

November 2023 - Meeting

Hi All,

Our support continues to expand with our November meeting which had a total of fifty-four members (including six new members) and eighteen visitors, so, a total audience of seventy-two.

This brings us up to pre-pandemic levels and with our membership sitting at sixty-six, beats our expectations.

We have a very diverse programme of talks for next year, which has been organised by our speaker organiser Pat Bushaway, which will be available to members and visitors at our next meeting in December. It will then be posted on our website both on-line and as a downloadable pdf.

Regarding this Newsletter.....

On **page two** are details of our next Meeting Monday 11th December 2023 and is 'From Brum to Bringsty Common: Tales of a Wartime Childhood', a presentation by Bill Macham, and the annual Forge Mill Needle Museum Christmas Craft Fair which takes place on two consecutive Sundays, the 3rd and the 10th of December 2023 from 11.00am to 3.00pm

On **Pages three and four** we have a report on our November Meeting presentation 'From Common to Posh' The History of Church Green to 1900 by Graham Smith.

On **Pages five to eight** I have used four pages to reproduce an article by Geoff Rollins on the history of Redditch Market up to the time of the development of the Kingfisher Centre.

I have sourced some images to support this, and I have also introduced it with a short biography of the writer.

I thought that this fitted in well with Grahams talk, as the Market was linked closely with Church Green and is part of the town's history.

Next Meeting...

Our next meeting is on Monday 11th December 2023 and is 'From Brum to Bringsty Common: Tales of a Wartime Childhood', a presentation by Bill Macham

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Coming up

Next Meeting Monday 11th December 2023

'From Brum to Bringsty Common: Tales of a Wartime Childhood'

A presentation by Bill Macham

This is an almost unique opportunity to hear from someone who lived through WW2 to recount their experiences.

Bill, who is a member of the Society, recounts his experiences of the war, from growing up in Perry Barr, moving out to the countryside and moving back to Birmingham.

He experiences the bombing, meeting Italian POWs, a working holiday on a farm and finally back to school in Birmingham.

His talk is accompanied by a slide presentation of contemporary images from the period.

As this will be our Christmas meeting, we will have, in addition to our usual tea/coffee and biscuits, mince pies, to celebrate the move into the Christmas season.



FORGE MILL NEEDLE MUSEUM CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR **Sunday 3rd and Sunday 10th December 2023: 11.00am to 3.00pm**

Step back in time and join the Forge Mill team to celebrate a traditional Christmas.

Victorian entertainment will provide the festive atmosphere whilst you browse amongst a variety of food and craft stalls to choose unique Christmas gifts.

- A variety of craft stalls offering unique Christmas gifts.
- Traditional carol singing.
- Alcester Victoria Silver Band.
- Mulled wine.
- Christmas crafts for children.
- A truly traditional Christmas event for all ages!

ADMISSION FREE

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

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS AT THE CRAFT FAIR
(there is a small charge - pre-booking required)



November Meeting Report.

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

by Graham Smith, our History Society Treasurer.



In his entertaining and informative presentation, Graham took us from the origins of the town at the time of Bordesley Abbey through to the end of the Victorian period.

The community of Redditch probably began outside the entrance to the Abbey and would have worshipped at the Gateway chapel (top left). However, the area was wet and marshy, and, at some date, the inhabitants moved to higher ground to the small plateau at the end of the ridgeway which is now our Church Green.

The first real record of this is the description by Joseph Monk, a lay preacher, in 1776, of the housing around 'the green'. The buildings were generally simple cottages, and the description was elegantly turned into a map by Redditch artist Norman Neesom (second left).

There were several public houses in the town, including the 'Malt Shovel' which was at the town centre crossroads – roughly where the '3 Cooks' is now (third left).

Redditch was quite lawless at this time and 'entertainments' such as bear baiting, cock fighting, and bare-knuckle boxing were often to be seen. The bread riots of 1800 (also known as the revolt of the housewives), was a term coined for a series of food riots and disturbances in England which arose out of exceptional food scarcity. (fourth left). There were no law enforcement officers in Redditch and so they were brought in from Bromsgrove. They were overwhelmed by the ladies and took shelter in the Fox and Goose public house.

With the increasing respectability of the town, the town elders decided that law enforcement was needed and Redditch's first prison, the Old Lock-up was built. This operated from 1824 – 1867 and had a set of stocks for miscreants outside (fifth left).

As the importance of the town increased it was decided that travelling down to Bordesley Gatehouse Chapel to worship required change and so, a new chapel, on the town green, was built in 1807-8. (bottom left).

November Meeting Report cont.....

The title of the presentation was 'From Common to Posh' and Graham set out to identify how the area had changed over the 19th Century and Graham illustrated this by the change in population and their occupations, and the change in housing quality.

During the 19th Century the population of the town was steadily increasing, however, the level of population around Church Green was reducing and Graham gave various examples which I will try to summarise.

In the short space of 10 years between 1841 and 1851 the population around Chapel Green had reduced from 463 to 376.

This was particularly marked in Chapel Green East which had reduced from 279 to 140. The employment had also changed.

In 1841 there were 74 people working in the needle industry, by 1851 there were 31. Again, this was most marked in Chapel Green East reducing from 58 to 8!

Thus, the area was becoming more gentrified, with larger houses and wealthier occupants.

Over the period 1841 to 1901 the population of Church Green had reduced from 463 to 205, and the number of people working in the needle industry from 74 to 4. Graham acknowledged the help of Forge Mill Needle Museum for the population data.

Graham illustrated the change to a more affluent community with images and descriptions of the new buildings which appeared over this period. I have illustrated some of his examples on the right, which I will leave you to recognise!

Graham gave a very interesting and informative talk showing the changes which has given us our iconic Church Green.

He told many stories of the time, many illustrations and accompanied this with factual details. I am only able to give a brief overview.

The presentation was much appreciated by our audience.



Redditch Market from the beginning to 1968

By J.G. Rollins

Introduction

JOHN G. ROLLINS was born in 1914 into an old Redditch family long involved in needlemaking. Having a great love of maps, he trained at the Ordnance Survey until the outbreak of World War Two when he joined the Royal Engineers (Survey). He was later seconded to Military Intelligence, Middle East for five years. After the war he returned to Redditch as a municipal engineer. He retired in 1974, when he was able to pursue his interest in history and archaeology, travelling widely collecting data for his research, especially into needlemaking.



During this time, he worked on his History of Redditch, which was published posthumously, and many other short articles and monographs.

From 1962 to 1983 the Forge Mill Group, which was founded by J.G. Rollins, maintained the equipment of Forge Mill on a voluntary basis and the availability is solely due to their dedication.

There is a plaque on the scouring mill to recognise his dedication.

Redditch Market from the beginning to 1968

An article written by J.G. (Geoff) Rollins at that time.

It is interesting to speculate that there was in all probability a market in this locality even before the Cistercian monks entered on to their lands at Bordesley in A.D. 1138 and before the little village or hamlet of de Rubeo Fossata (Redditch) took shape outside the Abbey Gates C. A.D. 1200.

Some historians maintain that the term market is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word 'mark' used to define a 'boundary between settlement localities.

In the course of time suitable points on these boundaries, such as crossroads, clearings in the forest or places were found to be convenient for the exchange or barter of surplus commodities and goods between neighbours, and so a market came to be established and recognised as such.

Ultimately trading extended beyond the immediate neighbourhood and goods were traded over even greater distances.

One of the earliest trade agreements known was between Offa of Mercia and Charlemagne A.D. 796 and is a confirmation of this trend.

The two local commodities most likely to attract attention were the salt from Droitwich and the iron products of the Arrow Vale.

Redditch Market part 2/4

Bordesley Abbey was founded on a mark between the counties of Worcester and Warwick and more important between the forests of Feckenham and Arden on the crossroads which carried the salt east and west and the iron north and south.

The far-sighted Cistercians encouraged the interchange of goods and were jealous of their rights control not only of the markets themselves but also of the goods offered for sale.

The Court Roll of 1461 refers to “the township of le Redyche“ (Redditch.) and would seem to suggest that it was by then a thriving community.

The Court Roll of A.D. 1481 records that there were those who “Sold shoes and took excessive gain” and others who overcharged for fish flesh, leather and gloves, while four men and one woman were presented by the Ale Tasters as having ; “brewed and broke the assize” and were fined.

So that it would seem that overcharging and exhibiting inferior goods are not new failings of the market traders.



*Left:
Section from illustration of
a medieval market*

*Right:
J.M. Woodward's
illustration of how
Bordesley Abbey may
have appeared with the
chapel at the entrance.*



When the Abbey was dissolved in A.D. 1538 the Market Rights passed to the crown and were granted by King Henry VIII in A.D. 1542 to Lord Windsor who levied an acknowledgement rent on the townspeople.

For a time after the dissolution the town suffered a setback but soon regained its vitality and by A.D. 1687 the population had increased to sufficient size to require a chapel, as a result of which the Abbey Gatehouse chapel of St. Stephen was endowed and rededicated to the service of God.

In 1712 it was further restored by the generosity of Nathaniel Mugg.

Gradually the townspeople migrated from the banks of the Red Ditch to the 'high ground, half a mile south, the site of Redditch Common and Gospel Oak.

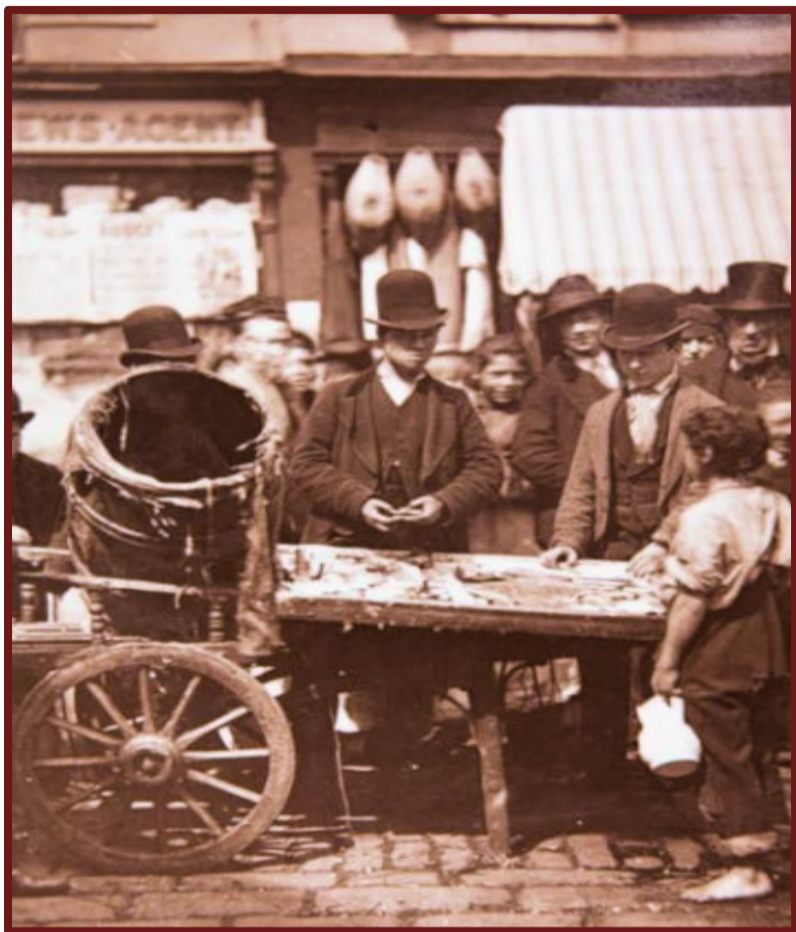


By 1780 it became expedient to remove the market to the new centre of population and it was established on the Green.

When the chapel was built A.D. 1805 the market was confined on the south side of the Green and Marketplace takes its name from this time.

At first the stalls of the traders were arranged on both sides of the street but were ultimately confined to north side only.

Redditch Market part 3/4



Above:
Market trader in the Victorian period.

A poem of AD. 1890 gives a glimpse of the market in A.D. 1840

*Greengrocer Hassell kept a stall.
Upon the Green - the Market Hall
When drunk he'd go and kiss his wife
Before the crowd 'tis true as life.
A funny fool once on the Green
Asked what was the thinnest thing he had ever seen,
answered himself and said no doubt.
'Twas a 'penneth' of cheese from Tommy Fowkes.
Tommy was there and heard it said.
He must have thought the fellow ill bred.
Tommy, however, did not seem teased.
For the truth was told of that piece of cheese.
Old Anthony Sprags; he swept the Green
On Saturday nights where the stalls had been
used to say that Anthony found.
Among his sweepings many a pound.*

In A.D. 1849 an attempt was made to obtain fresh sea fish for sale to the townspeople but the distance from the sea and the slowness of travel made impossible until in AD.1859 the coming of the railway improved the situation.

When Peakman Street was cut a short length of road opposite to it connected across the Green with Market Place splitting the market into two sections, a large one west of the new road and a small one for four stalls east of it.

The smaller one subsequently became the fish market.

The Market continued to use the site until November 1949 when the Plymouth Estates were liquidated and the Lordship of the Manor of Redditch together with the market rights passed to County Alderman, H. R. Bird.

Mr Bird was at that time Chairman of the Redditch Urban District Council, and generously abrogated his right in favour of the Council, on 14th October 1949.



Above and Below:
Images of Redditch Market in Market Place in 1900-1910



Redditch Market part 4/4

The Market was removed to a specially prepared off-street site in Red Lion Street after which the demand for stalls became so great that a second market was opened in A.D.1955 on Clarks Yard adjacent to the new bus station.

When later the Council acquired the land known as the Fox Goose or Royal Yard, adjacent to Clarks Yard it was decided to bring the two markets together and this was done on the 14th of December 1963.



In the early days it was customary to hold a second market each week on Tuesdays for livestock but as Redditch became more industrialised the need diminished.

The markets at Bromsgrove and Barnt Green gradually took over the trade and the practice was discontinued.

Left: Typical small market stall of the 1960s.

Below: Aerial view of the Redditch town centre from the early 1960s showing the location of the two market areas described in the text.

However, the popularity of the Saturday market induced the Councillors to reinstate the Tuesday market, not as a cattle market but as an extension of the Saturday market.

This second market came into operation on 7th December 1965 and when the market was removed from Market Place to Red Lion Street there were 17 stalls including 3 fish stalls.

The Red Lion Street market provided for 22 stalls, which were immediately taken up. The No.2 market originally made provision for a further 20 stalls which increased to 30 stalls in 1960 and 36 before No.1 market joined No.2 market on the present site. At the time of the move the number of stalls was increased to 68.

The number of stalls at present in use (September 1968) is 87 and provision has been made to increase this number to 105.

Postscript

With the development of the Kingfisher Centre, in 1975 Royal Square was opened. This contained an 86 stall open market, plus a food hall managed by the district council. This was to prove an outstanding success which steadily increased to a five day market.

Sadly, the ill conceived extension of the Kingfisher Centre to include Debenhams removed this facility. Which was a big loss to the town as the failure of Debenhams has shown.

