

September 2024 Meeting Report

Hi All,

We had an excellent turnout for our September meeting with forty-one members and eighteen visitors, so a total of fifty-nine. We had another fascinating presentation from Chris Jackson, which, this year was a continuation of his walk around Redditch using old postcards and included a short history of the postcard.

On the remaining pages of the Newsletter, we have:

Page two is the 'Coming Events' section.

Our next Meeting, is on Monday 14th October 2024 and the presentation is by Philip Jarvis. We also have information on 'What's in Worcestershire' online and the current Forge Mill Exhibition.

Pages three and four

Is a report on 'Continuing our walk around Redditch using old postcards' a presentation by Chris Jackson.

Pages five and six.

Is a report on the Heritage Open Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum which, despite the late rain, had a good attendance with a wide variety of exhibitors, with music, as always supplied by Indigo Arts.

Pages seven and eight.

Is a 'sort of' continuation of my Redditch Farming heritage series. I have used the 1945 aerial survey of Redditch which is available on Google Earth and compared this with the latest satellite image from Google Earth to show the dramatic change in the area over the last 70+ years.

Next Meeting.

Our next Meeting is on Monday 14th October 2024, details page 2.

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

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Coming up

Next Meeting: Monday 14th October 2024

The Redditch Railway, a presentation by Philip Jarvis

Philip Jarvis has spent many years researching the railway at Redditch. In 1985 he produced a book 'Steam on the Birmingham-Gloucester Loop: The Redditch, Alcester and Evesham Railway', published by Brewin Books, which is still available second hand from outlets such as Amazon.

In his presentation for the History Society, he will be giving us an overview of the changes which have occurred over the period from its inauguration in 1859 to the present time. This will be illustrated with many original and rarely seen photographs.



What's on in Worcestershire

A month-by-month guide to member societies' events

Two Month On-line Listing

As we pass into late September the number of outdoor activities reduce. However, if you are interested in history talks there is a wide range of history societies in Worcestershire and the surrounding area. The Worcestershire Local History Forum produces a twelve-month listing for its member societies and there is a viewable 2 month listing online at <https://www.wlhf.org.uk/woiw-2>

Forge Mill Needle Museum Exhibition:

Wed 4 September to Sun 20 October 2024

HONOURING THE PAST; CREATING THE FUTURE. An exhibition by Hilary Beattie and the Viewpoint Group.

Hilary and her group were granted privileged access to a selection of heritage textiles from the Welsh Quilt Association's Collection, based at the Minerva Art Centre in Llanidloes. The resulting exhibition is a vibrant and diverse collection of textile art, which beautifully links old and new and pays homage to those who came before.



Continuing our walk around Redditch using old postcards Presentation by Chris Jackson

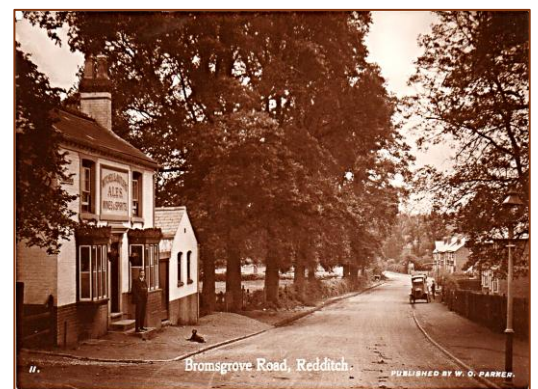
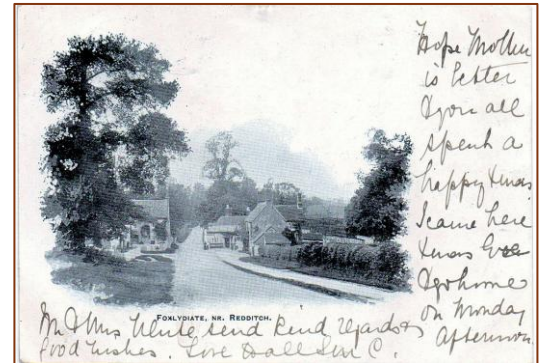
Chris began his talk with a brief introduction to the postcard which began in 1870, when the Post Office issued its first example. These were simple cards with a pre-printed stamp, with space for an address on the front and the back is for the message. Only the Post Office was allowed to print postcards, but later other publishers were permitted to produce them.

Initially the front could only contain the address, so small pictures began to appear on the back, and the message was written around it.

Finally, the split back postcard arrived, which had a message space, an address space and a picture on the front. This is the postcard that we know today. At this time postal deliveries were very frequent and in Redditch there were five deliveries a day (except Sundays) and eight collections a day.

So, it was possible to go on the train to Birmingham in the morning and send a postcard to Redditch which would be received before you arrived home! Chris illustrated his presentation with eighty postcards, and obviously I can only give a 'snapshot' of the wide range. So, I will explain the route which he followed with a few illustrative postcards.

Chris began in the town centre in Church Green East and then showed several postcards of Bromsgrove Road from the town centre to the Queens Head Public House. On route he showed pictures of Edward Street, Britten Street (with the school visible at the end) and a postcard of the school which is described as 'Council Schools'.



Top An early postcard

Middle Upper: Church Green East

Middle Lower: Queens Head, Bromsgrove Road (Red Lane)

Bottom: Britten Street – looking towards Bridge Street School.

Continuing our walk around Redditch page 2

After a postcard of 'The Vicarage', at the Bromsgrove Road/Plymouth Road junction, we then moved up Plymouth Road with many early postcards of the Garden of Remembrance.

We then had a rare postcard of Holmwood, when it was the home of Canon Newton, and then numerous postcards when it was an R.A.O.B. Convalescent home. Moving further on up Plymouth Road we had an early picture of the Redditch Golf Club House.

We then moved on to Headless Cross with early postcards of Rectory Road, arriving finally at its junction with Birchfield Road.

Chris showed us an early Royal Enfield publicity photograph for a 'ladies' motorcycle with an enclosed engine and chain drive parked by a very smart telephone box.

Passing along Birchfield Road, we saw some of the smart houses which occupied the area and examples of the garden parties which took place. Passing past the Rose and Crown, we moved on into Webheath, and the village of Foxlydiate.

It is remarkable to see how much it was a remote village, with a few houses and farms, and, of course, the 'Fox and Goose' public house.

We then moved along Hewell Lane, passing the cottages, and on to 'the Tardebigge'.

During WW1 this was a VAD Red Cross hospital and Chris showed us numerous interesting postcards from that period.

The use of postcards increased dramatically and by the early 20th century there were 800 million per year being sent.

They were, in effect, the e-mail/text of their day, but unlike the internet they are a physical item.

They are not just a picture but with the accompanying correspondence are a valuable source of social history.

The presentation from Chris was fascinating and he was able to give a lot of background to the images which kept the audience captivated.

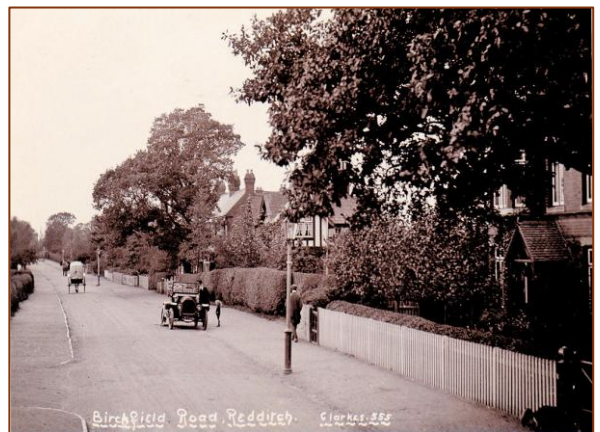
Chris has agreed to give us another presentation from his extensive range of postcards in our 2024/25 season next year.

Top: Holmwood at the time of Canon Newton

Middle Upper: Junction of Rectory Road and Birchfield Road

Middle Lower: Birchfield Road

Bottom: Foxlydiate Village



Heritage Open Day – 15th September 2024

Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre

Review by Anthony Green

It is now eleven years since the Redditch History Society and the volunteers at Forge Mill Needle Museum began our involvement with the National Heritage Open Days Event and it has now become a regular annual event.

Despite the rather wet afternoon, which obviously reduced visitor numbers, we had over 370 at the event.

We were promised that the rain would not arrive until around 4.00 pm, but unfortunately, the weather doesn't read the forecast and decided to turn up at about 2.30pm.

We had a table there with leaflets and a provisional programme for 2025 and had some nice chats with a number of interested visitors.

The Royal Enfield Owners Club are regulars at the event and had seven bikes on display.

John Bugden has a new bike, a 650cc twin, with a sidecar. He says that it has so much torque that he hardly ever needs to change gear!

History Society member, John Newey, and his colleagues in the Little Radford Model Boat Club always give a good display of their meticulously built model boats. This year they had a range of pleasure boats for the visitors to see.

Members of the Redditch Inner Wheel had a display of the 100 buttons which they had collected to celebrate 100 years of the organization. After the event the buttons are distributed to schools.

It was good to see so many Redditch Councilors at the event and we also had a visit from our newly elected MP, Chris Bloore.



Heritage Open Day– page 2

The Forge Mill volunteers were very active throughout the event.

Tours were given of the museum and the walk around the Abbey ruins attracted nearly forty visitors.

The Forge Mill Garden volunteers, who have spent so much time bringing the gardens up to such a nice level, organised a children's trail around the gardens and the site, related to plants, with a small gift at the end.

The volunteers also manned a gazebo at the entrance greeting visitors, counting numbers and explaining what there was to see.

The number of volunteers in the gazebo varied according to what tours were in progress, support for the trail, and other activities.

Of course, there was also tremendous support from the Forge Mill staff, and the Mill View Coffee Bar was busy all day.



Arts in Redditch (AIR) is a local charity run entirely by volunteers, promoting and supporting individuals and groups to help them get creative in many ways. They were in the Function Room and had various fascinating live activities.



Music was provided, as always, by Indigo Arts. There were both 'young Indigo' and the Violettes. When the rain moved in Indigo moved into the covered cloisters and the Violettes entertained us from 3.00 to 3.30 pm. It is when you hear them in such an intimate space that you realise how talented they are.



New for this year was a 'Dogs for the Blind' twin gazebo, with a very friendly guide dog (retired?) and some young dogs. This attracted many of our dog walker visitors. Finally, of course there was full access to the Museum and the current exhibition.



Redditch - from farmland to housing

The changing landscape shown by Aerial views 1945 and 2010

In 1945, the government of the day utilised the RAF to carry out an aerial survey of the country to establish the level of damage created by the bombing of WW2.

We are fortunate that these have been made available by Google Earth, provided you use the downloaded version, not the on-line version.

Obviously, these are not the same image quality as the satellite images available today, but with a little digital enhancement, such as sharpness and colourising, it is possible to enhance the image to emphasise the roads and housing.



The image above is the result of this and clearly illustrates that Redditch, Headless Cross and Crabbs Cross, lay along the A441, the railway came through from Birmingham and on to Evesham and the Arrow Valley was generally farmland. The principal features can be seen on the aerial view and the dark green areas show the woodland.

I have chosen the area, which seems mostly empty compared to the area today, to show how much of it was farmland.

Redditch - from farmland to housing – Part 2

The image on this page is exactly, as near as possible, the same area as shown in the 1945 image on the previous page.

If you look carefully at the dark images of the woodland it is possible to see that these features are little changed, however, for the rest.....

The railway line still arrives at Redditch, but does not leave to the south, and the town centre has now been bypassed with a dual carriageway.



The Arrow Valley is now filled with housing and industrial sites, except for a narrow strip of 'greenspace', the Arrow Valley Park. The Arrow Valley Park includes our historic Bordesley Abbey and Forge Mill Needle Museum, plus the Arrow Valley Lake.

Over the next two issues of the Newsletter, I will be looking with more detail at the development of the landscape with regard to the change from farmland to new industrial and housing developments.