

October 2023 - Meeting

Hi All,

We had our best turnout since the pandemic at our October meeting with a total of forty-seven members (including six new members taking advantage of our reduced half year membership charge) and six visitors. This made a total of fifty-three and at the last few meetings have had audiences of 46, 40, 49, 47. Our paid-up membership now stands at 60 which was our target for the year. So, the situation is encouraging.

We had three apologies from members who were unable to attend, including our Chair, Elizabeth Simpson who was on holiday, so 'yours truly' did the honours.

The presentations of old postcards of the town by Chris Jackson are always popular and is reported later in the newsletter.

Regarding this Newsletter.....

On Pages two and three 'Coming Events' section.

This month I have extended the 'Coming Events' section to include two Worcestershire-wide history events.

On page two are details of our next Meeting on Monday 13th November 2023 'From Common to Posh' The History of Church Green to 1900 by Graham Smith, and the Worcestershire Local History Forum Day on Saturday November 11th, 2023

On page three are details of 'REVISITING WORCESTERSHIRE'S PAST' on Saturday 6 April and Sunday 7 April 2024 , and the final exhibition at Forge Mill Needle Museum which is entitled STORIES CAPTURED IN THREAD.

On Pages four and five we have a report on our October Meeting presentation 'A Walk around Redditch using Old Postcards' by Chris Jackson.

On Pages six to eight is the third of my three-part story, of the roads in Redditch which covers the most recent period of the road system created by the New Town Development Corporation.

Next Meeting...

Our next Meeting is on Monday 13th November 2023 'From Common to Posh' The History of Church Green to 1900 by Graham Smith, our History Society Treasurer. 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

Coming up

Next Meeting Monday 13th November 2023

'From Common to Posh' The History of Church Green to 1900

Presentation by Graham Smith - History Society Treasurer.

The presentation, by our Treasurer, Graham Smith, is entitled 'From Common to Posh,' and is the History of our Church Green to 1900.

Graham has done numerous talks on the history of Church Green and earlier this year he created a three part 'House through Time' series of articles for this newsletter based on No 17, Church Green East (Webb House).

There is always something new to learn about the area and I am sure that Graham will provide another original well researched presentation.



**BROMSGROVE SOCIETY LOCAL HISTORY GROUP
INVITE YOU TO A WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY FORUM DAY
on Saturday November 11th, 2023, from 9.30 pm to 4.00 pm
at Bromsgrove Methodist Centre, Stratford Road, B60 1AS**

Speakers on the day are –

Quintin Watt – The Bromsgrove Guild's Great War – the presentation focuses on the impact of the war on the firm & its employees, many of whom were craftsmen from the continent. It also focuses on how the war provided work for the company in the 1920s through the construction of the many war memorials that were erected in Britain & the wider world.

Pat Tansell – Bromsgrove at War on the Home Front – Pat will speak about life in Bromsgrove on the Home Front during both World Wars & will also include some references to the Boer War. During her research into the subject, Pat used archived copies of the Bromsgrove Messenger & information available via Ancestry, Find My Past & other online databases & resources.

and after lunch a virtual trip to

Broadway – Worcestershire's Poshest Village with Julian Hunt – Broadway has one foot in the Cotswolds & the other in the Vale of Evesham. Its farmers grew wealthy from cultivating the rich soil of the vale & rearing sheep on the hills. Their rambling Cotswold-stone farmhouses have mostly been converted into country houses for the local gentry & Broadway is still the home of the North Cotswold Hunt kennels.

Entrance Fee £10 – to include tea/coffee.

Hopefully, other WLH groups will be present to advertise their wares!

For more info. – www.bsoc.co.uk or ring 01527 877227

Coming up cont....

'REVISITING WORCESTERSHIRE'S PAST'

Saturday 6 April and Sunday 7 April 2024 9.30 am – 5.00 pm
St John's Campus, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6



A Conference organised by the University of Worcester and Worcestershire Historical Society

This exciting conference is dedicated to the re-interpretation of Worcestershire's history.

It seeks to involve the broad community of those who are interested in the county's past. The emphasis throughout will be on how the concerns of, and the methods deployed by, historians have changed over the years and upon sources and our approaches to them.

Sixteen experts will deliver papers on a wide range of topics including vernacular architecture, landscape history, the liturgy at Worcester Cathedral, football in the county, Worcestershire peasants in the middle-ages, the origins of the Worcestershire gentry, Worcestershire parliamentarians in the seventeenth-century, printing and Worcestershire elections in the eighteenth-century, the history of Worcestershire ceramics, money in Worcestershire history, and Worcester in the 1950s.

There will also be an exhibition of local sources provided by the Worcestershire County Council Libraries, Archive & Archaeology Service.

For the full programme and booking details, please contact:

Joy Morgan whshonsec@gmail.com or 07872 138135

Forge Mill Needle Museum Exhibition October/November

The final exhibition for 2023 runs from Wednesday 18th October to Sunday 26 November 2023 and is

STORIES CAPTURED IN THREAD

An exhibition by Eclectica who are back at Forge Mill with a new body of work.

These artists, who are all based in the Midlands, are bound by a love of fabric and colour. In this exhibition they showcase their talent, creativity and skills to produce an amazing array of vibrant contemporary stitched textiles.

<https://www.forgemill.org.uk/web/events/>



October Meeting Report.

'A Walk around Redditch using Old Postcards' Looking at the areas off the Main Road.

Presentation by Chris Jackson



Chris is a local philatelist specialising in the Postal History and Postcards of Redditch and the county and has a substantial collection of local postcards which he has collected over many years.

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

In that presentation he 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,

Chris originally created that presentation using 35mm slides, but the postcards were scanned and digitised to make them more accessible to modern projection methods.

This year, he created for us, a new original presentation, using a selection of his postcards, which were scanned specifically for the purpose of providing a look at different areas of the town in an earlier, and simpler, age. With so many postcards in his collection, Chris took as his premise, a tour from Easemore road to Batchley passing through various adjacent areas.

The tour along Easemore Road began with a rare image of the site where the Redditch Indicator was created and printed, the next building being the Technical School which was built in 1900 and became the technical college 20 years later. Neither of these exist today.

On the left-hand side of the road there was the Union Club (Conservative Club), which now exists as the Masonic Hall, followed by the Baptist Chapel which was built 1923 to replace the chapel in Ipsley Street (see later). On the corner of Easemore Road and Archer Road was the Church Institute opened by the Bishop of Worcester in 1910. Chris also showed a postcard of a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) Hospital based on the top floor of Church Institute during WW1. However, this was possibly never used as too small.

After looking around the buildings in Easemore Road and Archer Road, mostly similar to today, but no parked cars, we passed on to Other Road. Other Road was built in the early part of the 20th Century and was built specifically for housing the influx of workers moving to the town as our industry expanded. Today, with the town centre ring road island splitting it into two, and reducing St Georges Road, it is difficult to envisage just how long it was.

Arriving in Ipsley Street there were several postcards of the Kings Arms – the original, and the reduced. The Royal Mail had refused to use Holloway Lane as it was too narrow and underdeveloped, so they sent the mail up the Slough and on to the White Hart. The mail then had to be collected from the White Hart and taken down to Redditch for delivery.

October Meeting Report cont.....



So, Holloway Lane was improved, and the Kings Arms was rebuilt in a narrower version, so that the lane could be widened. There were a number of images which had in them the ubiquitous 'nightsoil' cart, which was a regular feature around the roads of the town.

We then went down Beoley Road and saw a number of postcards including the crossing at 'Beoley Brook'. There were photographs of the 80-mile race around Birmingham by aeroplane in 1913. The aircraft were quite small with limited fuel tanks, so the race consisted of five stages, one of which landed in Redditch in a field at the bottom of Beoley Road. The prize was £500, but there were only two competitors, Hucks and Hamel, and Chris showed three slides of the event in Redditch. Hamel eventually won the race by 20 seconds!

Chris had two postcards of when Keir Hardy came to Redditch in 1901 and addressed a meeting on Beoley Road recreation ground, later followed by a meeting in the town. It is worth noting that the Labour Party was not formed until 1900, so an industrial town such as Redditch was obviously seen as a prime target for the movement.

Moving back along Ipsley Street, and passing Milward's Factory, we arrived at Ipsley Green (Pool Place). Here we had images of the Jubilee Oak, planted to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and the original Baptist Church, which was commandeered during WW1 to allow Terry's Springs to enlarge their premises. Chris then took us up Ipsley looking in at Marsden Road and South Street before crossing to Salop Road.

Moving on, there were some nice postcards of Oakley Road and Park Road (long gone) and on to the Railway Station. The area around the railway station was extensively explored and we then saw two early images of Unicorn Hill. Chris pointed out the cobbles on the left-hand side going up the hill. The purpose was to assist the horses to find grip when pulling their carts up the hill, particularly from the railway station.

There were some early pictures of the Unicorn Hotel, and then we passed down Bates Hill, with numerous postcards, before arriving at Hewell Road. There were some excellent postcards of the raised pavement (long gone) and the original Railway Inn, before we passed on to the Royal Enfield and many images.

We then saw two images of the open-air lido, from 1908/09, which later became the Hewell Road Swimming baths.

After looking at the fields which were originally Batchley Farm, we concluded with some early pictures of Batchley Estate.

This was a fascinating view of Redditch a century ago, not only in images, but also Chris's knowledge of the background behind the pictures.

The presentation was much appreciated by the audience and Chris has already agree to give us a further selection from his extensive collection next year.

Redditch Transport System - Anthony Green

Roads part 3 - The New Town Roads

Since early times, the centre of Redditch was the crossroads formed from the road from Birmingham going south and the road from Bromsgrove going on to Alcester.

Although the Turnpike Road gave good access both north and south through the town, by the 1960s, roads suitable for horse driven traffic were a 'bit' overwhelmed by the increase in car ownership.

When Redditch was designated a New Town in 1963 it had a road system which had hardly changed in the previous 100 years.

Between the 1950s and 1960s, car ownership in the UK had tripled and the road network in Redditch had not kept up with this level of increase and had become seriously overloaded.



At peak times, the Town Centre was hopelessly congested and there was a need to move the A441 route away from the centre of the town and the route along Evesham Street/Road.

I well remember driving through Birmingham, from Aston University or Dunlop Research, in Kingsbury Road, with quite a bit of traffic, but always moving and then when I reached the bottom of Prospect Hill, Gridlock!

There was no route through Redditch other than up Birmingham Road and through the town centre. When the Development Corporation began their work, they decided to create the new shopping centre before they built any new roads!



The creation of the Kingfisher shopping centre, so closing Evesham Street, without the improvement of the town centre road system, was badly thought out.

In their wisdom, they used the old roads, to create a 'one way' system for the town centre.

This Alcad 'how to find us' map shows, how difficult it was to show visitors to a factory in the town.

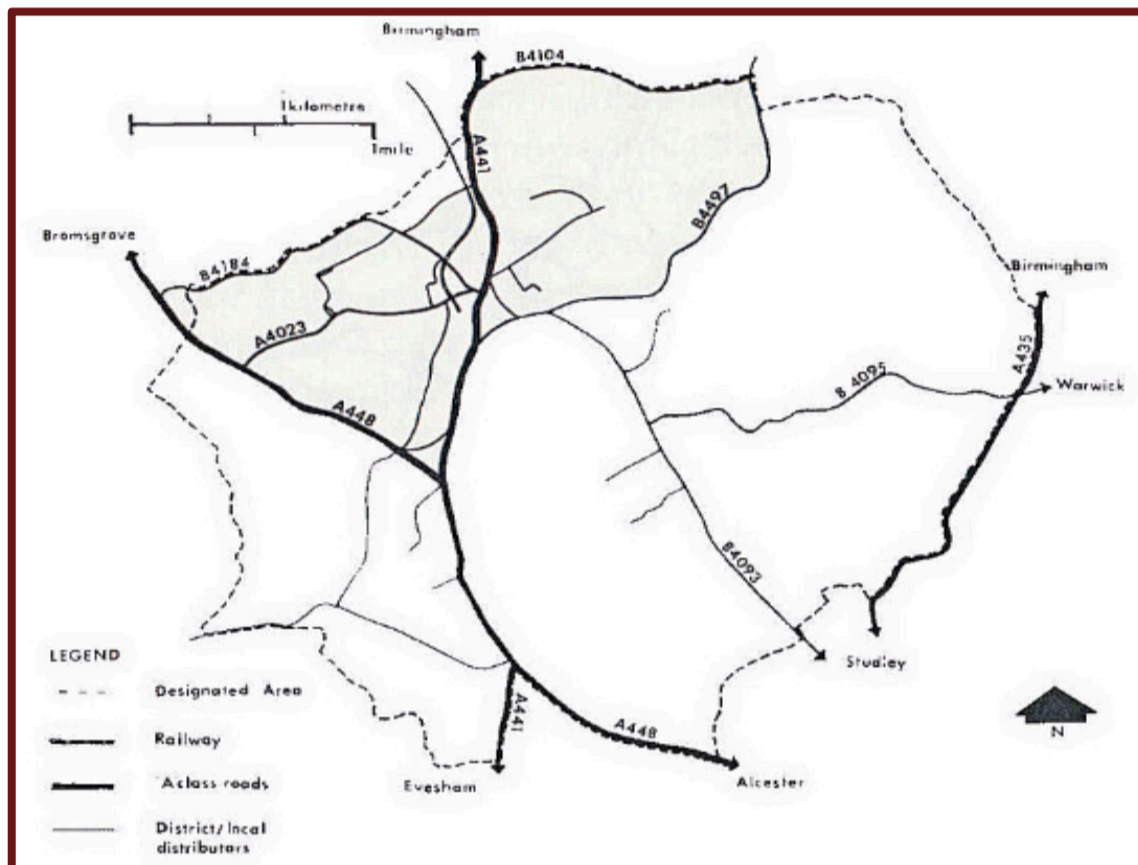
The roads were redirected to continue the route to Mount Pleasant and along Evesham Road through Headless Cross, Crabbs Cross, Astwood Bank and on to Evesham, and the road from Bromsgrove passed down Unicorn Hill.

The route south, through Studley, was sent down Ipsley Street.

The New Town Roads cont 2/3...

The situation using existing town centre roads was obviously short term and, clearly, the road system required for a developing town would require a more innovative solution to allow for the expansion of Redditch over the following decades.

The New Town Master Plan was a major change to the existing road system as it had to encompass the vast building programme which would treble the size of the population. This required new industrial, commercial, and housing estates.



Above:

The Redditch road system in 1964 prior to the new developments

The road system within the 'New Town' area had a very specific naming system.

The local residential roads, which were 'cul-de-sacs' were called a 'Close', these then fed into local roads called 'Lanes'. This was the nomenclature for the populated areas. These 'Lanes' then fed into distributor roads which were called 'Drives'. These distributor roads then fed into the main roads linking to outside areas, which were, 'wait for it', called 'Highways'.

The roads to the Industrial areas were called simply 'Roads'

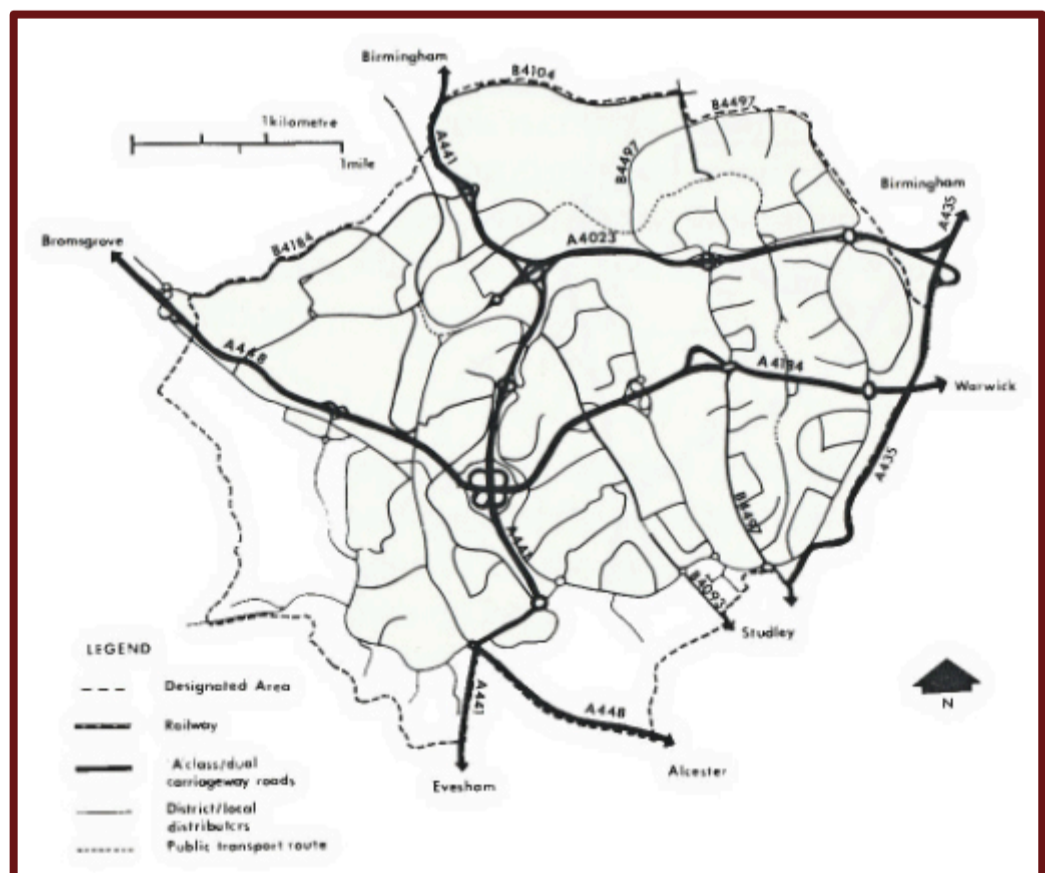
Perhaps I am being satirical, but it is, in fact, a very logical system and makes it very easy to find your way around the town.

This proposed removing through traffic away from the town centre, so that the A441 would bypass the central area of the town leaving the old route north of the centre and re-joining further south.

A bypass began at a new roundabout close by the junction of Windsor Road and Birmingham Road (The 'Sainsbury's' island) and continued to another island linking to the A441 at Crabbs Cross. This bypass had major links to another road including the proposed improved A435 which included the Wythall bypass.

Below:

The Redditch road system in 1984 when the New Town Development Corporation was dissolved.

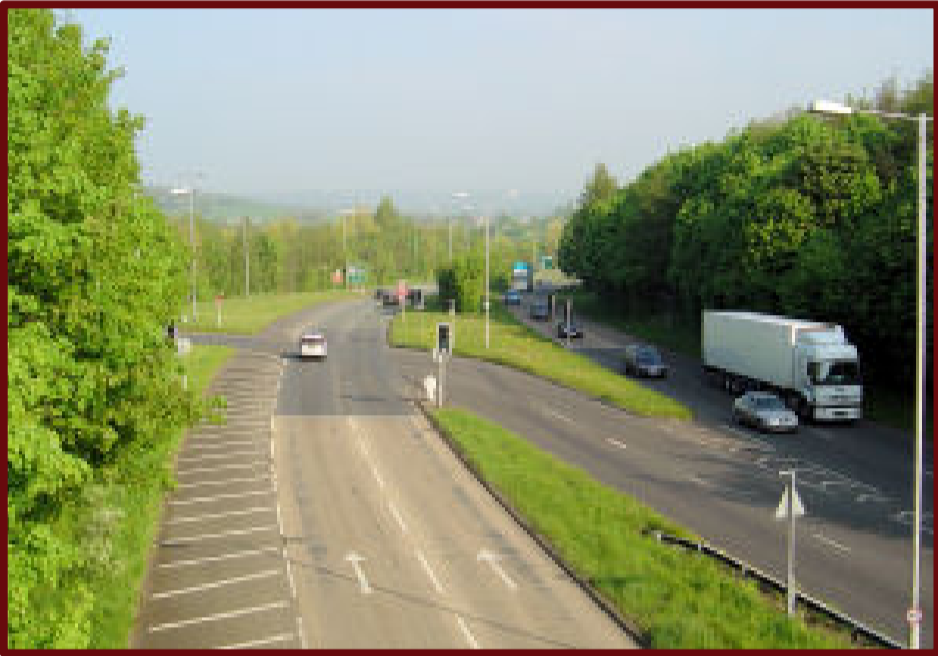


The New Town Roads cont 3/3....

When the Development Corporation came to the end of its life in 1983, the Redditch Road system had changed dramatically.

The new road system was designed to take Redditch to the end of the century. Traffic volume in the UK was still increasing and had again doubled between the 1960s and 1980s.

The new road system was designed to cope with this, and the traffic remained free flowing with very few rush hour traffic jams.



This illustrates the foresight and advanced planning of the much maligned but, nevertheless, effective, Development Corporation.

The result of the new roads developed by the Development Corporation, which were designed to link with the Motorway Network ensures that Redditch has an enviable location as shown in the Google map on the right.

The Bromsgrove Highway, A448, is a dual carriageway road to the Bromsgrove bypass. This gives direct links to the M5 North and South. This provides routes to the South-West and the North-West and Wales.

North, along the A441 quickly becomes a dual carriageway which joins the M42. This allows direct high-speed contact to the M40 to London and the M6 to the North-East. It also gives a fast route to Birmingham International Airport and Railway Station. Travelling South along the A435 proceeds along the Alcester bypass (dual carriageway) and via major roads to Evesham and Stratford and all points South.

I have many criticisms of the New Town Development Corporation and some of the changes which they made to the town, but the road system they created is not one of them!

When the development of the new road system began, there was a joke in the town that the Development Corporation was building a dual carriageway for each resident.

However, this was planned in the 1960s to last at least to the end of the 20th Century and for a population rising to 100,000.

This has been achieved and, even more than twenty years into the 21st Century, the road system is still 'fit for purpose' and allows for further expansion of the town.

Above right: View of the Alvechurch Highway which is effectively a town centre by-pass

Below: Google map showing the ease of access to the motorway network from the town

