

November 2022 Meeting

Hi All,

For our November meeting we had a presentation entitled “The story of the Gatehouse Chapel at Bordesley Abbey’ by Don Vincent, completed and presented by Anthony Green. This was well received and there is a report later in the Newsletter. As we do not currently have a Chairman, Chris Jackson performed the role so that I did not have to be both Chairman, Secretary, and speaker, and introduce myself. Thanks Chris.

We had an attendance of thirty-nine members (we had in addition apologies from four members), eight visitors and three new members which made a total of fifty at the meeting, which is our highest this year. We now have fifty-three paid up members which indicates that we are moving to a stable situation following two very difficult years.

On **page 2** there is an overview of our December presentation by Ron Gallivant with a seasonal talk entitled ‘Home Front Christmas’. Following this, to celebrate Christmas we will have mince pies and seasonal biscuits.

Continuing seasonal events, I have added the Forge Mill Needle Museum Christmas Craft Fair, which is now returning to give a taste of normality after two difficult years.

On **pages 3 and 4** there is a review of the November presentation which I gave on the Gatehouse Chapel at Bordesley Abbey. It has been difficult to condense this down to two pages, but I hope that you will find it interesting.

On **page 5** is our programme for 2023 which has been prepared by Pat Bellamy. This has an excellent range of speakers and should encourage more visitors.

On **page 6** I have put in a few images from a publication by Hodges of local photographs. They were based on the corner in Evesham Street and were an important producer of local postcards. I have a few more which I will publish when I need to fill a space.

On **pages 7 and 8** is an essay ‘Transition from Water to Steam Power in UK Manufacturing Industry’ which I have based on an article on the 5th of November edition of New Scientist. This had particular interest to early manufacturing in Redditch and I have used it with comments.

This newsletter was produced mainly 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
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Tel.: 01527 61434

Coming up



Next Meeting

Monday 12th December at 2.00 pm

At the Oasis Christian Centre, Clive Road.

Home Front Christmas

Ron Gallivant

REDDITCH MILITARY HISTORY SOCIETY

In his presentation Ron will be talking about how war and rationing affected Christmas time and how we prepared for a long war. He explains the National Austerity Programme; Blackout Regulations; the evacuation of children; how rationing and the Dig for Victory programme and Christmas Presents affected everyone. Ron points out that those who went through all this would be proud to be British!

As this is our December (Christmas) meeting we will not be charging for refreshments, and, as a Christmas 'treat' we will be having mince pies and festive biscuits as well as the usual tea and coffee. This will be our last December meeting as from next year, 2023, we will be reverting to our original ten meetings a year from February to November, as agreed at the Annual General Meeting. So, let us have a good turnout!

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR

FREE entry

Sunday 4 & Sunday 11 Dec
11am - 3pm

- Browse a variety of craft stalls offering unique Christmas gifts
- Visit Father Christmas in his grotto
(Additional charge & booking required)
- Traditional festive music
- Mulled wine
- Christmas crafts for children

A truly traditional Christmas event for all ages!

Additional charges for refreshments & some activities.
Overflow parking available at the Crematorium.



www.forgemill.org.uk

 **FORGE MILL**
NEEDLE MUSEUM

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

This is the most difficult presentation I have produced, and it concerns the Gateway Chapel at the entrance of Bordesley Abbey.

Its story began with the Abbey, continued after the dissolution, and finally arrived, as the Chapel on the Green, in the centre of Redditch.

It is not that complex, but it was begun by Don Vincent, our Chairman, who sadly died earlier this year and I have used his notes as much as possible, which I then incorporated with additional information supplied by Forge Mill Needle Museum, images which I have obtained from various sources and additional information to make this into a chronological narrative.

However, it has been a fascinating exercise and the text I used in giving the presentation amounted to over 4,500 words, so here I give a brief outline.

It is worth noting that the Cistercians did not go in for elaborate gatehouse such as Kirkham Priory. Hailes Abbey church is an example of how St Stephens chapel could have looked when it was the church for Redditch people.

1244 was the first reference to a chapel of St. Stephen at Bordesley and places the building under the ecclesiastical control of Tardebigge.

In 1301 there is reference to the Chapel as "the parish church of Bordesley" suggesting a widening of the building's function.

An illustration by Woodward painted about the time of his mid-19th Century excavation of the Bordesley Abbey site shows the Gateway Chapel at the entrance to the Abbey precinct. He would have based this on examples of Cistercian Monastery ruins which existed in a more complete state than the ruins at Redditch.

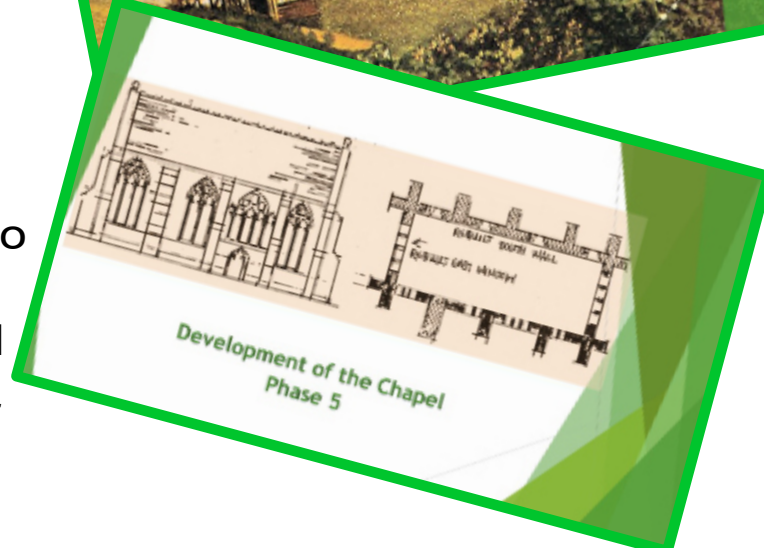
The archaeologists found that the chapel was extended five times until the last phase of the post-Dissolution modifications.

The Samuel and Nathaniel Buck drawing of about 1730 shows the north and east sides of St. Stephen's Chapel as it would have appeared after the dissolution.

On the 23rd of September 1538 we have the dissolution of the Abbey and the sale, and we have now moved on to another phase in the history of our little chapel.

When Thomas Habington visited the Chapel. In his "Survey of mid Worcestershire" he described it as a decaying chapel, and Nash, writing in 1799, reports that the building declined to a barn or place for cattle to shelter in.

In 1687 the people of Redditch successfully petitioned Lord Windsor to repair the Chapel and in 1688 the Chapel reopened. In 1712 we have the benefaction of Nathaniel Mugg and a brass plaque commemorating this is still in St Stephen's Church.



Report on November presentation cont.....

In 1863 James Woodward surveyed Bordesley Meadows, and in 1866 he planted a Giant Redwood in the Chapel graveyard in commemoration of his work.

The gatehouse chapel of Bordesley Abbey and parts of its accompanying graveyard excavated and consolidated by a Community Programme Project from 1983-8, overseen by Reading University.

So how was our 1244 Chapel constructed? First the chosen site sloped dramatically from north to south and from west to east. Vast amounts of infill were required to level the site. The foundation raft shows the building had external measurements of 20 by 8.3 metres and an internal area of 17.2 metres by 7 metres.

I was fortunate to have access by Forge Mill Museum to a range of 35mm slides taken at the time of the excavations of Bordesley Abbey which I was able to use to illustrate the excavations.

The graveyard itself was post-medieval in date. The randomness of the graveyard at St Stephens was typical of 18th Century graveyards and it is unusual to find such an arrangement visible today. It was fortunate that the Graveyard was abandoned before the Victorian period as that was an age of compulsive graveyard tidying.

Graves found during the excavation indicate that when the Chapel was moved the graves were not moved with it.

There were over one hundred gravestones found, and the majority were small homemade examples, rare today, but arguably far commoner in the early 18th century. Many were simply remnants which had been brought up from the abbey ruins and a date and initials very simply carved on. In earlier times, when many ordinary people survived on a daily basis, recycling was a way of life rather than a lifestyle choice.

Our little chapel has had a fascinating history. It began as the Gateway Chapel of the Abbey, after the dissolution it continued as the parish church for Redditch residents until, in 1805, it was demolished and using much of the stone, it was rebuilt in the town to become the Chapel on the Green. It expanded to respond to the increasing population until, in 1855, our current parish church, St Stephens was consecrated. So, one thousand years on, St Stephen has seen many changes and is still looking on over the town. Is not that amazing....

I am pleased to say that the presentation was appreciated by the audience and there were 15 minutes of questions before we went to tea in the Reeves Room.

I like to think that Don would have been happy with my attempt to present an area of history which was very dear to him.



13 th February	Wayside Wonders and Country Curiosities – local items of historic interest which people overlook	Dr.Richard Churchley
13 th March	Victorian and Edwardian Buildings of Redditch, Bromsgrove and Birmingham	Tim Bridges, The Victorian Society
17 th April	Annual General Meeting plus local history film(s)	Society Executive
15 th May	Winterbourne House and Garden, Edgbaston A general introduction and history	Henrietta Lockhart, Curator (Museum Collections)
12 th June	Exploring the past – the Excavations in Beoley in 2021	Nina O'Hare, Learning and Outreach Manager,
10 th July	It's Not about Shakespeare: Aspects of ordinary life in Stratford-Upon-Avon, 1775-1915	Val Horton, Author
14 th August	From Brum to Bringsty Common: Tales of a Wartime Childhood	Bill Machin
11 th September	'Remembering the Batteries' Nickel-cadmium industrial battery manufacturing in Redditch from 1918 to 1993	Anthony Green
9 th October	A walk round Redditch using old postcards: Looking at the areas off the main road	Chris Jackson
13 th November	From Common to Posh: The History of Church Green to 1900.	Graham Smith

Our meetings take place at the Oasis Christian Centre, 4 Plymouth Road, Redditch, B97 4QB

Meetings begin at 2.00 pm and last for approximately 2 hours, it begins with a presentation, which lasts about one hour, and this is followed by refreshments and society business, event news and project reports.

Non-members are welcome for whom there will be a £3 entrance charge. This is refundable against the membership fee if subsequently joining the society the same day.

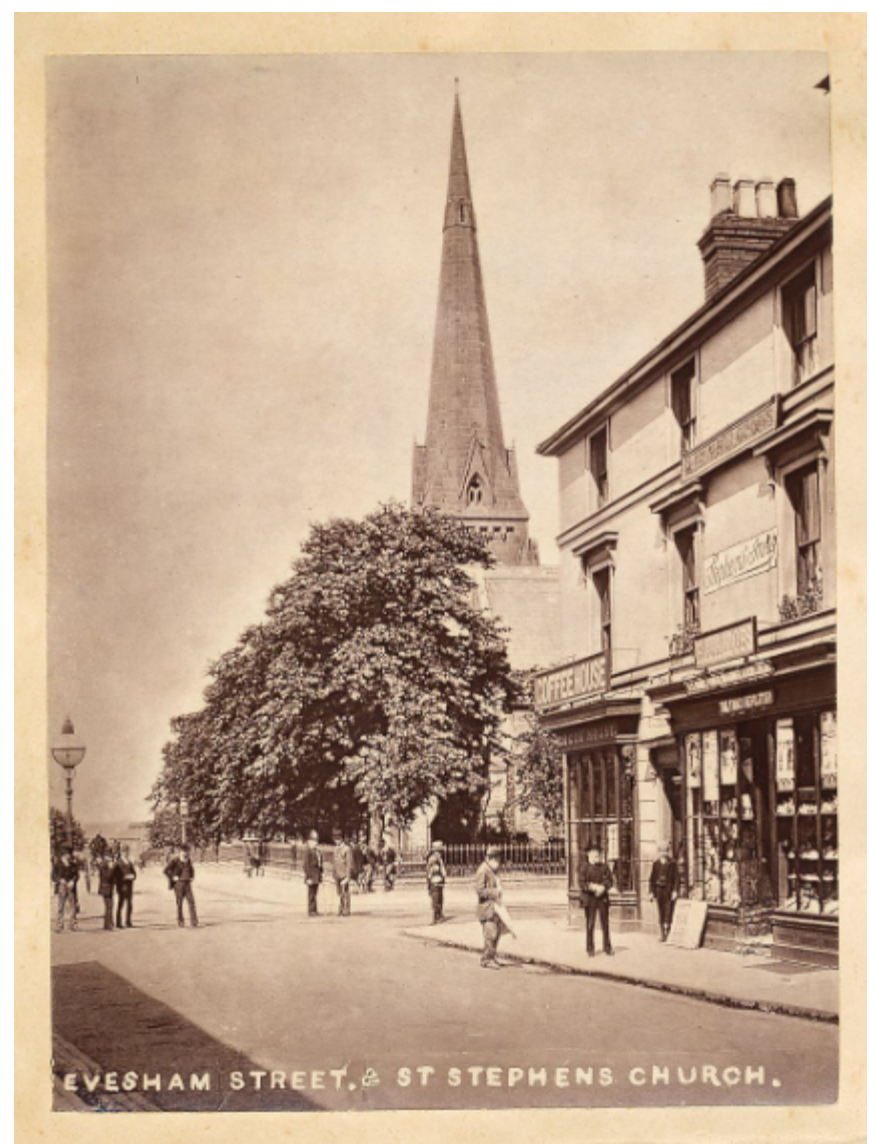
if planning to attend a specific event, please check our web site, our Facebook page, or monthly Newsletter for meeting details and any changes.

For further details of the Redditch History Society visit: www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk

E-mail: contact@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk or telephone the secretary at 01527 61434

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Photographs of Redditch by E.A. Hodges, 1, Evesham Street, Redditch



Transition from Water to Steam Power in UK Manufacturing Industry

I have based this essay on an article on the 5th of November edition of New Scientist by James Dinneen which describes how historians have battled over the precise timing of the transition in Britain from an agrarian economy powered by muscle, wood and water to a manufacturing economy powered by coal.

They also disagree about the causes of this industrial revolution.

I have put my additions in italics.

One proposed cause is that industrialists ran out of attractive sites along rivers to build the water wheels that powered many of their factories in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

“That implied water was scarce and expensive, and steam and coal was abundant and cheap,” says Andreas Malm at Lund University in Sweden.

Past analyses of the waterpower available to early industrialists relied on 20th-century precipitation patterns, but these are unreliable for estimating historical waterpower, says Tara Jonell at the University of Glasgow in the UK.

Jonell and her colleagues used precipitation records starting in 1862 collected by what is now the UK Meteorological Office combined with elevation data to create a more accurate model of the flow in Britain’s rivers and streams at the time.

They found that industrialists in England, Scotland and Wales had barely tapped potential waterpower when they made the transition to coal.

Concentrated development had saturated a few places, such as the river Spodden near Manchester, but overall “there was still plenty of waterpower that existed”, says Jonell, who presented this work at a meeting of the Geological Society of America in Denver, Colorado, on 11 October.



The water powered scouring mill at Forge Mill Needle Museum

Transition from Water to Steam Power cont....

In Redditch, of course, the river Arrow was an ideal source of waterpower, and, within the current Redditch boundary, there were no less than seven water mills involved in needle manufacture. Additional needle mills within the 'Needle District' operated along the Arrow from Alvechurch to beyond Alcester.

This supports the argument that coal power was neither cheaper nor more abundant or more productive than waterpower at the time and adds another nail to the coffin of the old orthodoxy.

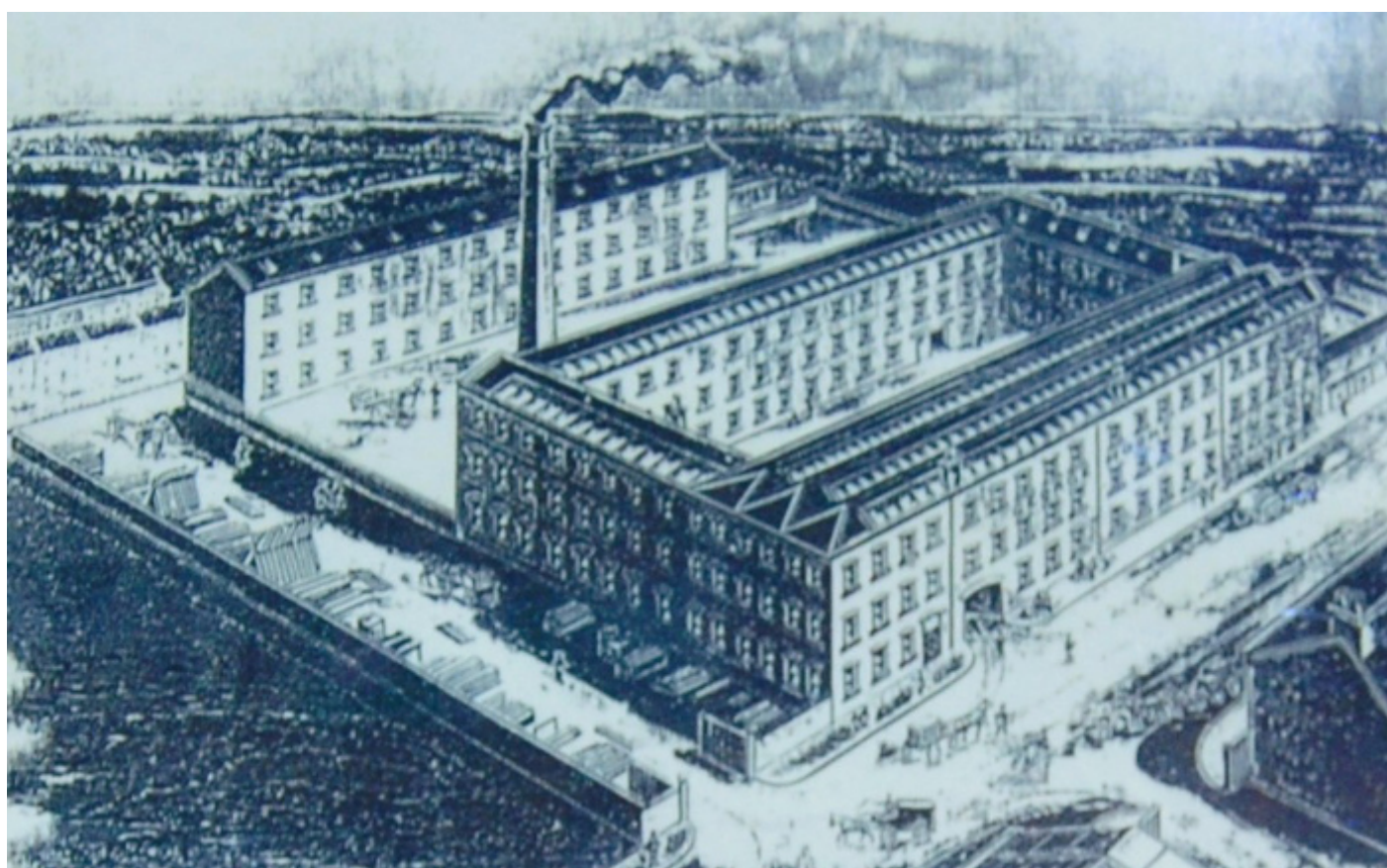
One possibility is that a series of droughts or seasonal irregularities may have made waterpower less reliable than coal, says Jonell. Historical documents discuss drought in Britain in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, though Jonell says it is not clear whether actual droughts took place at the time or how they might have interacted with other factors.

We can add our support for this theory as at Forge Mill Needle Museum there are the foundations of a steam engine which supplied power to the scouring mill when there was insufficient water available.

Malm, who was not involved with this work, has previously argued that drought played a role in this transition. He says workers' movements in the 1830s and 40s may have prevented industrialists from relying on labour to make up production driven by changing precipitation patterns. The mobility of coal was also a factor, he says. Relying on coal meant factories built near cheap labour or efficient transportation, instead of limited to sites along rivers.

The opening of the Worcester to Birmingham canal in 1807/1815 allowed easy access of coal for Redditch manufacturers, but this did not result in an immediate move from waterpower to steam power due to cost benefits. In fact, the scouring mill at Forge Mill was still operating as a viable operation until its closure in 1958.

There is still so much to learn about the history of the area well outside our normal parochial view, and the story has only just begun.



George Moore Needle Manufacturer, Red Lion Street, Redditch.