



# The Bromsgrove Society **NEWSLETTER**

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75p



## *Enforced Emigration*

# *The Bromsgrove Society*

Reg. Charity No. 510542

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## *Subscriptions*

Individual Membership	£4.25
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The Newsletter appears three times a year in March, June and September  
The Editor welcomes letters and short articles on topics related to the  
Society's aims and interests. Please submit copy (typed if possible) by the  
last day in January, April and July for each respective issue.



**Lloyds  
Bank**

*The Bromsgrove Society is pleased  
to have Lloyds TSB Bank PLC as  
its bankers.*

# *From the Editor*

My brother and his wife emigrated to the USA in 1968 and I clearly remember my mother weeping at the station as we waved goodbye to them. She felt that she had lost them, and indeed she was right, because no amount of carefully composed letters can compensate for the casual intimacy of someone just popping in for a chat. Now I communicate with them easily through e-mail and get an instant reply which, although not quite up to having a cup of tea together in the kitchen, is much more than Mum ever had. It pleases me to think that families can stay together in this way and that parents need not fear so much the prospect of their offspring leaving for distant lands. It is fascinating that since the Newsletter has gone onto the internet this page can be read by someone on the other side of the world at the click of a button. If you have the technology, or know someone who has, why not try to access it on [www.bsoc.co.uk](http://www.bsoc.co.uk)? Exciting new possibilities for geographical and historical research are immediately opened up. Perhaps a descendant of one of the four young men in this edition's leading article, who were deported to Australia from Bromsgrove for misdemeanours in the early 19th Century might be browsing the internet and could contact me with further information before you have even finished reading your Newsletter .....

The letter from Audrey Wheeler is another example of a son of Bromsgrove making an impact in another part of the world, albeit rather nearer in Wales. Much closer to home, Neville Billington has turned his attentions to Alvechurch and has come up with some fascinating facts.

April 6, the date for The Bromsgrove Lecture approaches. Isobel Jarrett's resume of past lectures reminds us how many prestigious speakers we have had. This year promises to be no disappointment so remember to order your tickets early.

*Fran Rogers*

## *From the Membership Secretary*

As a direct result of the internet the society is happy to welcome new members from abroad, namely Mr. Jeremy Ford from Australia and Mrs. Yoxall from New Zealand.

Other more local, but equally valued new members are:

Mr. & Mrs. Ashford-Smith, Mrs. Boon, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Potter, Mr. & Mrs. Scott-Watson, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Tomlinson, Mt. Wensley, Mr. Woodward.

Members may like to know that this year marks the Society's 20th birthday. To celebrate this event the committee is organising a welcome and get together for existing and potential members at Guesten Hall on Thursday 8th June. The evening will be held at the Society's expense and will be an opportunity for people to meet, socialise and find out more about the work of the Society.

Further details will be circulated to all members at a later date.

# Letters to the Editor

29, Victoria Road, Bromsgrove, B61 0DW

Dear Mrs Rogers

Perhaps Newsletter readers will be interested to know that a native of Bromsgrove is commemorated by an emblem displayed on lampposts, seats and litterbins in the South Wales town of *Ystradgynlais*.



The enclosed photographs have been sent to me by Julian Williams of Lower Cwmtwrch near Swansea. Welsh speakers will know that *Ysbwriel* is pronounced “hiss spew ree hell”, and means litter or rubbish.



The crane emblem shown refers to George Crane, Ironmaster and benefactor of *Ystradgynlais* who died there in 1846 and was born in Bromsgrove in 1785, son of John Crane (“The Bird”). “Unknown son of Bromsgrove” - Bromsgrove Rousler December 1994, gives details of his life.

Could I just take this opportunity to say that the wide variety of subjects covered in the articles for the Rousler

this year have been much appreciated judging by the favourable comments I have heard.

A sharp-eyed reader noticed a mis-print in my article, “War years at Ebenezer Chapel, Sidemoor” The name of the director of Music at Bromsgrove School should read I. Burnell.



*Yours sincerely, Audrey Wheeler*

*oOo*

## “Was It A Plane, Was It A Glider, Was It A Pigeon?”

*Mrs. S M Armishaw, 26a Ednall Lane, Bromsgrove. Tel: 01527 874973*

Dear Mrs Rogers

In the last Newsletter- November 1999, I asked Members of the Society” Could they provide information about a mug which I had bought from a market hall stall?” It had a raised emblem on the front saying ‘Bromsgrove Flying Club’, and featuring a plane or a glider.

I had no reply from Members, so I approached Pete Lammas who compiles a feature “Memory Lane” in the Bromsgrove Messenger.

He kindly published my request after which I had many telephone calls from local people.

The first caller was Henry Mason who lives in Austin Village, Northfield. In the past he had worked for Weavers the Builders in Bromsgrove, and is very interested in local history, and has written a book on his locality. He recalled the

1930's when grown-ups were called Auntie or Uncle, never by Christian or Surname. He remembered being taken by "Uncle Charlie" - in Uncle's car up the A38 towards Worcester where there were about three planes in a field, one of which was "Uncle Charlie's". But Henry's interest was riding in the car as ordinary people didn't have cars in those days, and it was a great thrill for him. This was long before the days of the Spitfire at Perdiswell, and being nearer to Worcester than Bromsgrove, would not be labeled Bromsgrove Flying Club.

Another caller remembered 'planes being made at the Austin Motor Works during the War. Could the test pilots have formed a Club? This again would not be Bromsgrove. Someone else remembered Sir Alan Cobham, and his Flying Circus which toured the Country before the Second World War. I remember my young Aunts paying either ten shillings or a pound for a flight, but this was never based in Bromsgrove.

Another suggestion - did Bromsgrove School have a Cadets Flying Club? No luck there.

I now had calls from pigeon enthusiasts. One lady said that when a child she had bred pigeons, and thought her Club was called Bromsgrove Flying Club, and meetings were held at either the Hop Pole Pub or the then Dragoon. She said her Father still bred pigeons, which is a very popular hobby in Bromsgrove.

A lady in her 70's whose grandfather bred racing pigeons was given the job of taking his clock to the clockman, where she had to queue for it to be attended to; a job she tried hard to skive when she knew it was race day.

So Was The Emblem A Plane, A Glider Or A Pigeon? No - it was a model aircraft. The original owner was told of my quest by a friend, and he rang to put me in the picture.

His name is Colin Darby, and he was for many years on the Committee of Bromsgrove (Model) Flying Club. The Flying Ground was at Fox Walks Farm, and the mug was made for him by a friend Mrs. Plewes who was a gifted potter, but because of changing circumstances, and house moves, the mug ended up in the Market Hall.

I was informed that Bromsgrove Flying Club still flourishes but that is another story.

But, I can now say the Mystery of the Mug is solved - *Success*

*oOo*

*88 New Road, Bromsgrove, Worcs. B60 2LA*

*Dear Fran*

Our son, who now lives in Australia, has just become a member of the Bromsgrove Society. Having been a Tolkien fan, he was fascinated to read the recent Rousler article, 'Bilbo Baggins of Bromsgrove. The other day he saw a luxury edition of Tolkien in a Sydney bookshop: - seven volumes in a presentation box, each volume bearing an embossed letter of Tolkien's surname.

After a few minutes contemplation, he surreptitiously re-arranged the volumes so that the embossed letters read ONE KILT, and walked away chuckling quietly to himself. (As he left, it occurred to him that TEN KILO would have been an even better anagram, but he dared not return to the shop!)

*Yours sincerely, Gillian Ford*

# *From The Chairman*

May I take this opportunity to wish all members of the Society a very happy, peaceful and prosperous New Year. To those of you who have been unfortunate enough to catch the horrible 'flu virus, I extend my sincere wishes for a speedy recovery.

In October last I received a request from Dr. Simon Penn, Director of Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings, for financial assistance towards the cost of providing 14 wooden carved corbels for the roof trusses of Guesten Hall, each of which depicts a tradesman concerned with the construction of the roof. At the November meeting of the Executive Committee it was agreed to make a donation of £2,000, being the estimated cost of two corbels, with the request that this paid for the figures of a blacksmith and a stained glass maker.

The Buildings and Environment Committee has been kept busy considering the drafts of the proposed new Worcestershire County Structure Plan for the period 1996-2011 and is currently studying the formal Deposit Draft with a view to making appropriate representations thereon on behalf of the Society with particular reference to the preservation of the Green Belt.

The Landscape Committee has been considering a variety of matters including tree planting, the potential improvement of Crown Close, and the planting of wild flowers along the by-pass.

Since the Annual General Meeting the Local History Group has had four very successful meetings, the last of which, on 7th. December, was attended by a large number of members and friends when Quintin Watt gave a most interesting illustrated talk about the activities of the Bromsgrove Guild.

On the 14th. January my husband and I attended the farewell party at the Council House to mark the retirement of Mr. David Hunt, the Director of Planning and Technical Services of Bromsgrove District Council. David will be greatly missed and, on behalf of all members of the Society, I wish him a very happy retirement.

Following my plea in the September Newsletter for members of the Society who have retired from full employment to volunteer to take an active part in the administration of the Society, I am somewhat surprised that, to date no-one has contacted me to offer their services. I am sure that, among our 615 members, there must be at least half a dozen active enthusiasts!! I look forward to hearing from you before our next Annual General Meeting in July - telephone me on 01527 877814.

*Jean F. James January, 2000.*



# *The Story of a Green Hill*

## by Jennie McGregor-Smith

A dodgy developer, six large houses and an industrial development to be built on prime agricultural land in rural Worcestershire. Shock, horror! Exactly what the Bromsgrove Society should try to prevent!

But this time we don't need to be too concerned, for it all happened in the second half of the Nineteenth Century. The land in question was Greenhill, still almost as green as its name, which runs between Burcot and Blackwell, two attractive and as yet unspoilt villages in the desirable Green Belt commuter-land between Bromsgrove and the City of Birmingham.

While delving into the history of the development of Greenhill – a fascinating and absorbing story (see details below) – I've been cogitating on the difference in attitude between then and now.

Then there appeared no "letters to the Editor" decrying the spoilation of the countryside; there was no watchdog organisation to keep tabs on planning applications; and even when the Waterworks was mooted, involving noisy steam engines and pumps, there was no uproar from the few villagers of Burcot. Imagine what a furore it would cause today!

One difference is in scale. The Victorian industrialists built fine, architecturally designed, dignified houses in spacious grounds, planted forest trees, created gardens, and had the wherewithal to employ local people and attract shops and services where there were none before.

Today's incomers wish, as the Victorians did, to leave the city for the countryside, but similarity ends there. The new homes of today, often large, expensive and well built, are too often set too close together in gardens that previously supported one house. Fortress-high fences and gates are built. There is difficulty parking at the local shops. There is no space to replace the beautiful mature trees that are felled, and gradually the spacious and wooded character of the area is being lost. A new suburbia is being created.

Barnt Green has changed over the past few years, and new planning applications to demolish and develop come in almost every month. Blackwell, Greenhill and Burcot should beware.

*The Story of a Green Hill : Greenhill, Blackwell in the nineteenth century by Jennie McGregor-Smith will be published in April, available in local bookshops or by ringing 01527 872422 for details and to order.*

*The book tells the stories behind the building of beautiful houses like Wadderton, Leahurst and Burcot Grange, of the building of the Waterworks which enabled sweet water to be pumped to Bromsgrove and Redditch, and something of the Browns who brewed ale and supplied coal, of the two Taylor dynasties, and of the very dodgy developer who started it all.*

# *Enforced Emigration*

## by Bill Kings

*The following report appeared in the Berrows Worcester Journal of 15th March 1838. Another version of the same incident could be read in the Worcester Gazette of May 1838, but couldn't be read in the Bromsgrove Messenger, as our own pea-pickers weekly did not begin to enlighten our lives until 1860.*

Berrow's Worcester Journal of 15 March 1838 report of the  
WORCESTERSHIRE LENT ASSIZES:

*William Hutton, aged 21, Benjamin Pugh, 20, Thomas Harbidge, 19, and John Harbidge, 21, all Nailers, were indicted for stealing on the 16th of January last, at Bromsgrove, a half-sovereign and other money, from the person of Thomas Morgan. The prosecutor (ed presumably Morgan) had been at Bromsgrove, and as he was going home between eleven and twelve o'clock, the prisoner Hutton followed him down the street, when Morgan, not liking the appearance of his new companion, turned into the Dolphin public-house, and remained there about half an hour. Afterwards, when going homewards, and about the distance of a hundred and fifty yards from the town, he heard several persons running along the road after him. Upon turning round he was seized and his arms pinioned down, by the three (sic) prisoners the whole of whom he knew, and the property named in the indictment was taken from his pockets. His hat was knocked over his eyes and the prisoners escaped without his being enabled to see them again. John Bamford deposed, that he saw the prisoner, Thos. Harbidge, come out of the Kings Head, and say that prosecutor had five or six sovereigns in his left hand waistcoat pocket when one of the others replied "let us follow the d \_\_\_\_d old fool and take it off him."*

*They then marched after him, and the witness followed them - they taking the road and witness the fields by the side of the road. When Morgan had gone about two hundred yards along the road, Barnford saw the prisoners tap the prosecutor's hat over his eyes, and rifle his pockets. He then went and informed Kings, the constable, who apprehended the prisoners. Prosecutor was not drunk but "market pert"... Several witness gave the prisoners good characters previous to this transaction, and among them was one W. Jones, who spoke to the character of Hutton: he said he never knew any ill of him. After a strict cross-examination by the Counsel for the prosecution, he admitted that he had heard he (Hutton) had been imprisoned in Leicester gaol. The judge immediately ordered the witness to be taken into custody for contempt of Court. He was then transferred from the witness-box to the dock. He seemed astounded at the change affairs had taken and said he never knew of his own knowledge that Hutton had been previously convicted - he had only heard the rumour.*

*His Lordship said it was his duty on hearing this rumour to inquire into the authenticity of it and not to come into Court and swear he know no ill of the prisoner, he cautioned him to be aware how he again gave characters to persons with a proper knowledge of them and their habits. He hoped the fright he had experienced would have the effect of deterring him from such proceedings in the future. After a severe reprimand, Jones was ordered to be set at liberty. - The Jury found all the prisoners guilty, and the Judge sentenced them to fifteen years' transportation.*

It has always been one of my wishes to find the time to research into the lives of some of Bromsgrove's recalcitrants who were sentenced to hard labour in Australia.

As I look across Stourbridge Road I think of the three lads who set fire to the Saintridge Lane Barn in the mid 19th Century. They were exported to Australia and hard labour for life. How did they finish their lives? A thousand and one questions are there for answering if only we had the time.

Regarding the transgression of Messrs. Pugh, Hutton, Harbidge and Harbidge a great deal of work was done for me by Lynette Wardle of Washington D.C. She wrote asking for information about a particular branch of her family named Harbige, Harbridge, Harbrige or Orrabridge. I jumped at the chance, finding two such families in 1690, and ten in 1851. There were none in the 1836 Register of Electors, but universal suffrage was a century away and only the wealthy could vote.

For Messrs. P, H, H and H it must have been a consolation prize to have been arrested by Jimmy Kings our local constable. 'Jimmy the Runner' as he was known locally, was the last constable to be appointed by the Court Leet. Under the 1839 and 1840 Acts, Bromsgrove became No. 7 County Division of the Police, with a superintendent as its chief. This high office in the new force was bestowed on the aforesaid constable, who henceforce became Superintendent Kings.

John Harbidge (spelling according to Court records) was born in 1817 as John Harbridge. The Convict Research Department of Australia says his birth was 1814 and his name Harbidge, but only the family need fight over that, as no fortune was left behind. John H. was a Nailmaker by trade - that of course is no surprise- and after sentencing, was transported to Parramatta, New South Wales.

After obtaining a Certificate of Freedom in 1848, this was cancelled in 1851 for "absence from the district".

He was granted pardon on 11th February 1852, but had married Catherine Murphy in 1851. They had seven children and John Harbidge died "in between 1893 and 1899".

Tomas Harbidge was born 1819 according to information given to the court, but 1817 by Australia, and of course, was a Nailer. He married Mary

Rock in Sydney in 1848 and they had 8 children. Thomas died in 1889 (aged 70 or 72!) at Sofgla, New South Wales. Since no information is given regarding his Ticket of Leave, and that he married in 1848, he served only ten years of the fifteen recommended by the Worcester Assizes.

William Hutton was a Nailmaker also. According to the trial he was 21 years of age, but convict research says 25. He was granted Ticket of Leave in July 1847, but this was cancelled when he received a “sentence of 6 months in irons for larceny” which was stealing paper. He married and had one daughter. According to the Australian statistics he had, “fair complexion, grey eyes, eyebrows partially meeting and a woman’s bust”.

So much for a single incident. We have many more occasions when the local courts supplied one way tickets for petty and major crime. This method of punishment served two purposes. It supplied Australia with much needed unskilled labour and it took the offenders off the wage bill whilst they were in prison. If the lawbreakers were paupers and were exported it also took them away from having to be assisted by our Local Board.

I now have details of five generations of the Harbidge family from 1755 when the first generation lived in Hanbury. The starter of the second generation moved to Bromsgrove around 1821, two of their number being John and Thomas, the aforesaid casual acquaintances of Jimmy the Runner. The third, fourth and fifth generations lived in New South Wales, Australia, in towns with romantic names such as Murrumburrah, Marengo, Boorowa, Costamundra, Wallaby Rocks, Wollogong, Gumdagai, and one in Binalong. I wonder if any of our members have ever been there?

To me, as the one surviving member of the Board of Guardians of the poor or the “Union” as we knew it when children, the year 1873 is engraved permanently on my mind. This was the year when the Guardians sent nine small children from the workhouse, all girls, aged from 5 to 12 years old, to Canada.

In Canada four of these girls served a sort of apprenticeship, and five were adopted. The following year another four girls were sent to Canada by the Board but once more we have no information regarding their progress. Do we have any member or members who have time to research the fate of these and other children sent abroad from the workhouse?

*Editor’s note.*

*Bill refers to a prisoner’s “ticket of leave”. This was in effect a release paper signed when a sentence had been completed. Time off for good behaviour existed even then, so some prisoners served less time than the sentence originally imposed in England.*

*The Board of Guardians of the Poor was an ancient charity responsible for the maintenance of the poor and needy in the town, and was one of many initiated in the reign of Elizabeth I. It was wound up in the early 1950s with the advent of the National Health and Social Services.*

# *Alvechurch*

## By Neville Billington

It is a village rich in historical interest, it lies within the official Bromsgrove District and is only six miles to the east of the town. Yet it remains largely overlooked and unrealised by local history devotees living anywhere west of Scarfield Hill (and that geographical entity surely includes most of us in the Bromsgrove Society)



*Red Lion Street, in the early ' thirties.  
Courtesy. Rachel Hayes*

Alvechurch, a village on the margin of the town's geography and historical attention is older than

Bromsgrove itself and older than the burgeoning city of Birmingham, ten miles to its north. It is a village whose history is unusually well documented and which can boast a thriving local history society and museum. And, of course, Alvechurch was the most easterly outpost of the once thriving Bromsgrove nail making industry.

*"From morning to night the village was haunted by the panting bellows and the soft, melodious jingle of nailmaking..."*

Martha Harber, 1817 to 1904, eye witness to the nailtrade, lived all her life in Alvechurch. Her best years were spent in service and for thirty of those she worked for the same employer at a salary that never rose above £4 per annum. Though Martha could read to a degree, she never learnt to write but, shortly after her death, her biographer published her priceless recollections. Her words that so poignantly capture the sounds of the nailers at work also record the men and women one would see "here and there" suffering from Nailer's Hump - back deformity caused by unremitting labour in nailshops as children, before bones were properly developed.



*George Henry Jones' cycle shop in Red Lion Street, about 1906. Courtesy. Stuart Jones*

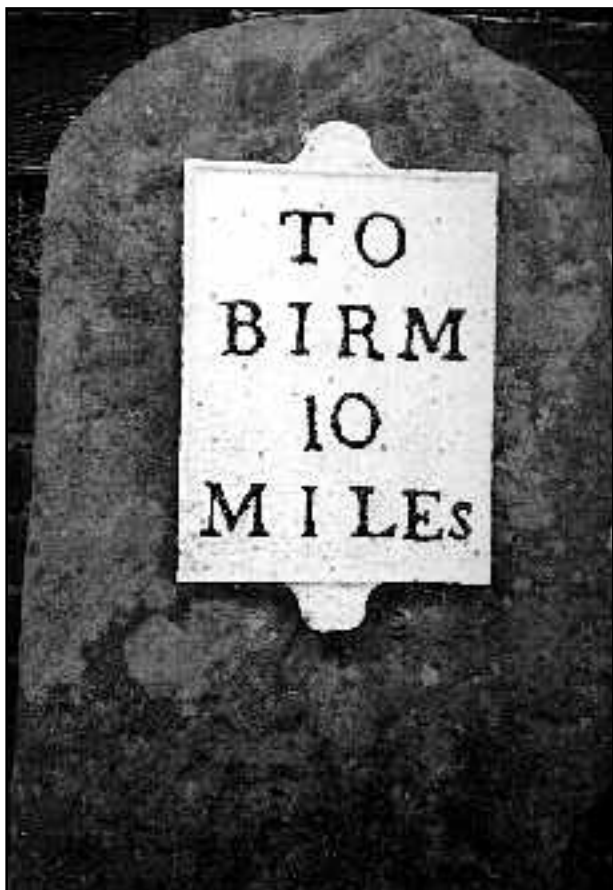
More written information on the village comes from a visit made by historian John Nook during the 1840s. One May evening Nook set out from Bromsgrove railway station to walk "*with the Nightingale attendant upon my steps*" to Redditch, where he spent the night, continuing to Alvechurch the next morning.

In Alvechurch Nook's flair for seeking out the intensely interesting seems to have flourished especially strongly and

he recorded a mass of information on the village and its parish church. As always, Nook was on the lookout for interesting epitaphs in the churchyard and a sighting - on the gravestone of one John Wheeler - has, I think, particular charm:

*Once I my fields with toil did till  
And did my barns with pleasure fill  
But I am gone and shall no more  
In future ages lay up store.*

Today this gravestone seems to be one of many that have become lost to erosion.



*This milestone was used as an ornament in an Alvechurch garden for many years and is believed to have once stood in The Square where it would have been seen by countless stage coach drivers and passengers (the village was an important crossroads on coaching routes). Road sign historian Graham Stanton puts the casting date of the plaque as somewhere between 1790 and 1800.*

An extraordinary archive of events in the village is provided by the Bailiffs Book, this being a record of all manner of village affairs, eg. constables' expenses, churchwardens' accounts, records of overseers of the poor, etc. The first entry in the book is dated 20th August 1603 and it continued in use until 1849, albeit entries during that vast span of years being somewhat haphazard. Nonetheless there is much interesting - and distressing reading. For example, in 1655 John Neale was paid four pence for "*whipping one vagrant and carryinge the pass to Redditch*". An entry dated 23rd April 1688 reads: "*Isaac Marriott, aged fourteen years and his brother John, nine years, were whipped according to the law and sent to Feckenham, in the county of Worcester and their brother Joseph was whipped and sent to Studley in the county of Warwick*".

A tariff of fines entered in 1820 warns that the bailiff will lay a pain of one pound ten shillings on every householder "*who fails to pen up their swine from Lady Day to St. Bartholomew's Day*". A fine of £1 is threatened for any householder who should "*hearken under windows*" and a swingeing £5 for any householder who "*doth entertain any stranger or inmate to damnify the borough*"...

To me, the most endearing feature of the book is a poem that was written, on the flyleaf, by the person (unnamed) who paid for and provided the book! It was intended as a guide to whoever may find themselves with the task of keeping it:

***The Donor to the Keeper of this Book:***

*Goe Goe, pack hence, I give thee free  
To Alchurch friends and keepe thee true  
Wherein if yt thou pleasest mee  
When thou are old, lie make thee newe.*

*Thy charge is this: yt is not longe  
That thou shouldst keepe and careful bee  
Of Alchurch comptes; yt none take wronge  
And eatch what's yearely donne may see.*

*Heerby thy creditt must increase  
And all must praise thy honest paynes  
Heerby thou author are of peace  
And watchman made to wrongfull gaynes.*

*Well nowe depart; thou knowest my mynde  
Bee just, then boulde, 'bash not to tell  
If Alchurch dealt with thou dost fynde  
In any Reckonings, ells' but well.*

The museum in Alvechurch is crammed with local artefacts and memorabilia, far too many to list here. However, I was struck by a clutch of photographs rescued from waste paper collected for the war effort in Somerset in 1941, showing Alvechurch villagers taking part in the 'Beating of the Bounds' around the turn of the century. This ancient ritual had been revived in the nineteenth century only to slip once again into history. There was, however, a re-enactment in 1951, Festival of Britain year.

The Alvechurch Historical Society goes to much trouble to organise a series of highly interesting talks during the Autumn to Spring period and these events are held in the museum which is in School Lane. To make seating space, the collection of photographs has to be carefully stowed away for these talks, so to see the museum's full collection it is preferable to attend on one of its open days - details from the AHS.

*Alvechurch, 1200 Years of History. By Wilfrid English 1997, ISBN 1 - 872962 - 61 - 01. Available from local bookshops, The Bromsgrove Museum and the AHS. Price £8.95. This book is especially recommended.*

*The Story of Martha. Price £1.00. Available from the AHS*

*The Church of St Laurence, Alvechurch. Price 20p. available from the AHS.*

*A Short History of Alvechurch. By R.H. Curtis 1977.*

*Bromsgrove Library Ref 942.442*

*The Rambler in Worcestershire. Volume 2. By John Noak 1853.*

*Library Ref 942.44*

*Alvechurch Historical Society: Chairman, Mr. Wilfrid English,*

*Tel: 0121445 2222*

*Programme Secretary: Mr. Ian Hayes, Tel: 01527 62427*

# *The War Diary Of Norman Gower* by Shirley Brittan.

My father Norman Gower was a well known figure in Bromsgrove and many of you will remember him. He was born in Stourbridge Road on 8 September 1913 and died on 14 January 1994. He lived almost all his life in All Saints Road and worked in many of the butchers' shops in the High Street and he also worked at the Co-op in Aston Fields for a time. We are lucky as a family that he wrote on the back of many of his photographs, and they are therefore a valuable historical record as well as something for our own archives. He sent many of his photographs to the Biggin Hill celebrations in 1980 and he was subsequently invited to attend. (The photo included here appeared in the Bromsgrove Messenger on 12 September 1942 and was taken in Durban.) His diary was S.O. Book 137 and was written during the voyage to South Africa in 1942. Dad was not a committed diarist and his entries span a very limited time, but they provide a fascinating insight into life at sea for many soldiers for whom this was their first experience of a sea voyage. I have added my own notes:



## **Dad's War Diary.**

**12th February 1942.** *Written on board the "Ormonde". Unfortunately the first part of the diary is missing and it begins as follows:*

Still no food. Issued with Life Jacket and wrote a letter to Pauline.

1.00 p.m. Getting ready for dinner. Had a surprise when it came, potatoes, cabbage and Roast Beef and pudding after. (No tea)! *This must have been a big disappointment for Dad as he was the world's biggest tea drinker.!!*

2.00 p.m. Began sorting ourselves out and wrote more letters to Mother, Gran and Aunt Ethel. *Mother was Lucy Gower nee Rea who lived in Stourbridge Rd. Bromsgrove. Gran was Frances Gower née Giles who lived in Walton Rd. Bromsgrove.*

4.30 p.m. Ready for tea. Mess Orderlies go for tea. Told to wait till seven p.m. Many moans!

6.00 p.m. STILL WAITING FOR TEA.

7.00 p.m. Tea Served. Very nice plenty of it.

8.00 p.m. Had walk round ship, found NAAFI, Bought Cigs. And matches. 10 Gold Flake 4d. and matches 1d. Very cheap.

9.00 p.m. Ready for bed. Slept on table on a mattress, 2 blankets with two more pals. OTHERS in Hammock over us. Plenty of fun and swearing.

## **Feb. 13th.**

6.00 a.m. Reveille. Washed and dressed.

8.00 a-m. Breakfast. Very good.

10.00 a.m. Ship moves out of dock. Think we are going. Lovely scenery to be seen when moving down the Clyde.

1.00p.m. Dinner. Very Good. Helped to wash up. *Typical of my father he would help anyone and used to advise the young housewives who came into the Co-op at the top of Bromsgrove High St. how to cook their meagre ration of meat to get the most out of it.*

2.00 p.m. Life belt drill. Hung about for an hour and a half perished waiting for instructions. All we were shown was how to tie our strings.

4.00 p.m. Finished Life belt drill. Ready for Tea. Wrote letter to Pauline and Shirley. *How I wish the letters had been saved. I remember them very well especially when they had been censored and you spent hours trying to figure out the words that had been erased or even cut out!! Told tea time is 7o'clock. Many moans and plenty of swearing.*

4.30 p.m. Dropped anchor outside Greenock and Dumbarton. Had stroll round decks and saw many warships including 2 Aircraft Carriers, Battleships and many Destroyers, also Cruisers.

7.00 p.m. Had tea. Very nice (after waiting)

7.30 p.m. Stood in NAAFI queue for sweets and tinned fruit for 2hrs without any luck.(Swore).

9.45 p.m. Made bed on table. Got in it. Lots of fun swinging the Hammocks.

## **10th Feb. 1942.**

6.00 a.m. WAKY WAKY I Got up head like a bucket, back sore. *My father was teetotal all his life so it wasn't a hangover!!*

8.00 a.m. Breakfast (Very good).

10.00 a.m. Lifebelt Drill. B....r all shown to us after waiting 1hr.

11.00 a.m. Sat on the deck with some of the Lads.

12 noon. Stood in NAFFI queue for 1 hour. Still no luck.

1.00 p.m. Dinner Served.

2.00 p.m. Lecture on Mess Deck. Told us to stick the conditions we were under. **THEY ARE TERRIBLE.**

3.00 p.m. Played cards till 5 o'clock. Won 2/-. *I bet he didn't put that in his letter to Gran. She was a very strict Methodist and a member of the Methodist Chapel in Birmingham Rd. Bromsgrove, and gambling of any sort was not permitted!!*

5.00 p.m. Stayed on deck till 7 o'clock.

7.00 p.m. Had tea. Food still O.K.

7.30 p.m. Had sing song in lounge till 9.30p.m.

9.30 p.m. Went to bed more Fun.

### **15th Feb. 1942.**

6.00 a.m. Reveille.

8.00 a.m. Had breakfast, food still great.

8.45 a.m. Went up on deck. Talked with the lads.

10.30 a.m. Went to Church in Officer's Lounge. Very good.

12.30 p.m. Stood in NAAFI queue. Still no luck.

1.00 p.m. Had dinner very nice.

2.00 p.m. Went on deck and saw plenty of ships. Still in the Bay. Many rumours about the Convoy moving. Stayed on Deck till 5 o'clock. *In another of Dad's memoirs he states that this was the biggest Convoy ever to leave the U.K. He also states that many of his Squadron the 92nd. East India had been lost in the previous six months during the Battle of Britain when he was stationed at Biggin Hill. He had been at Digby, Lincs. since November and after Christmas leave was suddenly recalled for overseas service and this was when he boarded the "Ormonde".*

7.00 p.m. Had Tea. Marvellous food under the conditions we are in. Bought 80 Players for 2/8d.

7.30 p.m. Went to Concert in the Lounge. Good show.

9.30 p.m. Went to bed and more fun.

### **16th. February 1942.**

6.00 a.m. Reveille.

8.00 a.m. Breakfast still good.

9.30 a.m. Went on deck a 12.00a.m. Had lots of fun with the lads taking the rise out of Tyne & Taffy. *I know that Taffy was Taffy Issacs and that he came from Rubery. I presume they were taking the rise out of their accents!!*

1.00 p.m. Had dinner. Helped to clear up.

2.00 p.m. Went on deck till 4 o'clock. Listened to Band. Plenty of fun and dirty songs. Bill half canned.

4.00 p.m. Went to the Mess Deck. Played Draughts and Cards.

6.00 p.m. Rumour we are moving. Anchor drawn in. Marvellous sight watching convoy formed. Moved down the Clyde.

6.30 p.m. STOPPED AGAIN.

7.15 p.m. Had tea. Went. in NAAFI Queue. Served at 9 o'clock with tin jam. Sweets, biscuits, pears, lemonade and beer. *I presume the pears and beer were for someone else!*

9.30 p.m. Went to bed, some fun.

11.00 p.m. STARTED ON VOYAGE. Did not know anything until we woke next morning.

### **17th. Feb. 1942.**

6.00 a.m. Reveille. Woke and found ship rocking. Went on Deck after washing. Marvellous sight.

8.00a.m. Had breakfast. Went on deck again. Many seasick but not affected me yet. Marvellous view looking at the Convoy. Marvelous escort. 2 Aircraft Carriers, 1 Battleship, many Destroyers and Cruisers. Travelled well all day no mishaps.

### **18th. Feb. 1942**

Still travelling well. All Convoy keeping close together. I felt very ill when I first woke up. Had no breakfast. Sick at 9.30 a.m. and altogether I was sick 5 times during the day. The Convoy's Guns opened out during the morning on Practice. We saw a Sunderland Flying Boat (*His brother Les Gower was helping to build these on Lake Windermere, having been trained at Bromsgrove Guild. Les married a Windermere girl in 1944. Dad was best man and I was a bridesmaid at St. Mary's Church, Windermere and Dad was recalled and sent to serve in Germany.*) out in front of us. Sea was very rough and rain was heavy. The ship rocked like Pat Collins swing boats on the Rec. on Fair Day in Bromsgrove. After being sea sick I said to the other chaps "I don't want to see the sea again after this". The food is still very good and we all had an orange after tea. Went to bed at 9 o'clock and water started pouring through the port hose. The weather was very rough.

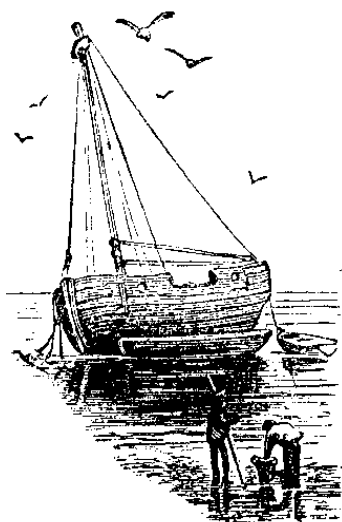
*I know that Dad was very sea sick all the way to South Africa and I think this is why his diary finished so abruptly.*

### **1st. March 1942.**

Arrived FREETOWN. SOUTH AFRICA, for first port of calling. Did not have any shore leave. Saw plenty.

### **From his other Memoirs.**

Arrived in Durban (*where I know he visited his Aunt Daisy Honeysett née Corbett from Highfields, Bromsgrove who had emigrated to South Africa many years before and certainly Dad would never have visited her but for the War.*) after 2 months sailing. Finished up at Port Tewfik, Egypt. Joined up with the 8th. Army. Did air cover through the Western Dessert. Joined Forces with the South African Force. Saw service in Malta, Sicily, Italy, came back to the U.K. in 1944 then saw service in France and Germany. Demobbed 1945, 'THANK GOD'.



# *The Bromsgrove Lectures*

This year we will be holding the 14th Bromsgrove Lecture in Routh Hall , Bromsgrove School. It occurred to me that a record such as this would emphasise the wide variety of distinguished speakers whom we have been privileged to hear since 1987, and the spread of topics they have covered. Lecturers have imparted their particular knowledge with great enthusiasm, making the evenings hugely enjoyable for all. I wonder how many members have attended them all.

The inaugural Lecture was in:

- 1987 H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester “*Conservation in North Worcestershire*”
- 1988 Professor Chris Baines “*The Wild Side of Bromsgrove*”
- 1989 John Julius Norwich (The Rt. Hon. Viscount Norwich)  
“*The Conservation of Venice and the Improvement of Bromsgrove*”
- 1990 Alfred A. Wood CBE (The Society’s President)  
“*Bromsgrove in Your Hands*”
- 1991 Hon. Jonathon Porritt “*The Challenge of Green Politics - growth and progress of a finite planet*”.
- 1992 Lord Montague of Beaulieu “*The Stately Home Business*”
- 1993 Phil Drabble “*A Voice in the Wilderness*”
- 1994 Lady Lucinda Lambton “*Curious Houses*”
- 1995 Professor Sir Michael Drury OBE “*A Picture of Health*”
- 1996 Sir Ranulph Fiennes OBE “*Living Dangerously*”
- 1997 Tony Evans “*The Second Severn Crossing - Building the New Bridge How did they do that?*”
- 1998 Lady Victoria Leatham “*The Problems and Pleasures of a Stately Home*”
- 1999 Professor Chris Dyer & Dr. Simon Penn  
“*Woods, Workers & Wild Women - 400 Years of Bromsgrove*”

The Lecturers have imparted their particular knowledge with great enthusiasm making the evenings hugely enjoyable - both for audiences and - hopefully - the Lecturers!

*Isobel M. Jarrett February 2000*

# *The Bromsgrove Society*

## **Officers and Members of the Executive Committee 1999-00**

### **Officers:**

<b>Chairman:</b>	Mrs Jean James, 19, Hawthorn Road, Norton, Bromsgrove B61 0EN	01527 877814
<b>Vice-Chairmen:</b>	Mr Roger Brazier, 36 Harvington Road Broom Park, Bromsgrove. B60 2BA	01527 878889
	Mr Tim Harris, Church Green Cottage, 44 Church Road, Bromsgrove. B61 8QH	01527 872451
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Mr John Rowlands, 34 Pine Grove, Rednal, Birmingham. B45 8HE	0121 445 3017
<b>Secretary:</b>	Mrs Joan Sykes, 51 New Road, Bromsgrove. B60 2JU	01527 872479

### **Committee:**

<b>Mr Desmond Clarke,</b>	19, Alvechurch Highway, Lydiate Ash, Bromsgrove. B60 1NZ.	0121 453 3034
<b>Mr Jim Griffith,</b>	(Chairman - Buildings & Environment) 24 Ragley Crescent, Broom Park, Bromsgrove. B60 2BD	01527 833252
<b>Mr Richard Guest,</b>	(Secretary - Landscape Committee), 36 Church Road, Bromsgrove. B61 8QH	01527 831580
<b>Mr Norman James,</b>	19 Hawthorn Road, Norton, Bromsgrove. B61 0EN	01527 877814
<b>Mrs Isobel Jarrett,</b>	28 Alvechurch Highway, Lydiate Ash, Bromsgrove. B60 1PA	0121 453 2100
<b>Miss June Longmuir,</b>	Hill Farm, Woodcote, Bromsgrove, B61 9DY	01527 832288
<b>Mr Ray Meredith,</b>	“Hillborough”, Stoke Pound, Bromsgrove. B60 3AX	01527 831083
<b>Mrs Jill Palmer,</b>	37 Fordhouse Road, Bromsgrove. B60 2LU	01527 871340
<b>Mr Graham Reddie,</b>	41 East Road, Bromsgrove. B60 2NW	01527 872055
<b>Mrs Frances Rogers,</b>	(Editor -Newsletter) High Barn, Walnut Lane, Finstall, Bromsgrove. B60 3BU	01527 872109
<b>Mr Robin Shaw,</b>	(Chairman - Landscape Committee), 78, Kidderminster Road, Bromsgrove B61 7LD	01527 831426
<b>Mr Tony Turpin,</b>	89 Stourbridge Road, Bromsgrove. B61 0AL	01527 876659
<b>Mr John Weston,</b>	(Chairman - Local History group), Breakback House, 20 Sunningdale Road, Bromsgrove. B61 7NN	01527 873483
<b>Ex-Officio Committee Member:</b>	The Bailiff of the Court Leet	

# *Dates for Your Diary*

## *The Bromsgrove Lecture*

The Bromsgrove Society is pleased to announce that the  
2000 Bromsgrove Lecture will be given by the former  
Parliamentary Correspondent for BBC News

***CHRISTOPHER JONES M.A.***

and will be entitled

***“The Royal Palace of Westminster”***

The Lecture will be given at Routh Hall, Bromsgrove  
School, on Thursday 6th April, 2000 at 7.30 p.m.

**Tickets at £5.00 each can be obtained from:**

W. E. Dawes, Gentlemen's Outfitters, High Street, Bromsgrove

Baylis & Co., Furnishers, High Street, Bromsgrove

Wilson's Pet Centres, Market Street, Bromsgrove

Mrs. Jean James, Chairman of The Bromsgrove Society 19, Hawthorn  
Road, Bromsgrove. Tel:01527877814

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***21st March***

***“10 Years of Local Radio”***

**Mike George**

of

**Radio Hereford and Worcester**

to be held at the Methodist Centre, Stratford Road, Bromsgrove.

Members £1.00. non-members £1.50

Commencing at 7.45 p.m.