

## September 2022 Meeting

Hi All,

For our September meeting we had a very interesting talk ‘Mr Mitchell’s quite wonderful Wall’ by Michael Loftus. In his presentation Michael told us about the Great Wall of Kidderminster—otherwise the massive structure that runs alongside the ring road from Comberton Hill towards the Worcester Road junction.

A summary of the talk can be found on **pages 3 and 4**.

We had thirty-five at the meeting made up of 32 members and 3 visitors. This was a slight fall back on last month but is nevertheless a respectable number.

It has been quite an eventful period over the past few weeks with the death of Queen Elizabeth, the accession of King Charles III, and the funeral. I am pleased that I did my talk on Queen Elizabeth at our July meeting. I have given this talk, which has been constantly updated, to a number of groups over the years, but the July presentation is the last time I will do it.

I could not let this newsletter pass without a mention of the Queen as her record is impressive. As a physicist, I am a lover of numbers and statistics, so, on **pages 7 and 8** there is a summary of records broken and activities performed over her very long reign.

I was planning to give an overview of our excellent Heritage Open Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum on Sunday 18th September. I will still do but it will now be in the October edition of the Newsletter.

On **pages 5 and 6** can be found the second, and final, part of the article by Rebecca (Becky) Smith concerning her family history research. The first part was in last month’s Newsletter.

Next month’s presentation is ‘From Granny Locke’s to the Royal Oak’ A Journey through Redditch using early Postcards, by Chris Jackson. I have given an overview of the presentation on **page 2**.

This is a major update by Chris from 35mm slides to digital images and a significant increase in the number of postcards. This should be well worth seeing and is an exceptional opportunity to see some very rare images of the town as it was in a simpler age.

Take care and stay safe

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## Coming up.....

**Our next Meeting is on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October at 2.00 pm and is  
'From Granny Locke's to the Royal Oak' A Journey through Redditch  
using early Postcards by Chris Jackson**

We can look forward to a special event at the Society in September with a presentation by Chris Jackson entitled 'From Granny Locke's to the Royal Oak' a trip through Redditch using old postcards.

In the past, Chris has created this presentation using 35mm slides, but we have now scanned and digitised the postcards to make them more accessible to modern projection systems.

In doing this Chris has increased the number in the presentation from less than seventy to over a hundred.

Using digital techniques, the quality of the images has also been improved.

Chris is a local philatelist specialising in the Postal History and Postcards of Redditch and the county. Chris has a substantial collection of local postcards which he has collected over many years.

Many of his postcards are very rare and this is a great opportunity to see a unique presentation related to the history of the town over the past 100 years.

The presentation uses, as its premise, a tour through the town, starting at 'Granny Locke's' which, although sadly demolished, was the toll house of the Pershore Road on the A441 at Bordesley Corner, and following the A441 through the town to 'The Royal Oak' in Crabbs Cross. However, this is not the end as it continues to the end of Crabbs Cross, which was a few hundred yards further on.

This is a great opportunity to look back in time with genuine images of how the town looked around 100 years ago.





## Report on September presentation

### “Mr Mitchell’s quite wonderful Wall’ by Michael Loftus.

For this presentation report, as well as taking notes, I also relied extensively on Michael’s extensive write-up, ‘The Great Wall of Kidderminster’, which can be found on the Kidderminster Civic Society website.

Michael told us about the Great Wall of Kidderminster—otherwise the massive structure that runs alongside the ring road from Comberton Hill towards the Worcester Road junction.

The dramatic deep relief faces and the other abstract features which can be seen were created by the internationally celebrated artist and sculptor William Mitchell.

It is surely time to celebrate the wall as Kidderminster’s most striking piece of public art and the Civic Society have done just that by supporting Historic England in making it a listed structure.

But how did the Wall come about in the first place and how did such a renowned figure become involved in this Kidderminster project?

In simple engineering terms, it is a retaining wall and it was a vital element of one phase in the construction of the ring road skirting the centre of Kidderminster which took place almost fifty years ago.

The ideal engineering line for that stage of the road would have taken it through the industrial area of Green Street, home to part of the, then still thriving, Kidderminster carpet industry.

To avoid this disruption the chosen alternative required taking a slice across the steep hillside above Green Street—hence the need for a retaining wall to hold back the hillside above the roadway.

The engineering requirements demanded a wall some 11metres tall at its highest point, 7 meters high on average along its length and some 320 metres long. It has a surface area of around 2100 square metres.

This concrete solution was a less expensive option than building in brick and the relief pattern approach offered scope to soften the scale of the structure.



*Above*

*Wall looking towards Comberton Hill*

*Below*

*Wall looking towards Worcester Road*





## Report on August Presentation cont.....

It was significant that the process of local government reorganisation was already well underway when this element of the road was being planned and built. So, this phase of the ring road was to be the very last major construction project which a stand-alone Kidderminster local authority would undertake.

The task of delivering the specifics of the decorative element of the structure fell to William Mitchell Design Consultants. Glass fibre liners which they designed provided the moulds which were the basis of the sculptured finish to the wall. It was agreed at the planning stage involving the contractor, the landscape architect and the design team that the finish should be informal and that any obvious repeat in the pattern should be avoided.

The creation of the wall was a result of a bold cross disciplinary partnership led by Jack Stewart and his team in the Borough Engineers supported by the technical and creative impulse from Douglas Smith. George Law and Company then overcame a number of other technical problems in manage the flow and settlement of the concrete that formed the wall. Success in these areas in effect created the canvas on which William Mitchell and his people created the wall that we can still enjoy today. Finally, the oversight role of the Borough Council's Redevelopment Committee in its very last months of existence has to be acknowledged.

Michael gave us a fascinating discourse on how important it is to collect information on relatively recent changes which, if lost, will be lost forever.

An excellent presentation on modern historical developments which was appreciated by the audience.



*Top Left*

*The wall under construction*

*Middle Left*

*.Putting fibre glass moulds in place for the wall*

*Bottom Left*

*Fibre Glass moulded features*



## Tracing my Roots from Redditch and Beyond (Part 2) by Becky Smith



*Grandparents*



*H W Mc Cave with cousin David Depper son of Lizzy Crow and Oliver Depper at his pub, The White Lion, in Alcester*

One of the benefits of Ancestry DNA is that they give you information on everyone whose DNA matches yours. What a gold mine. With the help of some newly found cousins, we identified my great grandfather: Sydney Herbert Croft, son of the warden of the workhouse in Rugby, England. Yetch!

Sydney got my 14 year old Irish grandmother pregnant and he got on a boat to the US. Herbert was raised in the slums of Birmingham (the Back to Backs) and was taken to the orphanage by neighbours when she died. A few years ago, when I was in LA, I actually visited Sydney's grave site in the Veterans Cemetery. He had joined the US Navy; never married and had no legitimate children. I found information on my great grandmother from census records. I have dozens of Croft cousins as Sydney Herbert was one of nine children. The youngest ended up in Burma; the oldest in San Quentin prison in California.

Now the Redditch mystery. Working with a DNA found cousin in Canada, we figured out the story of Eliza Crow, our 4th great grandmother. My Canadian cousin found the marriage certificate of her 3rd great grandfather (brother of William) which clearly identified his father. Eliza lived at home in Redditch but became the teenage mistress of a very wealthy Redditch businessman named John Palmer. He was a Deacon in the Methodist Church, married with several children. She had four sons with him before she was 20. All were raised by her father with funds from John as they were all educated and could read and write. Later she married David Hemmings and had six more children. What is so much fun is I have found cousins from both relationships and most live in Redditch. I've just been contacted by a fellow in Northamptonshire whose DNA says we are cousins from John Palmer and Eliza Crow. I cannot wait to meet him.

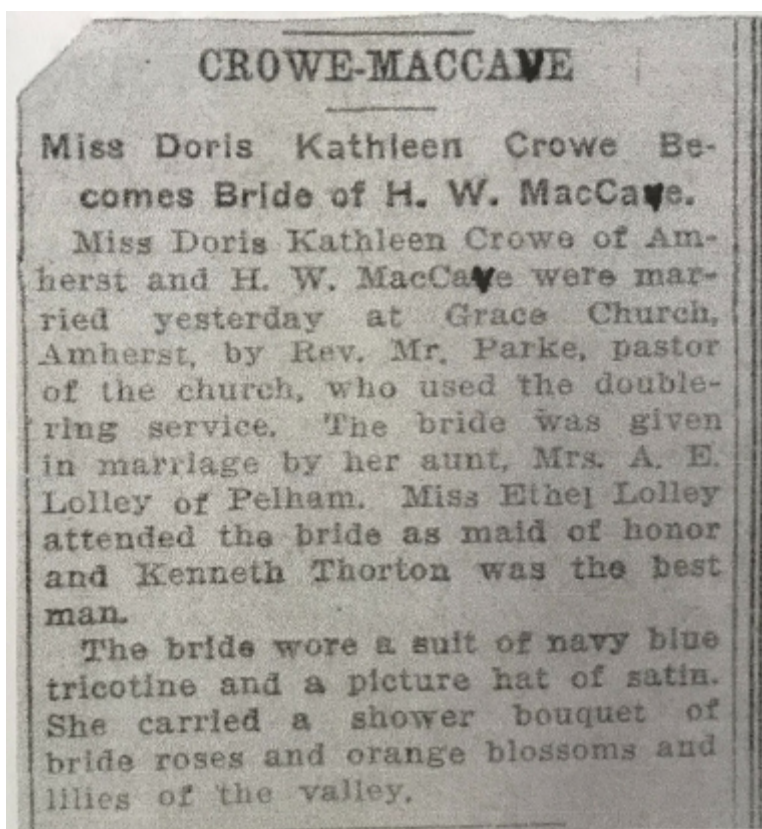
I have found some very interesting ancestors from my 2nd and 3rd Redditch-born great grandmothers. Mary Ann Crow's heritage was Robbines, Gauden, Bache and then Chapman. WOW. My favorite ancestor: George Chapman the Oxford educated poet, friend of Shakespeare and Johnson, who translated Homer from Greek to English. He is buried in the Poet's Church in London. Then there was Sarah Jane Wright Crow whose ancestor was Archbishop Tobias Matthews of York Minister.



## Tracing my Roots from Redditch and Beyond cont....



*Clsabel Parker Crow.jp*



*Wedding announcement of my grandparents. Mrs AE Lolley was May Parker Lolley born in Redditch*

The Archbishop's youngest son, Samuel, was at Jamestown, Virginia, and his son, Samuel Jr., was the first governor of the colonial colony of Virginia. Sadly, they made all their money from tobacco and had slaves. The county of Matthew in Virginia is named after the family. That's my 2023 vacation location.

It has surprised me that so many English folks are working on Ancestry to trace their roots. It has been helpful to me to collaborate.

I've actually become fairly adept using Ancestry and am a volunteer teacher at our local library. A friend from Massachusetts whose parents were both French Canadian had her DNA done on a whim. Her DNA results showed she was 75 percent French and 25 percent English. No one in the family could figure out where the English came from.

I did her tree and the results were absolutely astonishing; I immediately contacted one cousin in Redditch. My friend's great grandparents (several times removed) were Murial Throckmorton and Henry Berkeley of Coughton Court and are buried there in the family crypt. I've actually been there!!!

Henry was from Berkeley Castle where Edward II was murdered. I have an ancestor who was the gamekeeper at Coughton in the early 1800s.

Ever since the pandemic I have been trying to get back to the UK. If nothing else dramatic happens, I'll be in Redditch this fall.

I love getting the Redditch History Society newsletter each month and have shared it with some friends here in Estero, Florida, who might wish to visit. I have donated some items to the museum and am anxious to see the museum.

One benefit from working on family heritage (mostly English) is that I have had to become knowledgeable of English history.

I was able to find on-line computer course on the English Monarchy from Cambridge. Lots of time on-line and in the library. My cousin in Redditch said I know more about English history than he did.

I still have 3rd and 4th cousins in town and am looking forward to re-connecting. I still have a lot of questions on what it must have been like in the 17 and 1800s.



# Queen Elizabeth II - Record Breaker

Queen Elizabeth II notched up a number of landmarks during her record-breaking 70 years on the throne.

## Longevity

Elizabeth reigned for 70 years, seven months and two days, longer than any other monarch in British history. The previous record was held by her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria, who reigned for 63 years, seven months and two days until 1901.

Until her death on Thursday at the age of 96, Elizabeth was the oldest current monarch and head of state in the world. Only one monarch has ruled for longer: France's Louis XIV, more than 72 years between 1643 and 1715.

## Globetrotter

The queen travelled to more than 100 countries since 1952 - another record for a British monarch - and made more than 150 visits to Commonwealth nations. She went to Canada 22 times - more than any other country. In Europe, she visited France the most often - 13 times - and spoke the French language.

The Daily Telegraph calculated that she travelled the equivalent of 42 times around the world before stopping overseas trips in November 2015 at the age of 89.

Her longest foreign trip lasted 168 days from November 1953 to May 1954, during which she visited 13 countries.

## Busy

As a 21-year-old princess, Elizabeth pledged her life to the service of the Commonwealth.

As queen, she carried out some 21,000 engagements, gave royal assent to 4,000 pieces of legislation, and hosted 112 state visits of foreign heads of state. Among those she hosted were Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia (1954), Japan's Emperor Hirohito (1971), President Lech Walesa of Poland (1991) and US President Barack Obama (2011).

More than 180 garden parties have been hosted at Buckingham Palace, attended by more than 1.5 million people.





# Queen Elizabeth II cont....

## Politics and religion

A total of 15 British prime ministers served under the Queen. Her first was Winston Churchill (1952-1955) and the last was Liz Truss, who was appointed only on Tuesday. She held regular private meetings with her prime minister of the day, usually at Buckingham Palace on a weekly basis.

Elizabeth II met 13 out of the last 14 US presidents with the exception of Lyndon B Johnson. Her last visitor from the White House was Joe Biden in 2021.

The Queen was the supreme governor of the Church of England, a position dating back to the creation of the church under Henry VIII in the 16th century.

She met four popes on official visits - John XXIII (1961), John Paul II (1980, 1982 and 2000), Benedict XVI (2010) and Francis I (2014).

## Cards

The queen sent some 300,000 cards of congratulation to centenarians and more than 900,000 to couples celebrating 60 years of marriage.

She was married for 73 years - another record for a British monarch. Her husband, Prince Philip, died aged 99 in April last year.

## Portraits

The queen posed for more than 200 portraits since the age of seven. Most were painted in a traditional style. But Lucien Freud's portrait painted in 2001 proved controversial: one critic said it made Her Majesty look like one of her corgi dogs.

## Pioneer

In 1996, the Queen became the first British monarch to visit mainland China. She was also the first to address the House of Representatives in Washington.

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She sent her first email on March 26, 1976 during a visit to a Ministry of Defence research facility.



In 1997, she launched the Buckingham Palace website and in 2014 sent her first tweet. Three years ago, she made her debut on Instagram.

## 007

The queen is the only monarch to have jumped out of a helicopter with James Bond and parachuted into the opening ceremony of the Olympics. (Kind of.)

She and her beloved corgis made a cameo appearance at the 2012 London Games with 007 actor Daniel Craig, before a stunt person made the leap.