

March 2024 Newsletter

Hi All,

Our March meeting was an excellent finish to our current year. We had a large attendance of fifty-nine members and nine visitors, so a total of sixty-eight.

Our season runs from April to March, so our next meeting will be our Annual General Meeting (AGM), and this is Volume 5 (five years since we started the new format newsletter) Issue 10 (as we have ten meetings a year).

Our next Newsletter will therefore be Volume 6/ Issue 1.

For our last meeting of the current season, we had an enjoyable presentation by Max Keen (more below).

On **page 2** There are forthcoming events, particularly previewing our Annual General Meeting, which is important to ensure the health of the Society. There are other items of interest including a request for information.

Pages 3 and 4 Is a report on our presentation on 'The English Civil War in Worcestershire 1642-1651' by Max Keen. This was a bit special and was quite difficult to summarise, but I have done my best.

On pages 5 to 8 I have continued my series of short articles on the transport systems which were important to the development of the town.

This month it is the last of the series and covers the railway system which came to the fore in the 19th century and, until well into the 20th century, revolutionised transport of goods and materials throughout the country.

If anyone wishes to write an article for the Newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Take care, stay safe and look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

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Coming up

Next Meeting Monday 8th April 2024

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The annual general meeting, which is probably the least interesting of our meetings for many members is, in many ways, the most important. It is here where we elect our Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and members of the executive committee, we decide our programme of events for the next year, and, obviously, without these actions the Society could not exist.

The format for the meeting is that the current Chair (Elizabeth Simpson), Secretary (Anthony Green) and Treasurer (Graham Smith) give their annual reports and this is followed by the election of officers for the current year.

Our current officers have agreed to continue in their posts and Pat Bushaway is happy to continue as speaker organiser. The other elected members of the management committee, Sue Tatlow and David Spyer are prepared to continue in their roles and Richard Watson is willing to be a member of the Committee.

This was approved unanimously and will be proposed by the Committee at the AGM.

Our Independent Accounts Examiner, Gil Barlow, is also happy to continue in his role.

Of course, if anyone is interested in being involved in the management of the Society we are pleased to welcome them. There is no limit to the size of the Management Committee.

Please note that the membership fee, as agreed at 2023 AGM, increases to £20 per year (50% reduction for under 16s). Visitors fee increased to £4 per meeting from February.

We will have renewal forms and new member forms at reception and we will be collecting the fees after the meeting in the refreshments (Reeves) room. Please have cheques/cash, and pens, at the ready.

The Annual General Meeting will be followed by some short history films related to local and national events.

Local History Question - can anyone help?

According to my family records, there is/was a memorial to my great great grandfather, Charles Simpson Boswell, in Redditch, and I was wondering if it still stands, and where it is, if so.

He was a doctor (b 28 Feb 1822) and the memorial was for his work combating smallpox during an epidemic from which he died on 8 June, 1873. He was buried in Bromsgrove Cemetery. I believe the memorial was still standing in Redditch in the 1960s.

Many thanks for any help you can give, Best regards, Sara Lennon.

(I do not give e-mail addresses on the 'web' for obvious reasons, so, if you have any information please contact me and I will pass it on.)

Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre



This year Forge Mill Needle Museum are launching the 'Textile Connoisseurs Club' pass which provides entry into all five of the textile themed exhibitions this year for just £13.

It also entitles you to 10% off in the coffee bar and shop!

This has no limit for use, and so club members can visit all five textile exhibitions, and the museum, as many times as they wish.

The first exhibition is TRANSPORT AND BUILDINGS by the Bristol Modern Quilting Group is now on display and runs until 14th April 2024.

There are five textile exhibitions throughout the season and so, for enthusiasts, this is great value.

The only exhibition it does not include is the summer 'Star Wars toys and collectables' exhibition - but that is a different audience!

Details at <https://www.forgemill.org.uk/web/exhibitions/>

March Meeting Report

'The English Civil War in Worcestershire 1642-1651'

by Max Keen

Well, that was certainly different!

It began with a flourish, as our Chairman, Elizabeth, asked everyone to clap in unison, and Max, who had been waiting, or in his words, lurking, at the back, strode down the central aisle waving his banner dressed in his Civil War fighting costume – and the presentation never looked back.

Max, in his earlier life was a teacher, and is a born actor and storyteller, who kept our audience captivated during his hour-long presentation.

As Max pointed out, despite our modern perceptions, there was not really any difference between the costume of the two sides, but it was clear that his sympathy was towards the Royalist contingent.

He had two standing jokes, the first of which was every time he showed a picture of Charles I, Prince Rupert, or Charles II, he bowed so low that he almost reached the floor. The second was the 'lack of' and, sometimes, availability of plaques related to the travels of the main characters.

The amount of research he had done to follow the history of the Civil War in Worcestershire was quite impressive, so, although he presented it in a very dynamic and amusing way, he gave an amazing amount of detail concerning this often-ignored part of our history.

Worcestershire is quite pivotal in the history of the Civil War as the county where the first battle and last battle of the English Civil War took place.

The first battle, the Battle of Powick Bridge, fought on 23 September 1642, was a cavalry skirmish and a victory for the Royalists. The last battle, the battle of Worcester, fought on 3 September 1651, was decisive and ended the war with a Parliamentary victory and King Charles II a wanted fugitive.

The presentation was entitled 'The English Civil War in Worcestershire 1642-1651', but Max explained that the war was in three phases.

The First English Civil War took place in England and Wales from 1642 to 1646, which ended with victory for the Parliamentarian alliance in June 1646 and Charles in custody. The Second English Civil War took place between February and August 1648 which led to the execution of Charles I in January 1649 and establishment of the Commonwealth of England.

Top: Charles I
Middle/Top: Civil War Battle
Middle/Bottom: Prince Rupert
Bottom: Musket Fire



March Meeting Report cont.....

The Anglo-Scottish war (1650–1651), also known as the Third Civil War, was the final conflict when Charles II tried, with support of the Scottish army, to take control. Cromwell, with his new 'model army' brought the badly outnumbered Scots to battle at Worcester on the 3rd September and completely defeated them, marking the end of the three wars. Charles II was one of the few to escape.

However, this outline of the war was just a basis on which Max could tell his story and he had a particular interest in the movements of Prince Rupert, who spent much time in various venues in Worcestershire.

Max complained bitterly (but jokingly) about the many places where Rupert stopped where there was no plaque or evidence of his visit.

This was done to the extent that he could say to the audience 'and is there a plaque' and we could all say 'no!' Of course, so that he could confuse the audience, he could say on occasions that there was.

This was an enjoyable presentation, and I cannot in words do justice to it. So, I would like to finish with an e-mail I received after the presentation which sums up the presentation.

'I have to say what a fantastic and entertaining afternoon we had on Monday! Max Keen's presentation was second to none! His knowledge was truly amazing and that alone would have made an outstanding talk, However, given he provided us with so much local knowledge in such a way with his costume and humour that I think we all came away not only having learnt a great deal but had a fabulous afternoon.

Thank you all for finding such an inspirational speaker and PLEASE can he be booked again.'

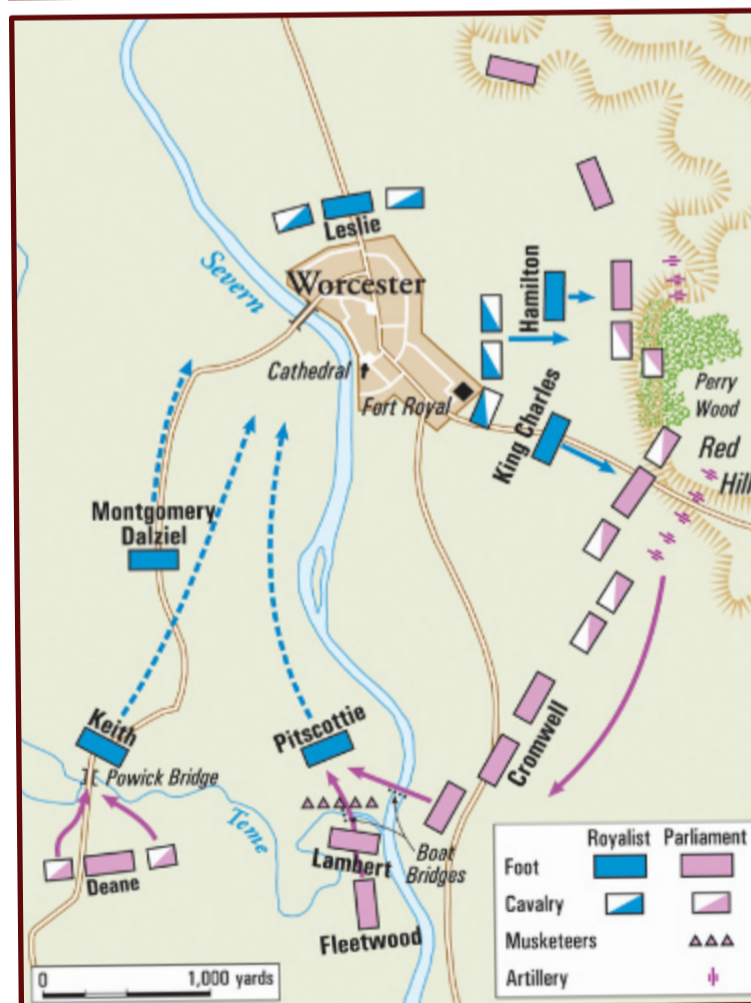
I haven't given the author of the e-mail, but our view was the same and immediately after the meeting Max was asked if he would come again next year.

He is trying to cut down on his workload, but he enjoyed the support from the audience so much that hopefully he will be with us for another presentation next year.

Top: Charles I on the way to his execution

Middle: Charles II

Bottom: Battle lines for The Battle of Worcester



Redditch Transport System - Anthony Green

The Railway System Arrives

The 18th Century showed great advances in transport, with the Turnpike system for the transport of people and mail over long distances, and the Canal system for the transport of goods and material.

However, in the 19th Century new technological changes appeared. The improvements in the steam engine, coupled with advances in manufacture of iron and steel, and the availability of coal, a compact easily transported high energy fuel source, were to have a significant effect on industrial activities.

Although early mills had run successfully with water power, using a steam engine allowed a factory to be located anywhere, not just close to a water source.



However, although the development of the stationary steam engine was a very important early element of the Industrial Revolution, the technology was capable of being reduced in size and used in mobile applications.

Although horse-drawn railways and steam engines had been around for years, the Stockton & Darlington Railway in north-east England, which opened on 27 September 1825, is credited as Britain's first passenger railway and the railway age had begun.

The railway system in Great Britain is the oldest railway system in the world.

This was followed by an era of a patchwork of local rail links operated by small private railway companies and these isolated links expanded during the railway boom of the 1840s into a national network, although initially being run by over one hundred competing companies.

A 'railway mania', followed and 240 Acts of Parliament were passed in 1845 (amounting to 2,820 miles of new track), compared to just 48 the year before and, over the next ten years, over 4,600 miles of new track were completed.

Above: An early map of the extensive railway network

The Industrial Revolution was creating a new, increasingly affluent middle class anyone could invest money (and hopefully earn a return) on a new company and railways were heavily promoted as a foolproof venture.

The world's first recognisably modern inter-city railway, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway (the L&M), opened its railway in 1830 and proved to be successful for transporting both passengers and freight.

The growth of excursion trains and the Great Exhibition of 1851 stimulated vast numbers to use the railways for the first time.



Above: The opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway in 1830

The Railway System cont 2/4....

By the end of the 1850's, passenger numbers had risen beyond all expectations and by 1854 alone, the network had reached 6,000 miles, and the magic of train travel had caught the public imagination.



Above: The original railway station in Clive Road

By the mid-1840s, the economy was improving and the manufacturing industries were once again growing .

Existing railway companies' shares began to boom as they moved ever-increasing amounts of cargo and people.

This encourages people to invest in new railways.

The railway lines which existed in 1961 (pre-Beeching!) were so comprehensive that every area of the country was covered by the network.

The Redditch Railway company was authorised in July 1858 by the Redditch Railway Act. The aim was to open a line, 4 miles long, between Barnt Green and Redditch.

It was, over most of its length, a single-track line. It was constructed in a little over one year and opened for passenger traffic on 18th September 1859 and goods traffic a few days later.

The original terminus was in Clive Road and the opening was reported on the front page of the first edition of the town's new newspaper, the Redditch Indicator.

The Redditch Indicator often gave a timetable for the Redditch to Birmingham line including it's station at Alvechurch.

Presented with the "REDDITCH INDICATOR," July 1st, 1861.

REDDITCH RAILWAY.
TIME TABLE FROM JULY THE FIRST UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

Trains leave	WEEK DAYS.						SUNDAYS.				
	1 2 and GOV. A.M.	1 and CLASS A.M.	2 1 and CLASS P.M.	2 1 and CLASS P.M.	2 1 and CLASS P.M.	2 1 and GOV. P.M.	1 2 and GOV. A.M.	2 and GOV. A.M.	2 and GOV. P.M.	1 2 and GOV. P.M.	
REDDITCH	8, 20	10, 0	1, 25	2, 30	5, 0	7, 25	7, 0	10, 10	5, 10	8, 40	
Alvechurch	8, 29	10, 9	1, 34	2, 39	5, 9	7, 34	7, 9	10, 19	5, 19	8, 49	
Barnt Green, ...	8, 35	10, 15	1, 40	2, 45	5, 15	7, 40	7, 15	10, 25	5, 25	8, 55	
Arrive at Bham.	9, 20	10, 50	2, 35	3, 25	6, 0	8, 35	...	11, 15	...	9, 45	
Worcester	...	11, 30	2, 35	...	6, 17	8, 45	8, 15	...	6, 25	...	

Trains leave	WEEK DAYS.						SUNDAYS.				
	1 2 and GOV. A.M.	1 and CLASS A.M.	2 1 and CLASS P.M.	2 1 and CLASS P.M.	2 1 and CLASS P.M.	2 1 and GOV. P.M.	1 2 and GOV. A.M.	2 and GOV. A.M.	2 and GOV. P.M.	1 2 and GOV. P.M.	
Birmingham	7, 5	10, 5	1, 20	...	5, 15	7, 10	6, 45	...	5, 0	...	
Worcester	7, 44	9, 28	...	3, 5	4, 40	7, 10	...	9, 50	...	8, 20	
Barnt Green	8, 45	10, 40	1, 50	2, 55	5, 45	8, 0	7, 25	10, 40	5, 40	9, 10	
Alvechurch	8, 51	10, 46	1, 56	3, 1	5, 41	8, 6	7, 31	10, 46	5, 46	9, 16	
Arrive at Redditch	9, 0	10, 55	2, 5	3, 10	6, 0	8, 15	7, 40	10, 55	5, 55	9, 25	

ALCESTER & STUDLEY.—An Omnibus leaves Alcester calling at Studley every Week-day in time to meet the Trains leaving Redditch at 10,0 a.m. and 5,0 p.m., and returns from Redditch after the arrival of Trains leaving Birmingham at 10,5 a.m., and 5,15 p.m.

Third Class with all trains between Redditch and Birmingham.

1A Train leaves Birmingham for Barnt Green at 1,0 p.m., but does not go on to Redditch until the next, arriving 3,4 p.m.

*These two carry mails out. † This one brings a mail in.

The timetable for the bus service from Studley and Alcester was timed to have specific 'train service' which coincided with the Redditch to Birmingham arrival/departures.

However, this important new transport system was enhanced, nine years later, when the line was extended to Evesham via Studley and Alcester using a new single line tunnel running under Mount Pleasant.

Right: The railway tunnel under Mount Pleasant shortly after closure.



The Railway System cont 3/4.....



Above: Route of Birmingham and Gloucester Loop passing through Studley, Alcester and Evesham.

Below: Redditch Railway Station - postcard from 1950s



The Ashchurch and Evesham Railway opened to both passengers and goods traffic in 1864.

The gap between those two lines was filled by the Evesham and Redditch Railway which was authorised in 1863.

The stretch between Evesham and Alcester opened to traffic 1866 and the remaining section between Alcester and Redditch opened in 1868 running to a new station at the bottom of Unicorn Hill.

The Redditch Railway was bought by the Midland Railway in 1865 while the middle section between Redditch and Evesham was taken over by the Midland in 1882.

From Redditch the line ran south through Evesham to a junction at Ashchurch where it re-joined the Birmingham & Gloucester Railway; the line became known as the Birmingham & Gloucester Loop.

After the First World War, economic pressures caused difficulties for many small railway companies.

By 1923, almost all the railways in the country were grouped into four new companies:

- The Great Western Railway (GWR)
- The London, Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS)
- The London & North Eastern Railway (LNER)
- The Southern Railway.

However, the decline continued and in 1948 the railways were nationalised as British Railways.

By the 1960s the expansion in road transport, which was subsidised by the government in the form of new roads and motorways, coupled with little investment in the railways, moved passengers and goods away from the railways and on to the road system.

In hindsight this can be seen as an error and our lack of investment in railways can now be seen as a short term expedient.

Sadly, the cost of reversing this is so large that it cannot easily be changed.

The Railway System cont 4/4.....

The Beeching Report in 1962 was produced to justify railway closures and, in the first ten years after its publication, more than 4,000 miles of railway track and 3,000 stations were closed.

The Beeching 'Axe' is still identified with the mass closure of railways and the loss of many local services.

After the Beeching Report the rail service between Evesham and Redditch was completely closed and the track lifted by 1964.

In 1965 there was a threat to close the section between Redditch and Barnt Green, but the line was reprieved due to the development of Redditch New Town.

Right: British Rail Network Map 1960s



Above: Photograph of new railway station (2000)

Right: Cross City Line Map (2000)

In February 1990, the Cross-City Line between Redditch and Lichfield was authorised which included the electrification of the line.

Today much of the former track bed can still be traced and part of the line has been incorporated into the Evesham Country Park.

Within Redditch the old route south follows tunnel drive and along the Alcester Highway.



The station was moved to the north side of Bromsgrove Road.

This allowed the former station site to be cleared for the construction of a new bus station to create a transport interchange.