

Newsletter September 2025

Hi All,

We had an excellent response for our first meeting after our August break, with an attendance consisting of 48 Members and 18 Visitors, so a total of 66.

This was assisted by an excellent article, based on Pat's press release in the Redditch Standard.

This is the highest attendance in this season of talks, and we are hoping that, as from October membership for the remaining five meetings is only £10, that we will increase our membership.

We have yet to achieve the pre-Covid level of membership, but we are slowly getting there, and the Society is now in a sound financial position.

This allows us to spend more on speakers, giving us a wider range of options. We are, of course, always ready to hear from our members with ideas and recommendations for speakers.

On the remaining pages of the Newsletter, we have:

On page two is the 'Coming Events' section.

Our next meeting is on Monday 13th October and is entitled 'Early Postcards of Redditch Town Centre' by Chris Jackson.

Also, I have two notices concerning meetings by two Worcestershire History Societies, who are, like ourselves, members of the Worcestershire Local History Forum. .

Page 3 to 8 I have devoted the report to "Redditch 1939 to 1945: How our town supported the War Effort", by yours truly, Anthony Green.

Next Meeting...

Our next Meeting is on Monday 13th October 2025 see page 2 for information.

The meeting will be, as always at the Oasis Christian Centre starting at 2.00 pm.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

E-mail: tony.rhs@btinternet.com Tel: 01527 61434

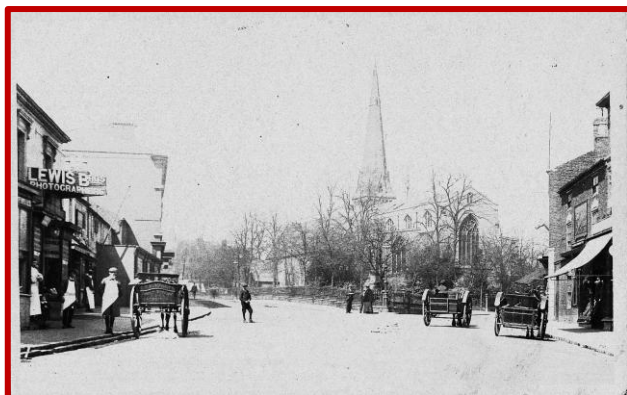
Next Meeting

Our next meeting is on Monday 13th October and is entitled 'Early Postcards of Redditch Town Centre' by Chris Jackson

Chris has probably the largest range of original postcards of Redditch which exist, and we have been fortunate that he is a member of the Society and is willing to present a selection of his archives for us.

To date, Chris has given us a tour along the A441 from Bordesley Corner to Crabbs Cross, and postcards from the roads off the main route.

In this talk, Chris will be looking at the areas around the town centre including Alcester Street, Church Green and roads which no longer exist. In particular Chris will be looking at the Palace Theatre over many decades.



Two interesting meetings taking place in Worcestershire in October



Ceremony and Splendour

Saturday, 11th October 2025

A day of entertaining and informative lectures
demonstrations and living history

Held at the Baptist Community Centre, Offenham Road, Evesham WR11 3DY



A Savage Splendour: The Thirteenth Century Tournament

Robert W. Jones, PhD, FR, FR HistS,
Visiting Scholar in History, Franklin & Marshall College

Sandy Wainwright: *The Life and Times of a Medieval Knight - Sir Geoffrey de Langley and Family*
Sandy will be presenting her new book

How Can We Know the Character of a Medieval King: the Case of King Henry III (1216-1272)

IRIS PINKSTONE MEMORIAL LECTURE presented by Professor Peter Coss

Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the School of History, Archaeology, and Religion at Cardiff University



Splendour and Reality: The Life and Connections of Godfrey Giffard, Bishop of Worcester

Presented by Professor David Carpenter

Professor of medieval history at
King's College London



Living History in Action The House of the Twin-Tailed Lion will present warfare in the thirteenth century and will answer questions about arms and armour



£25 each (for members) £30 each (non-members) Including morning coffee, lunch and afternoon tea
Booking details: Booking: www.simondemontfort.org/product/october-day-school/
or email: events@simondemontfort.org

Keeping the memory of the 6th Earl of Leicester alive

www.simondemontfort.org • Membership £15 a year • Couple membership £25 a year
Membership enquiries: jsnowden2000@gmail.com

The Simon de Montfort Society Registered Charity number: 1092319

Worcestershire
Historical Society

AGM & LECTURE

SATURDAY

18 OCTOBER 2025

14:45 - 17:15

The Studio
The Hive
Sawmill Lane
The Butts
Worcester WR1 3PD

Guest Speaker: Dilwyn Porter
De Montfort University

Sport & Society in
Victorian Worcestershire:
Gentlemen Amateurs &
Amateur Gentlemen

This event is **FREE** to attend

For In-Person attendance,
book on-line at:

[https://
whs2025AGMINPERSON.eventbrite
.co.uk](https://whs2025AGMINPERSON.eventbrite.co.uk)

For On-Line attendance,
book on-line at:

[https://
whs2025AGMONLINE.eventbrite
.co.uk](https://whs2025AGMONLINE.eventbrite.co.uk)



'Redditch 1939 to 1945: How our town supported the War Effort' – Anthony Green

It is possible to take almost any part of history and describe it using Redditch and the area as an example, and, so it is not surprising that our little town had a part to play in WW2.

I have given this talk for more than 10 years to local groups and it has slowly evolved over that time as I have gained more material.

These days, I am only giving talks to the Redditch History Society, and so this will be the last time it will be given.

As I was, as always, a bit short of material for the Newsletter, I thought that I would use these six pages to give as complete as possible report of the presentation.

I hope you find it of interest and agree that Redditch has a fascinating history and it really does have its own special place in the story of WW2.

In 1938 war had not yet been declared, yet preparations had already begun with new factories to support the war effort.

The first of three new factories in Redditch was built to manufacture the BESA Machine Gun. 'This was a British version of the Czechoslovakian ZB-53 belt-fed machine gun. It was an air-cooled, and therefore lighter, replacement for the Vickers and was ideal for use in light tanks and armoured cars. It could also be used as an infantry weapon.

The War office ordered the weapon from BSA in 1938 for delivery at the end of 1939. BSA began building a purpose designed plant in Studley Road, Redditch in April 1938 and the first batch of 50 guns were completed and fired in June 1939. During WW2 nearly 60,000 were made for our military.

The new High Duty Alloys Ltd factory in Windsor Road, Redditch opened on the 19th August 1939 for the purpose of manufacturing components using Hiduminium alloys. These high-strength, high-temperature aluminium alloys were developed by Rolls-Royce, and further by High Duty Alloys Ltd parent company. These materials were crucial to aircraft production and during WW2, the Redditch plant produced 10 million aero engine pistons as well as many other castings and components. As well as producing ingots of raw alloy, manufacturing included the initial forging or casting processes. Finish machining would be undertaken by the customer. Components made in Redditch were used by all of the major British aero engine makers and they even produced the undercarriage for the 'bouncing bomb'.

The Story of Redditch in World War Two Overview

IN THIS PRESENTATION I AM GOING TO COVER.....

- **Redditch Industry and the factory workers**
- **The Home Guard and the defence of Worcestershire**
- **Bombs fall on Redditch**
- **Raising money for the war effort**
- **Food production**
- **Evacuees**
- **The War Ends**

The Story of Redditch in World War Two Industry

WARTIME REDDITCH INDUSTRIES


Industries listed by the LDV/Home Guard as part of the Worcestershire war production facilities, being of local importance and requiring special protection:

- Britannia Batteries Limited, Lodge Road, Redditch *
- British Hard Rubber Company Limited (Morris and Yeomans), Astwood Bank *
- BSA Guns Limited, Studley Road, Redditch *
- High Duty Alloys, Windsor Road, Redditch *
- Lewis Spring Company, Queen Street, Redditch *
- Nife Batteries, Hunt End Works, Redditch *
- Reynold Tube Company Limited, Studley Road, Redditch *
- Enfield Cycle Company, Hewell Road, Redditch *
- * Ministry of Aircraft Production
- * Ministry of Supply

Other important industries producing products for the war effort included:

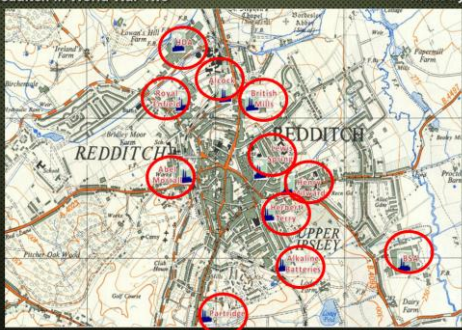
- Herbert Terry (Springs)
- Alcock's (Fishhooks and military sub-contract)
- Partridges (fish hooks)
- Henry Millward (needles)
- Abel Morrell (needles)
- British Mills (needles and fish hooks)

Plus many smaller companies producing components necessary for the war effort.



The Story of Redditch in World War Two Industry

LOCATION OF THE MAIN CENTRES OF INDUSTRY WITHIN REDDITCH DURING WW2



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Industry

1939
JULY
BSA
ARMAMENTS
FACTORY
OPENED



The third industry to be constructed in Redditch was the Reynold Tube Company Limited (later British Aluminium) on the Studley Road, who produced aluminium extrusions.

However, it was not just new industries which were important for the war effort.

As well as these three new industries, the LDV/Home Guard listed as part of the area's war production facilities requiring special protection, Britannia Batteries Limited, Lodge Road, Redditch, British Hard Rubber Company Limited (Morris and Yeomans), Astwood Bank, Lewis Spring Company, Queen Street, Redditch, Nife Batteries, Hunt End Works, Redditch, and the Royal Enfield, Hewell Road, Redditch.

There were also other important industries producing products related to the war effort and Home Front including: Herbert Terry (Springs), Allcocks (Fishhooks and military sub-contract), Partridges (fishhooks), Henry Millward (needles), Abel Morrall (needles), British Mills (needles and fishhooks) and many smaller companies.

A problem which arose quite quickly was that the requirement for more workers increased as the effect of male conscription reduced the number of local men available to fill the posts.

This was resolved in two ways, women who would take on the jobs previously done by men and workers from other areas of the country with limited war work would be transferred to areas, such as Redditch, in need of workers.

As a result, hundreds of workers were drafted into the town, and, with some of them coming from as far away as Scotland and Ireland, there was a need for hostel accommodation. 'The Abbey Hostel was built in the 1940s and consisted of a group of prefabricated asbestos-clad buildings which housed 300 single people. It had a large recreation room which continued to be used after the war. It was demolished in 1969 when the Sainsbury's store was built.

Many of the workers were young girls in their late teens and early twenties working in factories on capstans, drilling or milling machines, although some were land girls. Some were accommodated in people's homes, and many were given accommodation in various large old houses. In a visit in 1941, the Duchess of Kent visited the hostels as part of her visit to Redditch.

The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Industry

1939 - AUGUST
HIGH DUTY
ALLOYS
OPENED



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Industry

WAR WORKERS

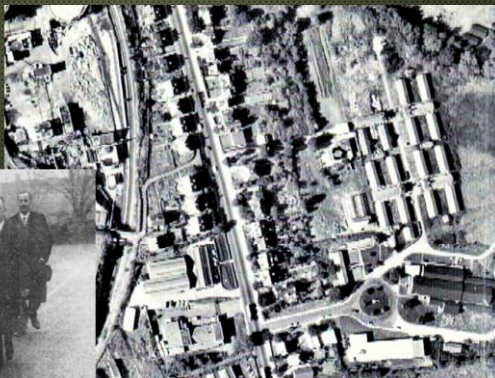


The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Industry

ABBAY HOSTEL

VISIT BY
DUCHESS OF KENT
IN 1941



Redditch 1939 to 1945 Page 3

The Story of Redditch in World War Two

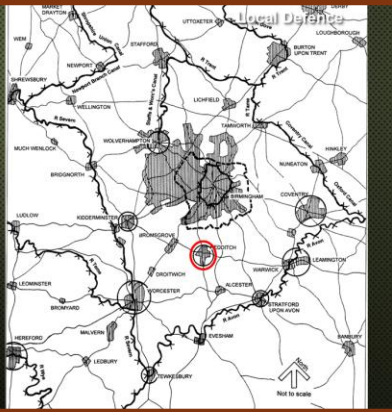
THE DEFENCE OF WORCESTERSHIRE - REDDITCH IS A TANK STOP

Main Roads

Stop Lines with the primary direction of defence indicated

Main built-up areas. Anti-Tank Islands ringed.

Birmingham Defence Area.



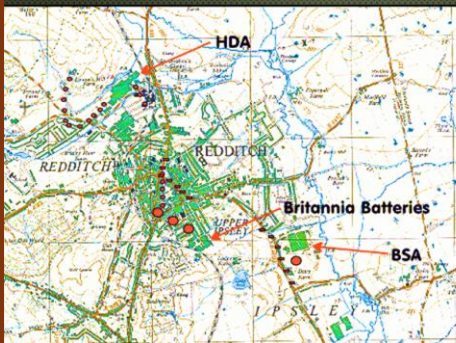
The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Local Defence

THE REDDITCH HOME GUARD GROUPS (&ARP)



The Story of Redditch in World War Two REDDITCH BOMBING



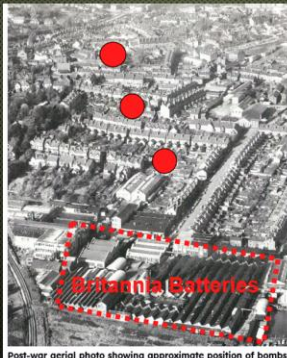
The Blitz



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

The Blitz

ATTEMPTED BOMBING OF THE 'BATTERIES'



Post-war aerial photo showing approximate position of bombs

The Local Defence Volunteers (LDV) was introduced in May 1940. It was a part time job, volunteers were still expected to do their full-time job, they would be unpaid but would receive a uniform and arms. Within two months there were 500,000 volunteers and in July 1940 the name was changed to the 'Home Guard'. The German Blitzkrieg (Lightning War) had swept through Belgium and with our very large coastline there was a fear that the Germans could land and then sweep up from the south and occupy our manufacturing centres in the West Midlands. Each area from the coast had to have a defence system against fast moving tank convoys. Rivers were natural boundaries to be protected. There were three tank stops in Worcestershire, Worcester, Kidderminster, and Redditch. The defence of Redditch was to be the responsibility of the 9th Worcestershire (Redditch) Battalion Home Guard, and the headquarters was established at the Drill Hall in Church Road. Redditch, despite its wide range of industry dedicated to the war effort, was relatively unnoticed by the German military and the attack by the Luftwaffe on the 11th December 1940 was the only 'Blitz' attack which took any lives in Redditch.

During WW2, there was severe censorship of the news media and as a result the bombings experienced by Redditch were not published. Eventually in 1944, when the tide had turned and there was a mention in the local paper of the bombings 4 years earlier. These figures are the most accurate which we have::

First air alert - sounded June 25th, 1940 - 1 hour 41 minutes.
300 alerts altogether - majority in 1940 - Last one Aug 5th, 1942.

735 homes damaged - 11 completely demolished or so bad that had to be demolished later.

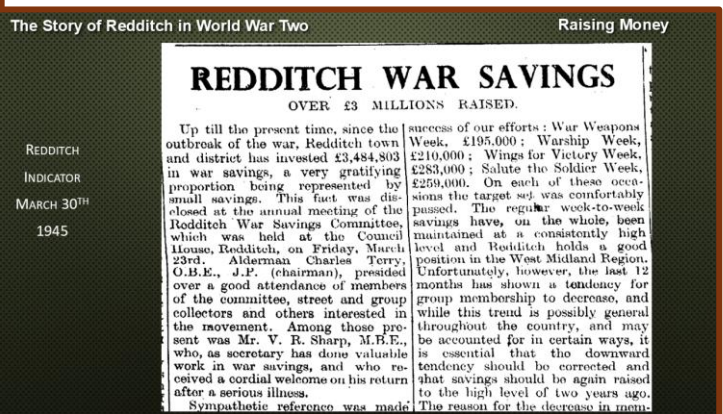
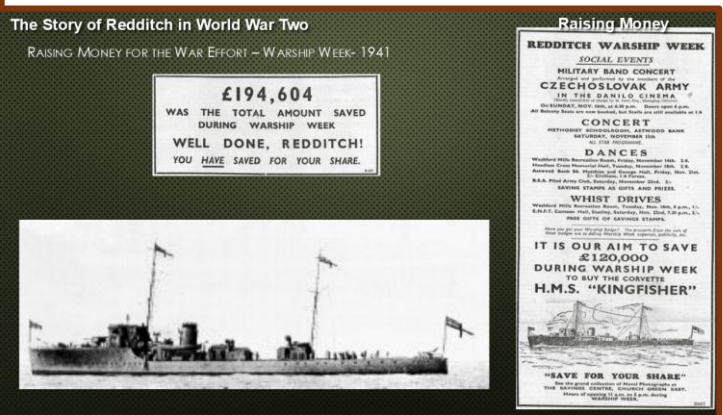
42 bombs dropped in Redditch District - 47 casualties in Redditch - 6 were fatal.

Heaviest blow was Dec 11th, 1940 - Alert sounded from 6.26 pm on 11th to 7.36am on 12th with only two short breaks. 37 bombs dropped - 18 of them fell on Redditch at Glover Street, Orchard Street, Kathleen Place, Izod's Yard, Ash Walk, Britannia Batteries playing field, Woodrow Farm Road. 4 separate lots of incendiaries fell on the new sewage disposal works.

In total there were 36 casualties - 6 fatal.

Redditch Civil Defences did valiantly throughout the period. They assisted in blitzes in Birmingham and Coventry too.

Redditch 1939 to 1945 Page 4



There were numerous funds set up to purchase weapons and equipment, and these were well reported in the 'Redditch Indicator'. In 1940 we had the Spitfire Fund, where £4000 was raised, and was typical of the civic pride associated with giving to the War Effort. Warship Week, in November 1941, gave residents of Redditch a chance to become shareholders in the Navy, so paying dividends for the country in the shape of sunken U-boats and safely convoyed cargoes. Redditch Warship Week set to raise £120,000 to purchase a Corvette to forge and strengthen links between the town and the navy, 'who unceasingly kept waters safe for all freedom loving peoples.' At the time of the 'New Town' development, Pat Wilson an ex-Wren and Mayor of Redditch, was anxious to have a tangible reminder of the relationship between the town and HMS Kingfisher in the new shopping centre. This was accomplished in a ceremony in June 1981 when a model of the ship was unveiled in the presence of Lt Nigel Hibbett, the Commanding Officer, and crew of the existing patrol vessel with the same name. This led to a representation on major civic occasions and visits to the ship when berthed in Gloucester Docks. The model now resides in Redditch Town Hall.

From the Redditch Indicator May 1943... 'Our picture shows the notice board, originally designed by Mr. R.H. Hodge, outside, the public library In Church Green West. It was wonderfully inspiring to hear reports of hundreds of cases where notes from £10 to £750 were brought to the various centres. Street Group collectors were continually encouraged by their reception. The certified total for the week is £282,704, the total for the month to May 8th is £318,973, and the grand total of war savings up to last Saturday is £2,512,987'.

Lord Kindersley has sent the following telegram: - 'Heartiest congratulations on this stirring result achieved in "Wings for Victory" Week. Please convey to the members of your committee and to all others associated with, you in this great effort my warmest thanks and appreciation.' "

Redditch raised £3,484,803 during the war period and a large proportion of this came from small savings.

Redditch 1939 to 1945 Page 5

The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Food Production

DIG FOR VICTORY



For a healthy, happy job



DIG ON FOR VICTORY



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Food Production

WOMEN'S LAND ARMY



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Food Production

DIG FOR VICTORY

SOW WEBBS SEEDS

For the Garden
Flower Seeds
Scotch Seed Potatoes
Fertilisers and Insecticides
Lawn Seeds
WEBB & SONS Seed Merchants
CHURCH GREEN, REDDITCH



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Post War Celebrations

CHURCH
GREEN
RADIO
BROADCAST

Listening to Winston Churchill's radio broadcast to announce end of war - Church Green, Redditch



The Dig for Victory campaign was launched when World War II started as the British government realised that the population would go hungry if the war were to last longer than a few months. The result was that formal gardens, lawns and even sports pitches were transformed into allotments, large and small, and everybody on the home front was encouraged to become a vegetable gardener.

The Dig for Victory allotment scheme in Redditch began in March 1940. The motto was that 'The Spade was as Mighty as the Sword' and that gardeners can help to win the war. In addition to private gardens and existing allotments, new allotments were created at Greenlands Farm and the tenants contributed to the cost of ploughing. By 1941 these were reported by the Redditch Indicator to be in excellent condition and were going well. It was a hugely successful campaign which exceeded all expectations. Between 1939 and 1945 imports of food for Britain were halved and the area of British land used for food production increased by 80%. It was estimated that over 1.4 million people had allotments by 1945.

Although it is not obvious today, Redditch, at the time of the Second World War, was very much a small town (population about 25,000) which was in middle of the countryside. The names which are familiar today as districts of the town, such as Woodrow, Batchley, Winyates, Lodge Park, Greenlands, etc., were, in fact, local farms. With this policy was a realisation that there was a shortfall of around 50,000 agricultural workers, due to decades of emigration to urban factory work and recruitment into the forces. It was to fill this gap that the Women's Land Army (WLA) was born. This 'army' of volunteers made a valuable contribution to food production in Britain during the war period and continued for some years after.

The Redditch Indicator reported...

The official announcement of the ending of hostilities in Europe was broadcast by Mr. Winston Churchill on Tuesday afternoon. Immediately afterwards the Prime Minister went to the House of Commons and told the news. The King broadcast to the Empire at 9 p.m.

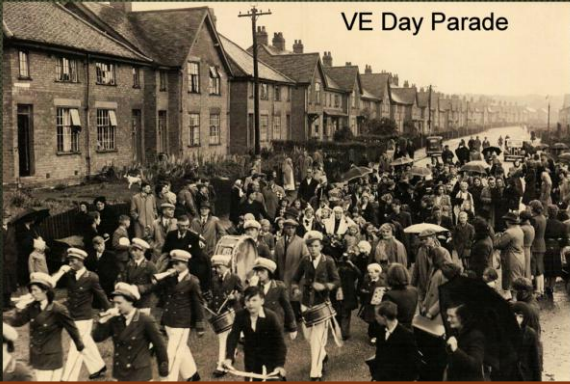
Redditch 1939 to 1945 Page 6

The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Post War Celebrations

VE Day Parade

CELEBRATION
PARADES



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Post War Celebrations

STREET PARTIES - ARROWVALE AND STUDLEY ROAD VJ PARTY BSA SOCIAL CLUB



The Story of Redditch in World War Two

Post War Celebrations

POST WAR
CARNIVAL



Redditch
VICTORY Carnival
September 15th, 1945



News that VE Day would be celebrated on Tuesday was received on Monday evening. The prospect of the war clouds rolling away and letting in the bright sunshine of peace evoked feelings of gratification and of enthusiasm. Soon the streets of Redditch, and roads in the vicinity were made gay with bunting. Thanks to the good work of the members of the Redditch Carnival Committee, streamers and electric bulbs of illuminations had been fixed in Church Green. The national flags gave a touch of colour and blended tastefully with the summer garb of the trees in the pretty town centre.

VE Day opened dull and threatening. Before mid-day there was a heavy thunderstorm, but in the afternoon the sun shone brilliantly. A large crowd gathered in Church Green for a civic service to commemorate the cessation of hostilities in Europe.

And, the following Sunday....

Thanksgiving services for victory in Europe were held at all the churches in Redditch on Sunday, the principal service was held at the Methodist Church, Headless Cross, jointly with Civic Sunday, the latter having been previously arranged for that day and place. A large company gathered at the Council House, including the Chairman, members and officials of the Redditch Urban District Council, the Police, organisations called into service during the war, and representatives of other bodies. Led by the Police and the Redditch Town Band, the procession marched to the Methodist Church, where every available seat was occupied.

Following VE Day and VJ Day there was a multitude of street parties and celebrations. However, in September the time for the annual carnival arrived and this would be the first peacetime carnival for seven years.

The war had ended and there were great expectations for the future. This was a time for celebration, and the town was determined to make this the 'Redditch Victory Carnival'.

Post war, there were dramatic changes in the lives of ordinary people. The creation of the NHS and expansion of social security, massive expansion in quality housing, particularly council housing, major expansion in industry and full-time jobs, and expanded universal access to education. It was a good time to grow up, and we will never see its like again!