

## **July/August 2024 Meeting Report**

Hi All,

We had an excellent July meeting with an attendance of forty-six members and ten visitors, so a total of fifty-six, and we had a first-rate presentation from Alan Godfrey entitled 'All roads lead to Rome: The story of Roman Roads in Britain'.

Our 'occasional' book sale, organised by Pat was a success and raised £64.50 for the Society's funds.

On the remaining pages of the Newsletter, we have:

### **Page two is the 'Coming Events' section.**

Our next Meeting, after our short summer break, is on Monday 9th September 2024 and is by Chris Jackson. We also have information on a meeting in Alcester featuring Prof. Alice Roberts, and the sad loss of our long-time member Sue Tatlow.

### **Pages three and four**

Is a report on the presentation 'All roads lead to Rome: The story of Roman Roads in Britain' by Alan Godfrey.

### **Pages five to nine (five pages)**

continues the new series of articles entitled 'Redditch - Our Farming Heritage' which will run over several issues. This issue I have part one on the farms which existed when I was 'younger' before the expansion of the town both postwar and the New Town development. This will be taking up the next two issues.

**Page 'Ten'** has the leaflet for the Heritage Open Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum

### **Next Meeting.**

After our short summer break, we have no meeting in August, our next Meeting is on Monday 9th September 2024, details page 2.

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](mailto:tony.rhs@btinternet.com) Tel: 01527 61434

# Coming up .....

Next Meeting: Monday 9th September 2024

**NOTE: there will be no meeting in August as we take our short summer break.**

**Continuing our walk around Redditch using old postcards**

**Presentation 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.



With this presentation of Redditch postcards, Chris will also include the history of the postcard, which, at its peak reached over three million per week in the UK, and was a major, pre- internet, source of direct messaging.

**5 YEARS** 1974 - 2024  
Alcester & District Local History Society  
50th Anniversary Lecture

**"ANCESTORS"**  
A history of Britain through burials  
**Prof. Alice Roberts**

What can a grave tell us about a person and past lives? From the Bronze Age to the Romans and the Anglo-Saxons, Alice Roberts explores how burial archaeology sheds light on ancient societies, and looks at how genetics is completely revolutionising what we know about the past.

Alice Roberts is an Anatomist and biological anthropologist, author and broadcaster, and Professor of Public Engagement in Science at the University of Birmingham.

**The Greig Hall**  
Kinwarton Rd, Alcester, B49 6AD  
Saturday 7th September  
Doors Open 6.30 Starts at 7.30  
**TICKETS £20**  
FROM PSW, BULLS HEAD YARD,  
ALCESTER

## Alcester History Society – Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September Presentation by Prof Alice Roberts

Tickets for the talk by Professor Alice Roberts, author and TV presenter, on Saturday 7th September are now on sale at PSW (stationery), Market Place, Alcester: the cost is £20 each.

Details on how to buy tickets online through the Society website are available at [www.alcesterhistory.org.uk](http://www.alcesterhistory.org.uk)

## Sad loss of Society Member

Susan Tatlow, a long-time member of the History Society, and an important local historian, has been battling a very aggressive cancer for the last 18 months or so. Unfortunately, she lost this battle and she has passed away peacefully.

The funeral is to be held on Tuesday 13th of August at Redditch Crematorium at 2.00pm followed by the wake at Forge Mill.

All of Sue's friends and colleagues, past or present are welcome.

Sue told her brother Andy, to inform everyone not to wear black as she wanted her life to be celebrated, not her death, mourned. It would be great to have some numbers of people who will attend the wake so that Andy can let Forge Mill know.

## 'All roads lead to Rome: The story of Roman Roads in Britain' Presentation by Alan Godfrey

In this presentation Alan, who is the Chairman of the Alcester History Society and also a volunteer at the Alcester Roman Heritage Centre, described his research into the roads which ensured rapid communications throughout the Empire.

The presentation lasted for an hour and was full of information, as he explained the road system, building methods, road design, how upkeep was financed, organisation, posting stations, bridges, fords, causeways, obstacles, measurement, milestones etc., etc.

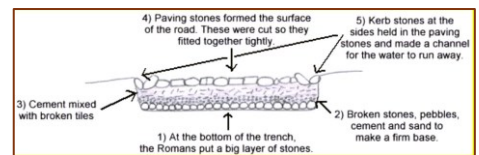
He explained that Roman roads in Britain were initially designed for military use and most were created by the Roman army during the nearly four centuries (AD 43–410). We know the routes of many of the roads as they formed the basis of modern routes, and, on this basis it is estimated that about 2,000 miles of paved trunk roads were constructed and maintained.

The map, top right, shows the roads which we know today. However, it is thought that in reality there may have been up to 8,000 miles of variable quality roads created.

The roads were constructed to a 'standard' design, using wherever possible local materials. The upper middle right image show a 'road building gang' in the process of construction and below that is a cross section of the road showing the different layers.

The Romans used a number of instruments to take measurements. In the image of the road construction an engineer can be seen using a 'groma' which was a sighting device to ensure the roads were straight. These were remarkably accurate.

Distances were measured using an 'hodometer'. This had an elaborate gear assembly which allowed a pebble to fall into the metal bowl after each mile. (a Roman mile was 4800 feet, a UK mile is 5280 feet)



Top: Map of the known Roman road system in Britain.

Middle: Upper: Roman road building Lower: section through road showing layers

Bottom: Hodometer used for measuring distances



## 'All roads lead to Rome'..... continued

Milestones were placed at various places along the road. They were tall stone circular stelae which gave the mileage to the nearest city, intermediate places and who paid for the road. However, this was not always the case as, during certain periods, they were used as a homage to the emperor!

Most Roman roads were wide enough to allow two chariots to pass in either direction.

Generally they would be 8ft wide where straight and 16 ft where curved. However, roads varied from this standard, the width of a road depending on its use and, in general, the wider the road, the greater its importance.

Alan spent some time explaining the elaborate construction of the Roman road which ensured that they endured beyond the time of the Roman Empire, the extent of which, showing the major roads, can be found bottom right.

The design and construction of the roads was so good that original examples can be found (right)

After the final withdrawal of Roman government and troops from Britain in 410, regular maintenance ended on the road network.

Repairs became intermittent and based on ad hoc work. Despite the lack of any national management of the highways, Roman roads remained fundamental transport routes in England throughout the Early, High and Late Middle Ages.

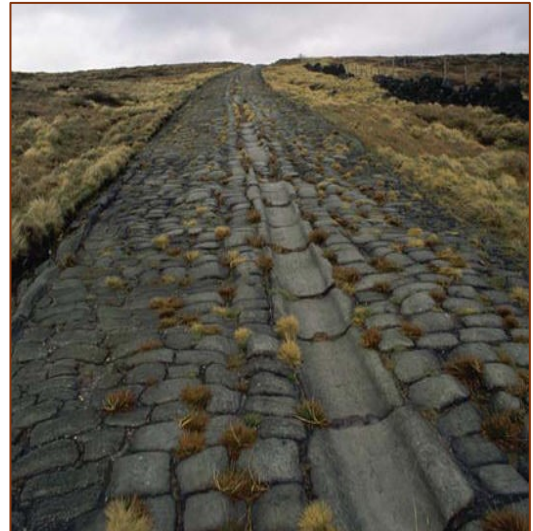
Incredibly, the country had to wait until the 18th century before we regained the knowledge and technology to get them back to the same standard.

This was a fascinating presentation full of detail and explanation. Although it lasted an hour, it seemed to pass very quickly and was much appreciated by the audience.



ROMAN MAIL COACH

THE BRITISH MUSEUM



**Top: Examples of Roman milestones**

**Middle: Upper: Roman Mail Coach Lower: Roman Road today**

**Bottom: Map of Roman Empire 125AD showing principal roads.**

# Redditch - Our Farming Heritage

## by Anthony Green

### Part 3 – the Farms (part1)

A good source for the history of farms in Redditch are sales brochures which give pictures and details of the size and facilities of an actual farm.

The late Ian Hayes donated an excellent dossier to the History Society of sales brochures for the Ipsley Estate when it was sold off before WW2.

Details from these brochures, and a few additional pictures/charts, will make up 'Part 2' of the farms section of our Farming history and will be in the next issue.

However, for this, the first part, I want to write about the farms that I remember because they were farms that I regularly walked past, or drove past, and they rest in my memory as they lie between the 40s and 60s, when I was growing up.

Unlike today, when it is so easy to take photographs, we saw things, they rest in the memory, but there is no physical record.

However, all is not lost! In 1945, the post war Attlee government commissioned an aerial survey of the country to establish the level of war damage. This was obviously not of the same quality of the satellite imagery which we have today, but, nevertheless it does give information which is otherwise not available. The images are available via Google Earth and I have used them in several occasions for this essay.

#### **Bridley Moor Farm.**

I was born in 1943 when my parents moved into Bridley Moor Road.

My very earliest memory is Dad carrying me to the top of the road and looking over the gate at cows and sheep grazing in the fields. This was the first time that I had ever seen farm animals, or a farm. This was probably when I was two or three and would be about the time that the aerial photograph, right, was taken.

As I grew older the farmland was taken over and the local council began constructing the



Above: Bridley Moor Farm (1945)

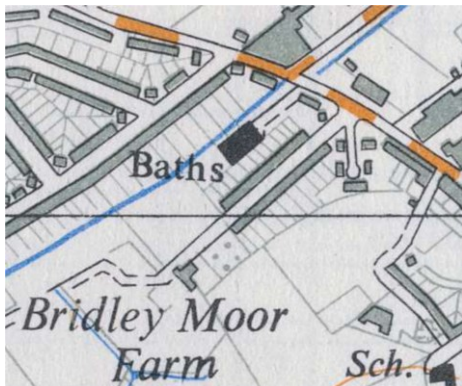
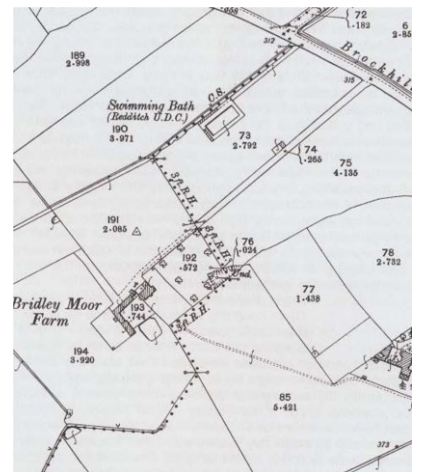


## Redditch - Our Farming Heritage Part 3 – page 2

the prefabs in Cedar Road/View and I well remember walking through the construction area on my way to Bridge Street School (now Holyoakes Field School). Of course, at that time the age range was 5-11 and after the 11+ we then went to Grammar or Secondary School.

From Cedar Road there was a back entrance to the Redditch Football ground and, if you went in at half time, they allowed 'junior' supporters in for nothing. So, I used to watch Redditch Town quite often at that time!

After the farm closed down it was taken over and became the clubhouse of the Batchley Social Club. Originally, they used the farmhouse as the club building but steadily added additional buildings to extend the facilities. At its peak it was a major centre for the local population, Dad was a member, but these local clubs have now difficulty in surviving. I well remember having local flower shows in the courtyard and the orchard turned into a car park.



**Above: left and centre**  
The original farmhouse building has had additions to produce the existing clubhouse (Google)

**Left: Post WW2 OS Map** showing same view as aerial image on previous page.

**Above Right: OS map of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century** before the time of Bridley Moor Road houses, Batchley and the Royal Enfield.

### Easemore Farm

Easemore Farm ceased to be a farm before I was born. However, it was still a feature in Easemore Road when I went to the County High School, in Easemore Road, in 1954.

However, it was not that much earlier that it was sold off by the Hewell Estate in the 1920s as a small working farm.



# Redditch - Our Farming Heritage Part 3 – page 3

The document below is part of the original document from the sale of Hewell Estate.

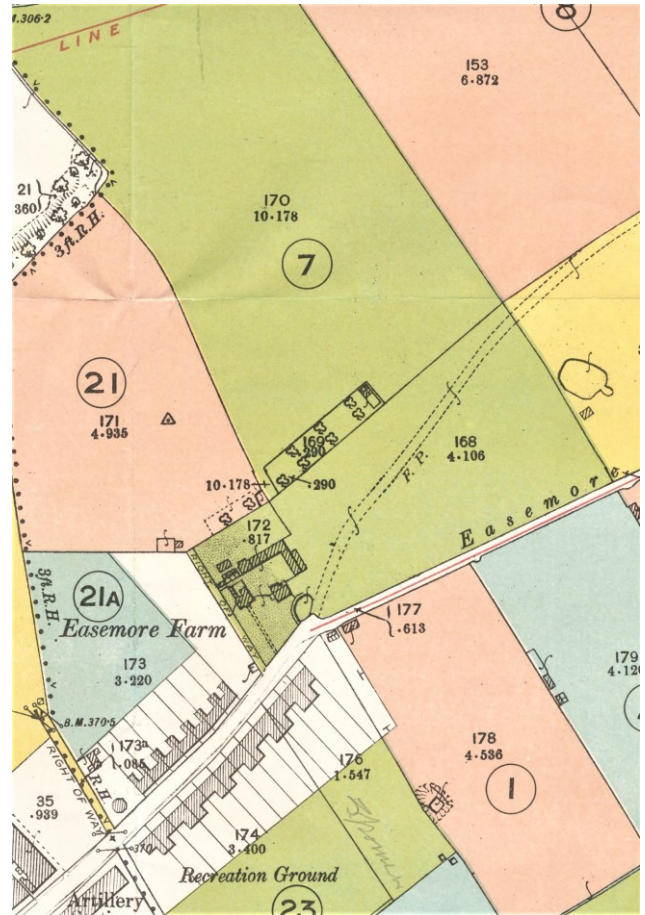
**Lot 7.**  
 THE COMPACT AND DESIRABLE SMALL RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY, formerly "Easmore Farm," fronting on the important Street known as Easmore Road. Lately improved and adapted to private use.  
 Comprising the Double Fronted FARM RESIDENCE, with substantial and convenient OUTBUILDINGS, ORCHARDING and TWO ENCLOSURES OF CAPITAL OLD TURF LAND, with a VALUABLE FRONTAGE TO EASEMORE LANE, of about 200 yards.  
 THE HOUSE, which is brick and tiled, stands well back from the Road in a pleasant Garden, and contains:—Porch Entrance, Flagged Hall, Two Reception Rooms, Dairy, Kitchen and Scullery. On the First Floor are Four good Bedrooms, Bath Room with Lavatory Basin and W.C. Water, Gas and Electric Light are laid on to the House.  
 THE OUTBUILDINGS are well constructed of brick and tiled, they are in excellent order, and comprise:—Four-stall Stable, Harness Room, Cow Shed for six, with Feeding Gangway, large Barn with Draw-through Gateway, Cow House for sixteen, Granary, Cart Hovel and other erections.  
 THE WHOLE containing an area of about **15a. 1r. 23p.**  
 as shown in the following Schedule :

**SCHEDULE OF LANDS COMPRISED IN LOT 7.**

Ord. No.	Description.	Area.	Area, Acres.	Tenant.	Rental.	Remarks.
172	House, Buildings, Garden and Fore-drove	.817		Mr. E. E. Webb	£40 0 0	NOTE.—The shaded portion of this Lot is held on lease expiring Midsummer, 1926 Annual Tenancy. Ladyday Entry.
169	Orchard	.290				
168	Old Turf Pasture	4.106	A R P	Mr. E. E. Webb	£35 0 0	
170	Ditto	10.178	15 1 23			
		Acres	15.391		£75 0 0	

REMARKS.—This Lot is most desirable as a small Pleasure Farm close to the Town for private occupation or to carry on a Dairy or Poultry Business. (See also remarks on Lots 1 and 2).  
 NOTE.—A right of way over the Fore-drove, Part 172 on the West side of Easmore Farm, is reserved to give access to Lot 21, the Purchaser of such Lot being liable to pay a fair proportion of the cost of repairing the Fore-drove jointly with the Purchaser of Lot 7.  
 The right of way across Field No. 168 O.S. is for foot passengers only. The main line of sewer crosses the Northern end of this Lot.

Apportioned Outgoings.—Tithe—Rectorial **£3 18 10**  
 Vicarial **1 11 5**  
 Land Tax **11 5 3**  
 Timber, **£11 0 0**



**Left and Right Today, amazingly, the main building of Easmore Farm still exists and is a residential property within a substantial housing development. The Google Earth view shows the farmhouse with its long drive from Easmore Road.**



By the 1950s the Ordnance Survey map has Easmore Farm with very much the same buildings and outbuildings but are clearly now within a residential area. The crossroads of Meadow Hill Road and Dale Road is now in existence and residential developments continued down Easmore Road. At this time Easmore Farm was clearly no longer a working farm, but still had quite a large area of land.  
 Today most of that land has been swallowed up in housing developments, but the original farm building (above) and long drive still exist.  
 I well remember with our 'cross country' runs from the High School, taking us past the farm and down onto the Arrow.  
 Of course, at this time, there was no road crossing across the Arrow at the end of Easmore Road, and Forge Mill Road, which had only just been built, was a cul-de-sac.



## Redditch - Our Farming Heritage Part 3 – page 4

### Marfield Farm

The farmlands of Marfield Farm adjoined those of Papermill Farm, Church Hill Farm, Ravensmere Farm and Batten's Farm. The land is now covered by the Church Hill residential development.

It lay along Marfield Lane (now a footpath) which joined the Roman Road, Icknield Street, (also now a footpath) at Marfield Cottages. The farm road to Ravensmere Farm originated directly next to the cottages.



Above Left: Google Earth 1945

Above Right: Postcard Harvest Home -Marfield Kind permission of Melvyn Amos '

Blow Left: Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre (Marfield 'lesser' Barn Today}

Below Centre: Plaque on 'lesser barn' at Bordesley Abbey Today.

Below Right: Google Earth 2013 image of the 'greater' L shaped barn in original location in Church Hill (now scout hut).

The farm included two barns, the 'greater' (L shaped) and 'lesser'. The L shaped barn was retained on the site and renovated. It is now the Scout Hut.

The other 'lesser' barn was initially moved to Matchborough but was later moved to Forge Mill Museum to create the Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre.



# Redditch - Our Farming Heritage Part 3 – page 5

## Batten's Farm

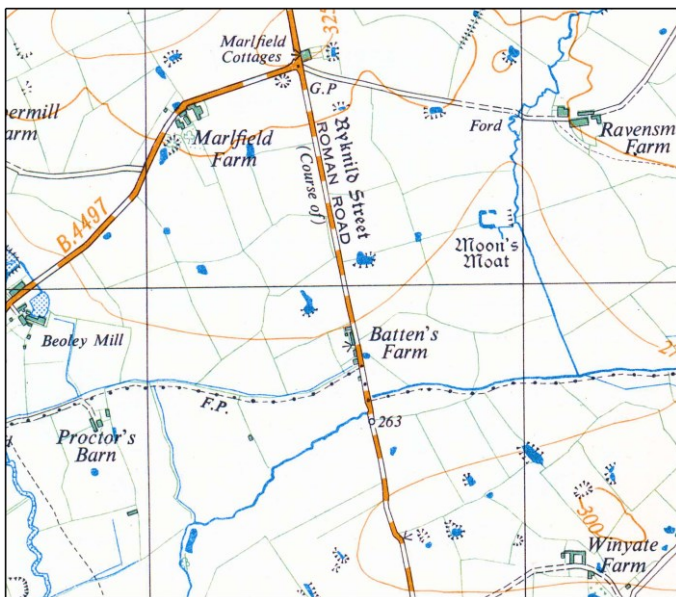
Batten's Farm was located on the route of Icknield Street (Ryknild Street) about 1 km south of Marlfield Cottages. This is approximately the position of the road island where Paper Mill Drive and Batten's Drive meet the Coventry Highway.

This was generally quite poor farmland and was only used for grazing. The small farms in this area of the town were never very productive and farming was a hard life.

It was often waterlogged, and I well remember that the public footpath which crossed Icknield Street by the farm was often impassible during wet periods in the winter.

The map shows clearly numerous small streams and pools covering the area.

Before any housing could be built in the area a large drainage system had to be developed and the Arrow Valley Lake was produced to reduce the risk of flooding.



**Left: Ordnance Survey Map 1:25,000 First Series (circa 1950) showing Batten's Farm on Icknield Street and its position relative to other small local farms.**

**Ravensbank Farm was west of Marlfield Cottages, and a footpath still exists between the housing. Ravensbank Road was, of course, named after the farm.**

**Below Left: the 1945 aerial survey view of the area showing the position of Batten's Farm along the Roman Road. This can be compared with the OS Map above.**

**Below Right: Photograph by Vincent Green (my brother) of Batten's Farm taken in late 1960s.**







# **FORGE MILL NEEDLE MUSEUM**

## **HERITAGE OPEN DAY**

### **15TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

#### **Admission Free**

On Sunday 15th September 2024 from 11.00am to 4.00pm we have our annual volunteer organised Heritage Open Day supported by local community groups. Amongst the wide range of local activities, we will have iconic motorbikes from the Royal Enfield owners Club, model boats from the Little Radford Model Boat Club, Arts in Redditch a charitable organisation promoting and supporting arts, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust will be promoting wildlife in Worcestershire, and much, much more.



**FORGE MILL**  
NEEDLE MUSEUM

**Free entry to the  
Museum and the  
current exhibition**

**Free guided tours of  
the Needle Museum  
and Bordesley Abbey  
Site**

**Music throughout  
the day from Indigo  
Arts our community  
charity supporting  
young people.**

**Refreshments and  
light lunches are  
available from the Mill  
View Coffee Bar.**

**Heritage Open Days 2024**

**FORGE MILL NEEDLE  
MUSEUM AND BORDESLEY  
ABBAY VISITOR CENTRE**

Needle Mill Lane  
Redditch, Worcs, B98 8HY  
Tel: 01527 62509  
<https://www.forgemill.org.uk>

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September  
11.00am to 4.00pm