Year's Day around the first of January has some merit. It is not far from the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. On our present calendar December 21st is the winter solstice. The passing of the seasons and the varying lengths of daylight hours were well known to our ancestors, whether they had a calendar or not.

The oldest Lunar Calendar is considered to be a pit at Warren Field Aberdeenshire which dates to the eighth millennium b.c.

The winter solstice is most important as evinced by the fact that the back wall of the burial chamber at Maeshowe is illuminated by the setting sun for a few days either side of the winter solstice. Maeshowe is a chambered cairn in Orkney and dates to around 2,800 b.c.

We might also note that The Great Trilithon stone at Stonehenge points out from the circle so that it is aligned with the setting sun at that time of year.

Now not entirely unconnected with the New Year is the festival of Christmas. The birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated, by some, on December 25th a mere six days before the New Year of January 1st but a long way from March 1st. It is mainly a European festival even if it spread with the colonial settlers to other parts of the world.

Even then some Christian sects e.g., Jehovah Witnesses don't celebrate it because they insist that there is no exact undeniable date for the birth of Christ. Others for example strict Roman Catholics would disagree and go to great lengths to prove the date. Here we should recognise that all religions are beliefs and as such, by definition, are necessarily true.

## Reflections Cont...

The combination of Christmas and New Year fits in neatly with the ancient custom of the Feast of Fools. Here especially on the great estates some lowly person would be appointed in England as The Lord of Misrule. Other countries had different names for the same role. The world was turned upside down. As the Christmas festivities lasted for twelve days one can see that it makes sense to run Christmas and New Year together.

*"Feast/Festival of Fools" print  
engraved by Pieter van der Heyden  
after Bruegel, after 1570.  
Conventionally dated to c.1559,*



Christmas and the New Year was a time of feasting. For most of the Medieval Ages the ordinary persons diet consisted of bread. It has been calculated that the ordinary person obtained some eighty percent of their calories from bread of varying composition. Milk from a cow that had calved would be used to make cheese which had a longer shelf life than butter. When fodder was not available or in short supply during the winter months the excess animals would be slaughtered. Corn was too precious to feed to surplus animals it was needed for bread production.

Cows would be in calf, the gestation period for cows is of the order of 280 days. They would have been put to the bull in the summer months in the hope of a spring calf. The gestation period for sheep and goats is around 147 days so it is possible for ewes and nannies to give birth twice in a year.

Not all animals were confined to the countryside, London the greatest city in the world had a considerable number of animals. Horses of course would be present, but cows and sheep were also to be found. One of the privileges of being a Freeman of the City of London was to drive one's sheep over London Bridge, on the way to Smithfield market, without paying a toll. However, we must remember that Britain didn't become an urban country (more people living in towns and cities than in the countryside) until around 1851. Also, wool was an important export for Britain for many centuries and many sheep of the right breed would have spent winter on the fells and in the dales.

The proliferation of market towns shows that slowly but surely animals were being confined to the countryside and sold at markets in the towns. even today there is evidence of old drover's roads in the countryside. Even geese would be driven many miles to market. The ideal time of the year to drive stock to market is at Christmas time and New Year when it is expected that there would be a ready market combined with handsome profits.

As mentioned above Christmas was a time of feasting, many families would only have tasted poultry at Christmas time. In the pre gas oven days sizeable birds would be cooked in the local baker's ovens. A place would have to have been reserved well in advance. Make sure your bird is well identified.

It makes one smile to read Dickens's A Christmas Carol when Scrooge wakes on Christmas morning, flings open a window and tells a boy to go and buy the biggest bird in the butcher's shop for the Cratchits. It would be Easter before it was cooked.

Here's hoping 2022 marks an improvement over the past two years. If its any worse I may well just give up. Its being so cheerful as keeps me going.