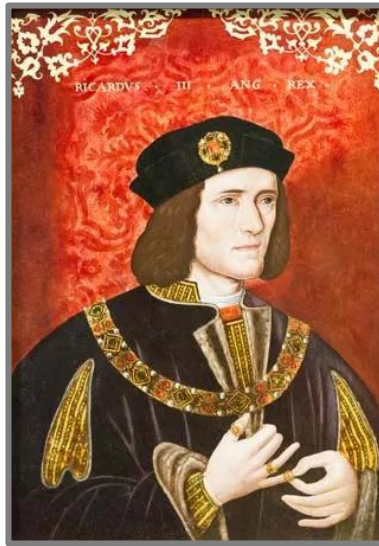


## December Meeting

**We wrapped up the year** on a real high with our December meeting – a fantastic turnout of 46 Members and 12 Visitors, making 58 in all. The evening was made even better by a lively and engaging presentation from Max Keen, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. And once again, we were delighted to see the Redditch Standard feature us with a great article, thanks to Pat's press release.

**Our December** speaker, Max Keen, once again treated us to not just a presentation, but a full-blown performance, this time on Richard III. The question at the heart of the talk was simple enough: was Richard a hero, a murderer, or a loyal brother? As you'll see from Pat's report, Max finally came down on the side of Richard. In true Max fashion, it was lively, entertaining, and just a little mischievous—exactly the sort of history lesson that keeps us all on our toes!



## A Word from the Editor..

**Although I was eagerly awaiting** Max Keen's presentation, fate had other plans—I was busy enjoying myself with a knee replacement! Not quite the entertainment I had in mind, but at least I had a good excuse. Thankfully, Pat stepped in with a meeting report. **Since this is our Christmas Newsletter**, I thought it only right to sprinkle in something seasonal. My mind wandered back to 2020 and those unforgettable lockdown days. Our last meeting was in March 2020, and we didn't gather again until August 2021—a full 15 months later.

In that time, our humble two-page Newsletter blossomed into eight pages, and we even managed an online AGM to keep everything shipshape under the Constitution. December 2020 brought us a bumper 16-page Christmas edition, complete with a wonderful little article by our late and much-missed Chairman, Don Vincent.

**It feels just right to bring** Don's piece back this year. Consider it a little Christmas gift from the past—I hope it brings you as much cheer as it did me.





**Forge Mill Needle Museum is now in 'hibernation' for December and January after the Christmas Craft Fair.**

## **WINTER SEASON**

From 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026 the MUSEUM and VISITOR CENTRE is closed. The SHOP, GROUNDS and COFFEE BAR open all days: 10.00am to 3.00pm except that the entire site is closed on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day.

All facilities reopen on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February with a full range of activities for 2026.



**We have no meeting in January, and so our next meeting will be 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026.**

**The presentation is The Worcestershire Regiment and is given by Lt. Col (retd) Mark Jackson**

The Worcestershire Regiment was a line infantry regiment in the British Army, formed in 1881. The regiment fought in many conflicts, including both the First and Second World Wars. Lt Col (Retd.) Mark Jackson OBE, is chair of trustees of the Mercian Regiment Worcestershire and President of Worcester Branch W.F.R.A. Mark will be give us a short history of the regiment and, in particular, will detail when the 1st Battalion of The Worcestershire Regiment landed in Normandy on June 22, 1944, as part of the follow-on forces.





## *'Richard III: Hero, Murderer or Loyal Brother?' by Max Keen (1 of 2)*



Above: Max Keen at our meeting  
(photo Elizabeth Simpson).

Below: Stained glass depiction of Richard  
and Anne Neville in Cardiff Castle



Max entered the room dressed as a foot-soldier (because horses were easily floored on the battlefield by longbows). He wore leggings, a tunic and padded jacket and head protector, and items of armour, including a helmet, scavenged from corpses on the battlefield. He carried a halberd – an axe-type blade with a spike mounted on a long shaft (known also as a ‘battleaxe’), as well as a sword which, although sharp, was almost diamond-shaped in section and was useful for inflicting serious wounds when poked and prodded under the enemy’s armour which covered vulnerable body parts! The helmets often caused heat exhaustion because, once the visor was closed, the soldier’s breath would circulate inside it, combined with the padded protector, the temperature of his head would rise quickly and drastically, meaning that battles only lasted for about two hours.

After explaining and illustrating the soldiers’ lot, Max went on to give us the details of the life of the man who was to become King Richard III, and of the dynamics of his very complex extended family which spanned countries and dynasties.

It was a thrilling and fast-paced expose and was confusingly full of various Richards, Edwards and Henrys, but Max’s presentation was mercifully backed up with many coloured illustrations of contemporary portraits of the family members as well as judiciously-chosen illustrations from classic Ladybird Books (I am also a fan) and well-drawn maps as necessary.

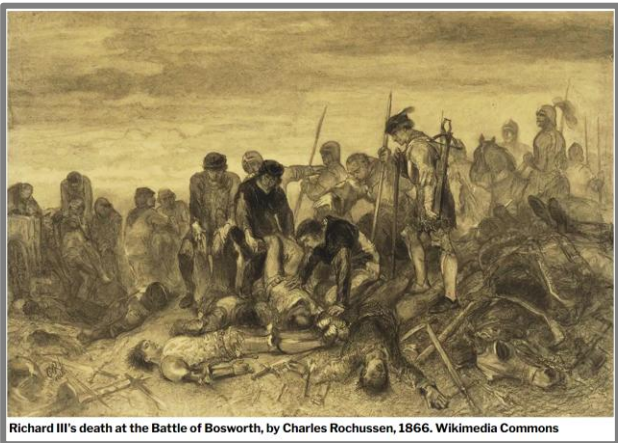
Richard was born on 2nd October 1452 at Fotheringay Castle and died on 22nd August 1485 on Ambion Hill near Bosworth, at the age of 32. His mother was Cecily Neville, and his father was Richard of York. He was created Duke of Gloucester after the accession of his elder brother Edward IV.

The Wars of the Roses – civil wars for the throne between the rival royal houses of York and Lancaster - began when Richard was three years old, with the Battle of St. Albans (where there is apparently a commemorative plaque on Barclays Bank). Many other battles followed throughout Richard’s formative years and were raging all his life.

## *'Richard III: Hero, Murderer or Loyal Brother?' by Max Keen (2 of 2)*



Above: The 'Battle of Bosworth' by James Doyle. Richard III is on the white horse,  
Below: Engraving of Richard III's death at battle of Bosworth.



Richard III's death at the Battle of Bosworth, by Charles Rochussen, 1866. Wikimedia Commons

Ludlow was sacked at Ludford Bridge in 1459, and the Battle of Wakefield in 1460 heralded the Wars of the Roses 'proper'. The Battle of Towton of 1461 was fought in mud and snow – 20,000 Lancastrians and 8000 Yorkists were slaughtered over 8 hours, figures comparable to the loss of life on the first day of the Somme. The Battle of Tewkesbury, which was fought in 1471, was fought inside and outside the Abbey, and Max – always full of colourful and unexpected facts – told us that it took six months to clear up the detritus of the massacre and to re-consecrate the Abbey. We know that Richard, who was only king for two years, died in battle, but Max Keen assured his audience that he had had a very bad press and that several of his family members (too many for me to note down and link up!) were the murderous ones . . . the bad reputation of Richard III was promoted by William Shakespeare, who based his play about the evil hunchback on a novel written by Thomas More, 40 years after Richard's death.

Richard II I was, according to Max Keen, enlightened and well-thought of. He oversaw the introduction of Gutenberg's printing press to England by William Caxton in 1476, arguably starting the English cultural renaissance. Richard also coded the Law in English from Latin, founded the College of Arms and made himself cognisant of the common man. He was an able soldier who, as modern tests have shown, was not physically impeded by his scoliosis. He, contrary to popular belief, supported and cared for family members and did not kill the Princes in the Tower – Max believes they were 'spirited away', one to France, and one to the north, and perhaps became Perkin Warbeck and Lambert Simnel . . .

In conclusion, the answers to the question in the title of the excellent presentation were: Yes, No and Yes!

NB. Redditch History Society will be hosting Max Keen again in February 2027 (he was already booked for 2026!)



# **Provisional Programme of Presentations for 2026** (subject to change)

<b>DATE</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
<b>January</b>	<b>No Meeting</b>	<b>No Meeting</b>
<b>9<sup>th</sup> February</b>	<b>The Worcestershire Regiment</b>	<b>Lt.Col.(ret'd) Mark Jackson</b>
<b>9<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>The Gunpowder Plot – A Midland Uprising</b>	<b>Philip Bowen</b>
<b>13<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>AGM, with films</b>	<b>The Society Executive</b>
<b>11<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>Art goes to War, 1939-1945</b>	<b>Henrietta Lockhart</b>
<b>8<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>‘Body on the Bromyard Line’ – local archaeology</b>	<b>Emma Hancox Explore the Past’</b>

<b>DATE</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
<b>13<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>Local Law and Order and Popular Protest pre 1850</b>	<b>Richard Churchley</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>No Meeting</b>	<b>No Meeting</b>
<b>14<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>A History of the Fish Hook</b>	<b>Anthony Green</b>
<b>12<sup>th</sup> October</b>	<b>Through the Letterbox: Historic Redditch and its Postal System</b>	<b>Chris Jackson</b>
<b>9<sup>th</sup> November</b>	<b>A History of Canal People and their Working Lives</b>	<b>Tony Conder</b>
<b>14<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>A Victorian Christmas – in costume!</b>	<b>‘From Time to Time’</b>

# **‘The Way We Were’**

## **Going back to Christmas Day in the nineteen forties / fifties. Don Vincent (1/2)**

Worshipers would attend church on Christmas Eve to celebrate Christmas Mass which started just before or just after Midnight depending on the particular segment of Christian belief. (Although since 2009 the Pope now celebrates Mass at 10:00 p.m.). Children had been around the neighbourhood carol singing. More like religious begging actually. Let's face it even if one could prise the video game from the youngsters, would you fancy letting them roam the neighbourhood these days. Let alone anyone actually answering the door to them?

Then came the big day. The joy at finding the big present (notice the singular tense) plus the odd smaller ones (nuts, an orange etc.). One would see children out with their presents. Boys would have a bike or a scooter or a pair of skates, while girls might be wheeling a new doll in a new pram. In those days gender neutrality had not been invented

We the kids might have had a cooked breakfast, doubtful though much too excited to eat. The chicken, a rare treat, would be slowly sizzling in the oven. We always had a chicken never a turkey and a goose could be a bit fatty. Uncle ( from age seven I was brought by an aunt and an uncle but that's another story) may well have gone out to meet his brothers in law for a pint with the words “ Don't be late for your dinner “ ringing in his ears- he never was. Christmas dinner was the immediate family only as opposed to Christmas tea when the not too extended family descended on us.

Average for Christmas tea was about ten presents. What a spread! Remember it is the late forties/early fifties.



*Uncle Arthur and Aunt Emily my 'parents'.  
Notice uncle is wearing a suit  
There were standards to keep up!  
Plus, the comfortably stocked drinks trolley*



## **‘The Way We Were’ Going back to Christmas Day in the nineteen forties / fifties. Don Vincent (2/2)**

Aunt was a great manager stuff had been squirreled away, marvellous trifles made (a tin of fruit went along way), salads fantastic. It all came back the other day when I was making a sandwich for lunch. The tomato was a bit big so I cut it in two and save half for the next day. You can take the person out of the forties but not the forties out of the person. Very often the question ‘Do you want half of this tomato’? Or ‘do you want a bit of this pork pie’? was broached. After tea the decks were cleared. Aunt was ordered out of the kitchen while the older ‘children’ did the washing up. Left Overs were wrapped and preserved for Boxing Day. Aunts, Uncles, Grandma decamped to the front room ‘letting their tea go down’. The adults would have a smoke. Cigars and cigarettes always featured high on the list as Christmas Presents, there was some truth in the quip that the colour of our ceiling was Embassy brown. Once the washing up had been done and the tea digested, we normally decamped back into the dining room, and some silly game was played soon however the playing cards would be produced. A good hour or so of ‘Newmarket’ ensued. Of course, various alcoholic drinks would be consumed. We always had a good selection of drinks no overindulgence but something for every taste. Shopkeepers always ran clubs in those days. A few shillings a week mounted up enabling the purchase of festive cheer. We didn’t finish Christmas owing money on the credit card. of course sandwiches had to be consumed during the card playing. Yet it all left enough for a cold dinner (we weren’t posh enough to have lunch) on Boxing Day. I suppose it all broke up at about eleven o’clock. Another Christmas had come and gone and who knew what the New Year would hold for us.



*Granny Willis formerly Godson née Mills  
( My mother's and Aunt Em's mother)  
notice the curtains have been changed)*



# *and finally....*

## **Redditch – in the Snow - Winter 1962/63**

Well, here we are in December, which can only mean one thing—it's time for me to dust off those photographs I took around Redditch a mere sixty-three years ago! Over the years I've shamelessly plugged them through presentations and even a book, so I thought it was high time to give them a fresh twist. This year, I've enlisted the help of some rather clever colourising software. It takes a plain old black-and-white image and magically transforms it into full colour—as if the past has suddenly decided to join us in the present.



*Looking down Bromsgrove Road towards the town centre. Most motorists didn't get this far, so it became a pedestrian walkway.*



*Unicorn Hill is a very sharp rise to the town centre. Not an easy drive for the faint hearted under these snowy conditions.*



*Looking down Holloway Lane towards Studley. The road rises from the Arrow Valley to the Town Centre Plateau. A bit too much for most cars!*

*This Newsletter is edited and published by Anthony Green, Society Secretary, Redditch History Society and is produced on behalf of the Society.*

Web Site [www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.redditchhistorysociety.org.uk)  
E-mail: [secretary@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk)