

October 2022 Meeting

Hi All,

For our October meeting we had a fascinating presentation by Chris Jackson 'From Granny Locke's to the Royal Oak' A Journey through Redditch using early Postcards' .
This was an excellent visual presentation of how Redditch looked in a simpler age.

We had an attendance Of 30 members (we had apologies from 3 members), 10 visitors and 7 new members which made a total of 47 at the meeting. We now have 50 paid up members and this is very encouraging for the future of the Society.

On **page 2** I have given an overview of the presentation I am preparing based on the outline created by our late Chairman Don Vincent. I am pleased with the result so far and I have learnt so much about our amazing little Chapel..

On **pages 3 and 4** is a review of our October presentation 'From Granny Locke's to the Royal Oak', a Journey through Redditch using early Postcards, by Chris Jackson. This does not do justice to the presentation but I have given an overview and some images. I was well received by the audience and I am pleased that Chris has agreed to give a similar exhibition, but with early postcards of the other roads of Redditch.

On **pages 5 and 6** is a review of the Redditch History Society exhibition at Forge Mill Needle Museum entitled 'Remembering the Batteries' This runs at the Museum from 3rd to 27th November And celebrates the history of nickel-cadmium battery manufacturing in Redditch from 1918 to 1993. The exhibition demonstrates how two companies merged to become Alcad, the second largest battery manufacturer in the world for nickel-cadmium industrial batteries.

On **pages 7 and 8** is a review of the Heritage Open Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum on Sunday 18th September 2022. This was another great day at our Forge Mill Needle Museum and ran from 10.00am to 4.00pm. The weather was good, dry with some sunshine, but it was a bit cool. This meant that although we had several hundred visitors it was a steady stream rather than a packed site.

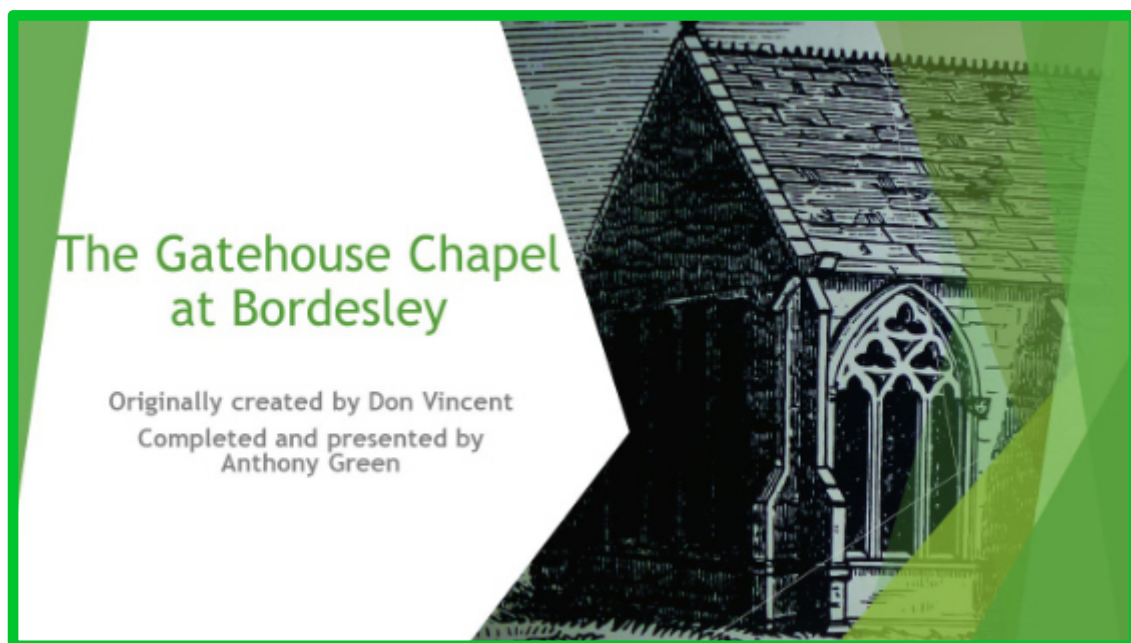
This newsletter has been largely produced by myself and I am happy to do this if I can keep finding material but some support is helpful. If you have stories, reminiscences, memories related to the town, please contact me. I am happy to turn this into an article which can be shared to anyone interested in the town.

Take care and stay safe

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

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

Coming up....Next Meeting



**Monday 14th November
at 2.00 pm**

**At the Oasis Christian
Centre, Clive Road.**

**'The story of the Gatehouse
Chapel at Bordesley Abbey' by
Don Vincent, completed and
presented by Anthony Green.**

I first met Don 15 years ago when I volunteered at Forge Mill Needle Museum. He was already a volunteer there. He was then seventy-one and I was sixty-four.

Don had an amazing knowledge of local history, particularly needles and Bordesley Abbey and for this year, he was planning to give a talk on the Gatehouse Chapel at Bordesley Abbey.

Sadly, he died before he was able to produce his presentation, but I was not happy to delete him from our programme and I have obtained the work to date which he had done.

With support from Forge Mill Needle Museum, particularly Jo-Ann Gloger, I have added much additional information and images produced during the excavations by Reading University.

Our little chapel has had a fascinating history as originally it was St Stephens chapel at the gatehouse of Bordesley Abbey, for local people, artisans and passers by to worship, and it was built around 1200.

When the Abbey was demolished in 1538 it fell into disrepair and was used for storage and a cattle pen.

In the late 17th Century it was refurbished for use by local Redditch people and this was further enhanced in 1712 with a donation by Nathaniel Mugg.

It was further extended until, in 1805, it was demolished and using much of the stone, it was rebuilt on Church Green in the town to become the chapel on the green.

It was further expanded to respond to the increasing population until, in 1855, our current parish church, St Stephens was consecrated. So, 1000 years on, St Stephen has seen many changes and is still looking on over the town.

Isn't that amazing....



Report on October presentation

'From Granny Locke's to the Royal Oak' A Journey through Redditch using early Postcards', by Chris Jackson.

Chris gave us a wonderful opportunity to look back in time with genuine images of how the town looked from around sixty to one hundred and twenty years ago.

His presentation used, 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.

Chris originally created this presentation using 35mm slides, but now the postcards have been scanned and digitised to make them more accessible and of higher image quality.

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.

Chris began with a brief fascinating history of postcards. It was in 1894 that British publishers were given permission by the Royal Mail to manufacture and distribute picture postcards, which could be sent through the post and by 1905, at the peak of their success, there were hundreds of millions of postcards sent through the post. At this time Redditch had eight collections and five deliveries a day, so that you could send a postcard in the morning and have it received in the afternoon.

Chris had many fascinating stories related to the images as we progressed on the journey beginning with the sad story of Granny Locke's being demolished for no good reason. It was a classic example of a turnpike toll house and, if it did need to be demolished, it would have made a great acquisition to Avoncroft.

As we progressed along Birmingham Road, which in early postcards was known as Clive Avenue, it is surprising how many of the early houses and factories still exist. However, as we pass beyond 'British Mills, much has been lost.

At the top of Prospect Hill, at the junction with Easemore Road was a coffee shop much frequented by Midland Red bus drivers as, before the Bus Station existed, the bus stops were all around Church Green. So, if your driver was not in his cab when it was time to go, you could find him in the coffee shop!

Chris showed a nice image of a bus in Church Green West, during WW1, with a large gas bag on top which replaced diesel due to fuel shortages. This was for the Redditch – Kidderminster route, as the amount the gas bag carried was only sufficient for that route, Redditch – Birmingham was not possible!

There were some nice pictures of the Church Green fountain. It illustrated that there were many different configurations of water flow which were possible. There was a particularly attractive postcard of the fountain illuminated for a night-time event. It is hard to believe how photographers with the equipment available one hundred years ago managed to take such amazing photographs. There were also early pictures of the bandstand, with the original thatched roof and the later tiled roof, and the plants, long gone, such as the Yucca and the cherry trees.



Report on October Presentation cont.....

We then proceeded along Church Green West looking at the cottages which existed before the Smallwood Hospital and Redditch Building Society were built, both before and after the event.

St Stephens Church is a focal point of the town and amongst the images shown was one in 1905 when the spire was renovated. At the time, the Redditch Librarian went to the top, brave man, with a plate camera and took views of the town in the four directions from the top. Chris has three of these views as postcards which we were able to see. It is amazing how small Redditch was at that time.

We then passed on to the crossroads and Evesham Street, which was the heart of the town. It was always said that you could buy anything in Evesham Street except needles. No-one in Redditch, the centre of needle manufacture, ever bought a needle!

Looking at Evesham Street over time we saw the Vine Inn being replaced by the Talbot, Lipton's seemed to move to another spot on every image, the appearance of the Hungry Man hotel and so many different shops that it was easy to hear the audience remembering a different time and pace of life. Evesham Street was a popular view for postcard manufacturers and Chris was able to cover a wide range of time.

We then passed on to Mount Pleasant, which has little changed except that then a car could stop in the middle of the road and have a discussion with a cyclist, now, there is a continuous row of parked cars. The Woodland Cottage has changed little over the years.

Often, in the postcards, there was a motorbike and sidecar in the view. These are Sealey postcards and Chris believes that Mr Sealey put he motorbike in the scene to give some foreground.

Arriving at the Park Inn, little changed, we are just past the drive to the Southcrest, the home of the Terry family. This is now the entrance to Pool Bank Drive and Southcrest is now a hotel. At this point Mount Pleasant changes to Evesham Road and this was the point when the southern Toll House (long gone) of the turnpike road leaving Redditch was situated.

We then passed through Headless Cross and looked at the changes which has occurred with the introduction of Headless Cross Drive and the houses demolished to build it and on along Evesham Road.

There were some nice pictures of the area immediately leaving Headless Cross, including the Methodist Church, and Chris gave us some amusing tales of the characters who lived in the area.

Passing on to Crabbs Cross, we arrive at the Royal Oak, now a private house, and continue a few hundred yards to the end of Crabbs Cross.

Obviously, in a few hundred words I cannot give a full appreciation of the narrative by Chris, and, with over one hundred images, a two-page summary cannot give it justice.

It was very appreciated by our audience and was a highly successful meeting.

I am pleased to say that I have agreed with Chris that next year he will produce a similar presentation but with the wide range of postcards which he has for the Redditch streets and roads off the 'main drag'.



Remembering the Batteries Exhibition

Forge Mill Needle Museum 3rd to 27th November

Since the founding of the History Society in late 2009, we have produced an exhibition on aspects of Redditch History at Forge Mill Needle Museum every year with the exception of the 2 years lockdown. I want to continue this activity and so this year Redditch History Society will be celebrating the history of nickel-cadmium battery manufacturing in Redditch from 1918 to 1993.

This is an update of the exhibition I did in 2020 and includes a timeline, illustrated guides to the manufacturing processes, the important contribution to the war effort in World War 2, videos, documents, photographs and artefacts.

The exhibition also demonstrates how two companies merged to become Alcad, the second largest battery manufacturer in the world for nickel-cadmium industrial batteries and, sadly, its eventual closure.

Shortly after World War 1, a Nife battery facility was set up in England and a young engineer, Martin Dybeck, established headquarters in Redditch.

The company had been registered in a London office in 1918, four £1 shares being issued, but it was not until February 1920 that production began.

The company was named Batteries Ltd. and they found premises at Hunt End which had previously been occupied by two other well-known Redditch firms, the Enfield Cycle Co., and the Eadie Manufacturing Co., who later moved to the present Union Street premises and whose emblem, EMCo 1896, still remained on the gates to the offices.

In 1923, the Chloride Group bought some shares in Batteries Ltd.

In 1926/28 Lucas took an interest and in 1933 Chloride finally acquired a controlling interest with Lucas retaining a shareholding.

Subsequently Lucas was bought out in 1968/69.

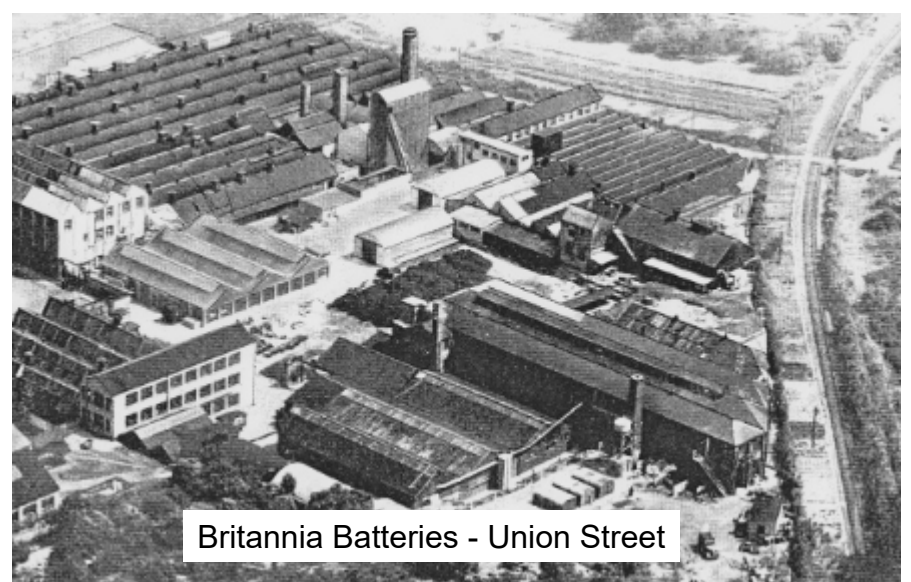
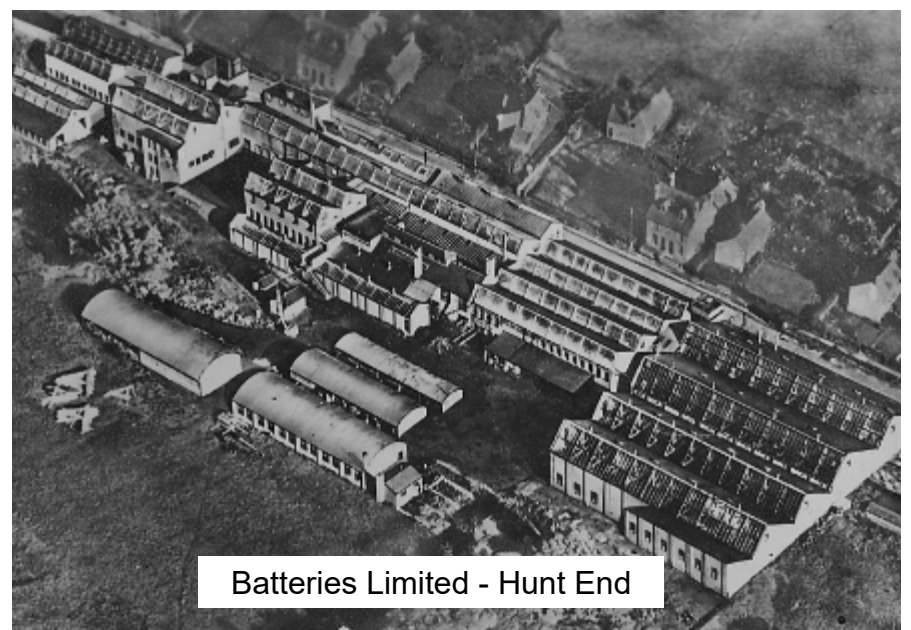
Some 40 years before then, in 1928-29, Varta took over the present Union Street premises to establish a new factory,

This was called Britannia Batteries, and was based on the manufacture of lead acid, alkaline (Edison tubular and a fiat plate type) and dry batteries (Pertrix).

In 1931 and then in 1936, Chloride purchased all Varta interests in the UK.

Before acquisition by Varta, the Union Street factory was occupied by the BSA Company for the manufacture of motorcycles.

Many ex-BSA employees stayed on in the factory to work for Britannia Batteries and later for Chloride.



Remembering the Batteries continued

For a time, Chloride continued with the manufacture in Redditch of both lead acid and dry batteries,

This was in addition to the two alkaline types, but the lead-acid activities were gradually absorbed by other companies in the Group.

Chloride disposed of the Pertrix dry battery section, helped by a disastrous fire which occurred during the Second World War which destroyed the main Pertrix building.

In about 1933 Batteries Ltd. was renamed Nife Batteries Ltd. and in 1947 the company moved from Hunt End to Union Street to be merged with the alkaline section of Britannia Batteries, forming a new unit named Alkaline Batteries Ltd.

The names of Nife Batteries and Britannia were retained for commercial use.

The company later changed its name to Chloride Alcad in April 1973.

They sold the company in 1982 to the Marathon Manufacturing Inc of Waco, Texas, USA who retained ownership for 5 years.

However, due to the financial difficulties of the parent company resulting from the oil crisis of that time, they were forced to sell a number of their acquisitions, including ALCAD.

In 1987 it was acquired by the French specialist battery company Saft, who embarked on a major transfer of all their pocket plate manufacture from their site in Bordeaux to Redditch.

However, in 1991 Saft acquired the Swedish company NIFE AB, the descendant of the original Nife Company, who were in financial difficulty due to a large manufacturing investment.

In 1993 the Redditch plant was closed and the production of the Alcad products moved to the Swedish factory based in Oskarshamn.

The Alcad brand name was retained and continues to be made and sold.



Heritage Open Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum on Sunday 18th September 2022

We had another great day at our Forge Mill Needle Museum Heritage Event on, Sunday 18th, September which ran from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

The weather was good, dry with some sunshine, but it was a bit cool. This meant that although we had several hundred visitors it was a steady stream rather than a packed site.

Indigo Arts entertained us with an excellent range of music throughout the day.

This was provided by

- the Young Indigo Singers
- the Violettes and
- an excellent saxophone/clarinet soloist. (Lucy)



The regional Royal Enfield owners Club had a successful co-exhibition with the museum, and they were back supporting the event with their superbly maintained bikes.



The Little Radford Model Boat Club exhibition was larger than ever and among their highly detailed model boats they had a working steam launch.



Heritage Open Day cont....

Arts in Redditch had displays/stands from their members and Niall Gallen was there discussing the survey and research he was doing on the Paolozzi mosaics for the forty-year anniversary next year.

In the same area was a mosaic making activity for children which was well subscribed.



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust were also present with stand and were very pleased with the response from visitors.

We had our Forge Mill Volunteers/Redditch History Society location next to the poster display of Queen 's visit to Redditch and the opening of the Needle Museum at Forge Mill in 1983 which was shown earlier this year to mark the Platinum Jubilee.

We had quite a number of visitors who were interested in the history of the town and we had some good discussions.

The guided tours of the Needle Museum and the Bordesley Abbey Ruins were well attended, and we split the afternoon mill tour between two guides because of the size.



Visitors were able to view the latest exhibition in the Gallery FOUND, an exhibition by Art Textiles: Made in Britain, which runs until the 30th of October.

The Mill Side Coffee Bar was busy all day with drinks, ice creams and light meals.

