THE BLACKCOUNTRYMAN

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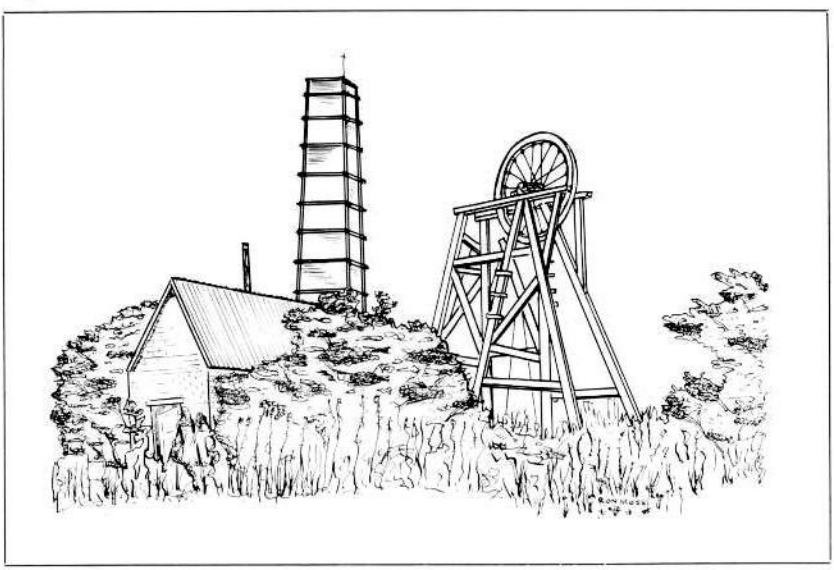

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY

PUBLICATIONS

THE BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY'S TWO

GREAT

WINTER SUCCESSES

(1)

A Black Country Nurse At Large

by EDITH COTTERILL

EARLY REVIEWS :

" Highly recommended."—**Birmingham Mail.**

" I would recommend it to anybody who recognises earthy and compassionate good humour when he fiinds it."

—Birmingham Post

" Altogether a very good buy for only 50p."

—Nursing Weekly

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(2)

A Capful o' Nails

REPRINT OF A 19c NOVEL OF THE NAIL TRADE

50p

Also highly recommended by the Birmingham Mail

Vol. 7 No. 1.

Editor:
HAROLD PARSONS

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January, 1974

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1 Cedar Gardens, Kinver
Tel. Kinver 2065

EDITORIAL

WELL, here we are in 1974, with a bright new and more expensive cover. I don't know how we do it, at only a £1 a year individual membership of the Black Country Society, and postage gone up as well. It says a lot for the vast amount of gratuitous work put in by committee members. In fact, the new cover is largely their idea, wanting the mag. to have a more attractive appearance in the shops. Sort of sock 'em in the eye when they are lashing out for Radio Whatsit or Woman's Friend!

In the end though, it is inside the covers that counts, and as we kick off with Volume 7, I would like to thank all my contributors: the faithful and the equally welcome out-of-the-blue writers. I trust we shall see more of the latter of whom the author of ' Carnival,' on Page 34 of this issue, is a typical example.

As to our new cover. Don't go thinking we liked it so much we hated to send it out! That isn't why we are so late this time. Fact is, we have been held up by circumstances beyond our control—such as the printers having a long Christmas holiday and then running into the three-day week fiasco.

Mind you, the printers did us well in the latter months of '73, churning out ' A Capful o' Nails ' and ' A Black Country Nurse at Large ' in quick succession. Not only did the new titles give a boost to seasonal sales (along with Christmas cards and calendars), they also promise to be top sellers. Of course, they will have a long way to go to catch up with Black Country Stories, now in its twenty-third thousand copies sold.

Harking back to the magazine, it is a matter of regret that a couple of items herein have a Christmas flavour, for I do strive to be topical. So much so that I have left out the traditional New Year greeting. It rings a bit hollow towards the end of January.

Yo'll tek it as read, then, wo' yer?

SOCIETY NEWS | John Brimble reports

IT was reported in these notes (Vol. 6, No. 4), that the Society had asked the Ordnance Survey to include the name 'Black Country' on their future maps, as one means of retaining the identity of the region after the forthcoming local government re-organisation. Unfortunately, though sympathetic to our request, this cartographic department have stated that it is not possible for technical reasons to include the name, notably because of background concentration. We are naturally disappointed at this, but can be consoled by the fact that whilst the name 'Black Country' cannot be on the map physically, as long as the Society exists, it will do its utmost to see that the identity of the area remains intact.

It has been the aims of the Society since its formation, to create, as far as possible, a diverse interest in the activities of the region, and one of our most recent ventures has been in the field of whippet racing. After a most interesting meeting at the Vine Inn, Delph, Brierley Hill during 1972, when members of the Brierley Hill Whippet Racing Club spoke to members of the Society, it was felt that an annual whippet racing event in this area, for a suitable trophy, would be a stimulous to this sport, recovering from a decline, and also be an added attraction to the area. It was accordingly decided that we should sponsor an annual race, open to dogs from all parts, to run for the Black Country Society Challenge Trophy—a handsome silver cup bearing the name of the Society. The first event was held on Saturday, 6 October at Tipton Sports Union Stadium, and attracted whippet owners, not only from the Black Country, but from such places as Stoke-on-Trent, London, and Evesham. It was pleasing to see the trophy won for the first time by a local whippet, 'Blue Lagoon,' owned by Stephen Hodgett of Pensnett.

The organisation of the race meeting was carried out by members of the Brierley Hill Whippet Racing Club, who we must thank for the efficient way in which this was done. Considering that this was the first time that the Society had involved itself in such a venture, it was felt to be successful. Despite the inclement weather, an encouraging number of people attended. The trophy was presented to the winner by committee member Mrs. Andrea Archer.

On September 27, by kind permission of the Royal British Legion Club, Lanesfield, a meeting was held at its headquarters, when members of the Society's Industrial Archaeology group talked of projects recently undertaken. A talk was given by Geoff Stevens on the Saltwells Spa, Netherton, and Aran Allman gave a detailed account of the mine accident at Nine Locks Colliery, Brierley Hill in 1869, which resulted in a miraculous rescue (Blackcountryman Vol. 2, No. 2). Keith Hodgkins talked about his researches into back to back houses in Tipton, whilst Ron Moss gave an illustrated talk on chain shops of the Old Hill area.

On Wednesday, October 17 at the Crown and Cushion Inn, Ocker Hill, Tipton, W. A. Smith of Wolverhampton Polytechnic, spoke on John Wilkinson, Ironmaster. We were pleased to see members attend this meeting, when almost everyone else watched the England v. Poland football match on television instead!

Mr. Smith gave an informative talk on the great ironmaster who, it seems, has not received the credit he deserved, probably because much documentary evidence relating to him has either been destroyed or lost.

On Saturday, November 3, an exhibition of photographs and objects from the Society's historical collection was mounted at the Park Lane Methodist Church Hall, Tipton. We would have liked to have seen many more people attend this, as much work was put into its organisation. However, many people who came, contributed interesting information relevant to local history, and a number of donations were made to the collection. It is hoped to mount this exhibition at intervals in various parts of the region.

On the future, a meeting was held at the Union Inn, Tipton, on 31 October, when representatives of the local planning authorities met members to discuss the progress of the local structure plans, with particular reference to employment. This produced a lively discussion, and whilst this is a specialised topic, it is thought important that meetings concerning the future of the region should be held regularly.

Still with the future, a meeting was held on 13 November at the Red Lion, Walsall, when Mr. J. Isaac, Director of Operators for the West Midland Passenger Transport Executive, spoke on the future of transport in the Black Country. This proved to be a most interesting talk, in which the speaker outlined the many difficulties facing his authority and what future development can be expected.

Informal evenings where members can mix socially, such as at darts, domino and crib matches, and at the recent 'Gray Pay Night, again proved popular.

Following the success of the 'Aaron Manby' and Dudley Canal Tunnel commemorative postal covers, the Society has recently produced two more of these, one being to commemorate the Wesley Riots at Wednesbury in 1743 (produced in conjunction with the Methodist Philatelic Society), when a week long exhibition, ending on October 20, was mounted at Wednesbury Central Library, illustrating the history of local Methodism. This included items from the collection of the Springhead Methodist Mission, Wednesbury, and from our own historical collection.

A week later on October 27, a cover was produced to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Wolverhampton Trolleybus system. An open-air exhibition was held at Wolverhampton, which included a trolleybus from the Black Country museum. This event was held in co-operation of local trolleybus enthusiasts and the Friends of the Black Country Museum. This most successful exhibition was visited by many people, including local civic heads. We must thank Dr. E. R. Clarke, who is well known in local philatelic circles, for his help and advice in producing this cover.

BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY

WINTER PROGRAMME, 1974

Thursday, January 17th, 8.00 p.m.

THE PAINTERS ARMS, AVENUE ROAD, COSELEY. Dr. John M. Fletcher: Language and Humour in the Black Country.

Tuesday, February 19th, 8.00 p.m.

THE BRITANNIA INN, OWEN STREET, TIPTON. Ron Moss: Chains, Forgings and Odd Work. Contemporary hand-craftsmen of the Cradley area. A talk illustrated with slides.

Wednesday, March 20th, 8.00 p.m.

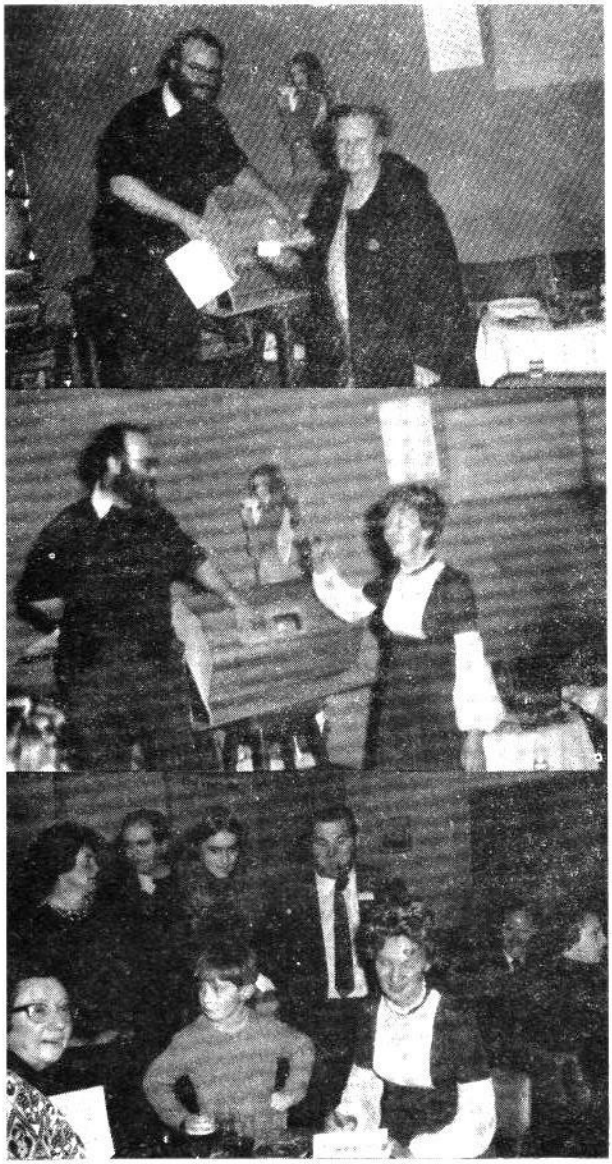
CROWN & CUSHION INN, OCKER HILL, TIPTON. A.G.M. of the Society, followed by a short programme of slides showing some of the Society's activities during the past year.

Thursday, April 25th, 8.00 p.m.

UNION INN, UNION STREET, TIPTON. A discussion, with local experts present, of transport proposals in the new local authority structure plans.

All smiles at the Bull and Bladder as the Black Country Society entertain a group of German visitors to this area (July, '73). See 'Correspondence.'

Photo: Jack Daker



Mrs. Edith Cotterill, author of 'A Black Country Nurse at Large,' and Mrs. Lucy Woodall, Hon. Vice President of The Black Country Society, draw early prizes in the Society's Christmas Draw at the Tipton Sports Union, on Dec. 19th, 1973. (See page 59)

Mrs. Cotterill signing copies of her book at the same meeting.

On October 20th, 1973, the Black Country Society, in co-operation with the Methodist Philatelic Society, issued a special cover and handstamp to mark the 230th anniversary of the Wesley Riots.

DR. J. M. FLETCHER writes here on—

The Beginnings of Methodism in Wednesbury

"I preached in Wednesbury at four to a nobler people and was greatly comforted among them. So I was likewise in the morning. How does a praying congregation strengthen a preacher?"

John Wesley's words of 1749 are but one of his many sincere references to the strong support that he felt he had received from the people of Wednesbury. His journal is filled with flattering references to the effectiveness of his congregation there. They 'hunger after the word' (1760); they contain 'no mocker or trifler' (1751); when he preached in the rain 'every man, woman, and child stayed to the end' (1751). At the age of eighty-six, he made what was to be his last visit to the town 'to our old friends at Wednesbury where the work of God greatly revives.' To a packed audience, 'the house could not near contain the people,' he preached his last sermon. Less than a year later, he was dead. It was fitting that this remarkable man should at the close of his life address the people of the town in which his greatest dangers and probably his greatest triumphs had been experienced.

The Black Country, and Wednesbury in particular, showed all those characteristics which were to explain the rapid and astonishing impact of Methodism on the life of this country. Early industrialisation, especially beyond the limits of the few urban centres of the region, had produced a population little affected by the traditional organisation of the Church of England. Many clergymen preferred the company of the squirearchy and wealthy industrialists to that of the colliers, nail-makers and iron workers who were increasingly becoming typical of the area. Others, despite their good intentions, were overwhelmed by the extent of the task they faced and depressed by the rigidity of the system within which they worked.

The last twenty years of the seventeenth century saw an overwhelming preponderence of colliers and nailers in the population of Wednesbury. As J. F. Ede remarks, comparing the figures with those of a century earlier, 'there has been an industrial transformation.' The established church had neither the equipment nor often the inclination

to cope with this sudden change. And year by year, the situation worsened. We cannot trace with confidence the movement of the population in the eighteenth century, but there is no doubt that when reliable figures became available in 1801, they show that there were about twice as many people living in the town as a century earlier. The Dissenters were very weak in Wednesbury at this time and could do little to fill the gap left by the ineffectiveness of the established church.

Charles Wesley's first visit to the town, when he preached in the 'Coal-Pit Field,' the area around the present Potters Lane, resulted in the conversion of Francis Ward. This important figure in the early history of Black Country methodism was a well known local gentleman, underground manager in a Wednesbury colliery. John Wesley's first visit, in January, 1743, was probably arranged by Ward at whose house he stayed. His preaching was successful and he was well received by the town's vicar. Opposition against the methodists, however, now began to appear, apparently stimulated by some of the local clergy and gentry who were alarmed by the success of Wesley's preaching.

The summer of 1743 saw repeated attacks on the persons and property of local methodists. Wesley himself described these riots in his pamphlet 'Modern Christianity Exemplified at Wednesbury,' published in 1745. This valuable record consists of sworn statements by those attacked in these disturbances. Francis Ward's own vivid description tells how he was attacked by a mob, almost blinded in one eye, beaten, and forced to the ground. He was rescued by the intervention of a 'poor woman,' who raised him up and carried him home —one of many examples of courageous intervention by individuals in face of mob violence against methodists. Frustrated in their appeals to the local magistrates for protection, the methodists appealed to the Wesleys for help. Both visited the town to strengthen the resolve of their converts and it was on October 20, 1743, that John Wesley suffered in Wednesbury one of the most frightening experiences of his not over peaceful career as a preacher.

After preaching from the horse block in the High Bullen, Wesley retired to Francis Ward's house. From here he was taken by a mob to the magistrates, first at Bentley, then at Walsall. Both refused to see either the leaders of the crowd or Wesley and after some terrifying moments, Wesley was returned to Wednesbury by some of the rioters themselves, impressed by his courage and calmness. For five hours he had been amongst the rioters and certainly at times believed that their intention was to kill him. Some believe that his experiences at Wednesbury during this year provided the insipiration for his hymn, no. 276, where occur the lines:

> "Jesus alone
> Defends his own
> When earth and hell oppress us."

Whatever the truth of this assumption, it is clear that Wesley was deeply impressed by his experiences and worried at the prospects facing his supporters in Wednesbury.

Sporadic attacks on Wednesbury methodists continued during the winter, but on February 6, 1744, rumours reached the Wednesbury congregation that a full scale attack on their property was planned for Shrovetide. Sure enough, on that evening, a prayer meeting of the group was brought the news that houses of local methodists were again being attacked. They dispersed to remove what goods they could from their homes, 'laid down and committed our souls to God.' The next morning saw the start of the worst experiences to be suffered by the Wednesbury congregation.

For six days, riots continued. Again we have sworn statements, recorded by Wesley in his pamphlet already mentioned, which describe eye witness accounts of what happened. Armed with clubs and axes, mobs regularly gathered on Church Hill, Wednesbury, and then proceeded systematically to attack and destroy the property of the best known local methodists. Francis Ward's house again received special attention, although here the movable furniture had already been transferred to safety. The shopkeepers amongst the methodists, were especially badly affected, losing most of their stock at the hands of the rioters. The sufferings of individual methodists was such as to encourage their colleagues in London, at the instigation of Charles Wesley, to organise a special collection of money which was sent to alleviate the immediate sufferings of those left destitute.

There are several features of interest about these local riots beyond the obvious impressiveness of the courage and determination of the Wednesbury methodists. The first curious feature is the ambiguous behaviour of the local justices. They refused to support the methodists' attempts to obtain warrants against the rioters, but also refused officially to act against the methodists. Certainly, in general statements to groups and individuals, the magistrates expressed strong hostility to

the methodists and even insinuated that those who attacked them were to be ignored by the law. But when confronted by the rioters who had seized Wesley, both Lane and Persehouse at Bentley and Walsall, refused to intervene. Persehouse, in fact, gave the lame excuse at about 7.00 p.m. that he had retired to bed!

Perhaps it was that, unable to act by law against the methodists, whose activities seemed harmless enough, the local gentry from whom the magistrates were drawn, were suspicious of any meetings that involved tradesmen and working class people. Certainly, we see from Wesley's pamphlet that the Wednesbury methodists included many colliers, nailers, brickmakers and such like workers, although it was, of course, the more substantial members of the group that lost most in the riots because they had more to lose. 'Inciting the people to disorder' was a constant charge against the methodists.

What probably lay beyond this attack was the fear that once organised into methodist groups, working people might be encouraged to put forward industrial and even political demands to the detriment of the local gentry. In this, the magistrates were perhaps more far sighted than John Wesley himself who was, of course, not committed to any revolutionary social or political policy.

The second interesting feature is the part played by the Wednesbury rioters themselves in the events of 1743 and 1744. The evidence indicates that there was always a sprinkling of Wednesbury men, mostly colliers amongst the mob, but repeatedly the records speak of the mobs from Darlaston, Bilston and to a lesser extent from Walsall, as responsible for attacks on local methodists. An interesting reference in an anti-Wesley pamphlet of 1744 actually speaks of a Wednesbury mob driving away one from Darlaston which was about to set on local methodists. Perhaps the impact of the Wesleys on the ordinary people of Wednesbury had already been sufficient to ensure strong support there for them.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, is to discuss how far the riots were deliberately organised, and why. Certainly, there must always have been a criminal element present, those seeking personal revenge or ready to steal and loot from damaged property. Also, we know from contemporary statements that some working men were particularly annoyed by the methodists' attack on drinking and gambling and the consequent desertion of these occupations by their converted friends. But this seems insufficient to explain especially the well organised attacks of 1744. The rioters had a list of methodists to attack and they also presented some victims with an ultimatum that they should either sign a recantation prepared by the vicar of Wednesbury or suffer violence. It is also suspicious that the rioters of this year chose to meet on Church Hill before beginning their attacks. It does seem that the local clergy must bear some of the blame for encouraging these riots. In their defence, however, it must be said that they had suffered some provocation from methodist extremists in Wednesbury who had attacked them in such phrases as 'blind dogs.'

The methodists certainly believed that attacks on them were organised 'by the principal men of the place.' Such opposition may probably be put down to simple fear by the local gentry of the possibility of working class organisation and consequent political trouble. We must remember that the Hanoverians were not popular and that another Jacobite rebellion was to break out in 1745. Any movement involving the industrial working class must have been suspect, especially when it involved some hostility to the established church which the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Hanoverian Monarchy was pledged to defend.

The methodists terrifying experiences in Wednesbury did not destroy their determination. The society grew from strength to strength, providing missionaries to other parts of the Black Country and numbering many famous methodists, including the future founder of the methodist church in the United States, amongst its converts. It was to play a great part in the town during the nineteenth century and still retains today much of its earlier vigour and influence. John Wesley could well feel that his personal efforts and sufferings had indeed achieved their proper compensation.

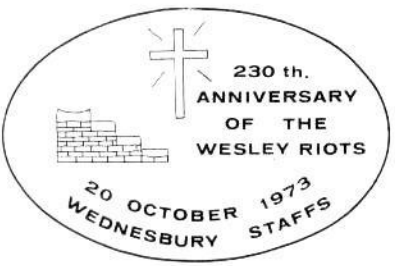


Illustration and handstamp used on first day cover

THE STORY OF A LARGE TIPTON FAMILY

—As recalled by Joan Parsons

MR. and Mrs. S. Tearne lived in Chapel Street, Tipton, when the photograph on the opposite page was taken in about 1912. This couple had 17 children, and at the time of the photograph, two had died in infancy and three were yet to be born. The family later moved to No. 23 Neptune Street, where Mrs. Tearne lived until the start of the '39-'45 war, when she went to live with a daughter at Coseley. Mr. Tearne died in 1931 and his wife in about 1955.

The children shown in the photograph are as follows:—

Boys, standing, L. to R.:—

Sidney: joined Territorials in 1914 and took part in the breaking up of the Hindenburg Line in 1918. Rejoined the army after the war and died in India, probably in early 1920s.

Charles: joined A.S.C. in 1914, and served in France with Field Ambulance. Married a Tipton girl. Kept a shop at corner of Bell Street and Chapel Street, and a club at Walsall. Was later a representative for a wines and spirits firm and moved to Birmingham, where he died.

Sam: (late father-in-law of the editor of "The Blackcountryman"), joined Worcestershire Regiment in 1916 and served in Ireland during The Troubles. At one time was part-manager of The Seven Stars, Princes End, Tipton, and manager of The Glassmakers' Arms, Amblecote. Worked at the National Projectile Factory, Dudley, until 1916, where he met his wife. After the war, worked at Harper & Bean, Dudley, and later at the Vono, Tipton for 17 years. He died at Kinver in 1971.

Reginald: (eldest of the 17 children). Joined 6th South Staffs Regiment in 1914 and served in France and Egypt. Lives today near Kidderminster, aged 81 years. Was well-known as manager of The Castle and Falcon, The Empire Vaults and The Duke of Wellington, all in Dudley, and as manager of Empire Theatre in Hall Street, Dudley. He was also a noted boxing M.C. and a judge of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier breed.

Fred (extreme right): joined the Labour Corps and transferred to the Education Staff. Became a teacher at Wolverhampton Street Schools, Dudley, and was one of the youngest headmasters in the country when, at the age of 33, he moved to Barton-on-Humber. Tragically, he died after only six months as head.

It is of ironic interest that all these sons returned safely from the war, but that in their absence two of their younger brothers were killed. Both are shown seated in the front of the photograph. Left: Wilfred, who was killed in Wright's yard, Tipton, when playing hide and seek and crate fell on his head (aged about 12 years), and . . . right: Alfred, who was electrocuted at work when using the toilet—it is understood that a live wire was in contact with the lavatory chain. He was aged 18 and had been working on 'munitions.

The Tearne Family (1912)

—Story on opposite page

Girl, standing, is Lena. She became a cook in domestic service and lives now at Polesworth, Warks.

Girls seated: L. to R.: Matilda (now living at Kinver), Winnie (living in Birmingham), Elizabeth—in rocking chair—also living in Birmingham. All went into domestic service.

The baby is William. He attended Wednesbury College of Art, and formed the Argosy Cycling Club in Tipton in the 1930s. As a result of this club, Elizabeth and two later boys, Harry and Victor, were to find marriage partners. William married a girl from the Isle of Man, worked for many years at Dunlop, Birmingham, and died in that city about six years ago.

Ena Massey will evoke older readers' memories in her account of—

HAPPY DAYS

MEMORIES of a Black Country woman in 'The Blackcountryman' Vol. 6, No. 2, revived many of my own.

In those days, we lived in Pound Terrace, which formed one side of The Pound in Toll End. A row of shops, kept by wonderful characters, formed the second side of the triangle, while the third was mainly private houses.

Growing up amongst much poverty, children regularly ran the streets clad only in a thin vest or ganzy with neither shoes nor socks. Nevertheless, the community was happy and smiles always greeted one.

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness," frequently quoted by mother, meant help in the house from all the family. Brasses to clean; knives rubbed on emery boards (no stainless steel); windows leathered and polished; quarried floors scrubbed with soft soap; blue brick yards swilled; outside lavatory scrubbed—seat and floor included; ducks and chickens fed; also odd errands completed; all done before we could 'play out.'

Twice a week, mother baked a peck of flour, and we carried the loaves to grandma's baking ovens. How we loved our home baked bread, especially the batch-cakes, split open whilst hot, a nut of butter added, and eaten, with melted butter running down chins and fingers!

Being the eldest child, and the first grandchild, I was thoroughly spoiled. Many treats and titbits came my way that the other children never knew about. Fortunate, too, in having a minder; I loved her dearly. Frances was like an auntie and looked after me while mother tended the younger children and babies.

Before I was five, she taught me the first steps in knitting and crochet. Dad often worked late, so mother allowed me to come quietly downstairs when the others were asleep. We made purses and collars of pretty coloured tiny beads, also shelf edging and anti-macassars in macrame string.

Now, back to the dear old 'Pound!" Each of the three corners of the triangle was graced by a small railed garden. We loved to sit on the low wall facing the shops.

This row of shops, each a perfect gem, formed the base of the triangle. Old Lady Morton kept the shop to the right of Wesley Place. As we pushed open the door, the swinging bell overhead tinkled loudly. Our choosing of sweets for our "Sad'y halfpenny" was very leisurely. Port wine toffees? Kali Bags? Liquorice Strips? or Brandy Balls?—the latter were my favourite being sticky and long lasting. Mrs. Morton, a dear old soul, often sold Mum 'a pennorth o' vinegar' in a cup, or 'two pennorth of jam or pickles' in a basin.

On the opposite side of the opening, a veritable 'Aladdin's cave' was kept by Mrs. Duffield. Dressed usually in a black skirt and white blouse, she was ready to fit us out for "Sunday School Anniversaries," or to sell a packet of pins. Everything for men, women, children and babies formed the largest part of her stock of wearing apparel. Her window displayed as many articles as possible, and the shelves inside stacked ceiling high with boxes of many sizes, held other goods. Lines across the shop were hung with pinny's; bloomers; drawers; underskirts; blouses with neck boring; vests of wool or cotton; long sleeved, high necked night-gowns in flannelette or cotton; voluminous night shirts; and long woollen stockings.

Amongst the smaller items sold were packets of pins and needles; small balls of rainbow wool; cottons; darning wools; black and white elastic of varying widths and steel thimbles. Our eyes were glued to her window when she displayed rows and rows of shiny, glass beads!

Next, Mrs. Beauchamp in her green-grocery shop, sold high class fruit and vegetables and prices were reasonable. In season, we loved the small, sweet, juicy blood oranges, always cheap—about 20 for one shilling (old money). Mrs. Beauchamp's son, Joe, came round daily with his horse and cart selling fruit, vegetables and rabbits. A plump rabbit for 9 pence (old money), with plenty of vegetables and pearl barley made us a delicious stew or pie. How well I remember Joe's cry, "Skin a rabbit for nine pence!" Mrs. Beauchamp was a grand person, loved by us all.

Clarke's fish shop came next. Almost every local family patronised this shop, fresh and fried fish being sold. One old penny bought a large newspaper-wrapped package of chips, liberally sprinkled with salt and vinegar. A tuppenny piece and pennorth o' chips made a good meal. Peas, soft and mushy, could be bought if desired as an extra.

Good Friday was a special day, when fish was a "must!" It paid to be early to get a sweet, succulent middle cut of hake. Pure dripping was used for frying in open pans heated by coal fires.

A little farther along the row, Mr. Hind's 'High Class Grocers' supplied most of the week's groceries. Tea, from tall painted cannisters, was mixed to your liking; Danish butter, a lovely delicate

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pinky shade, was cut from the tub; patted, shaped and patterned—delicious to eat; sharp to the tongue; cheese was cut with a wire from the whole; broken biscuits of many varieties were sold by the pound; flour measured and weighed from miller's sacks; lump sugar packed in pink or blue dunce's hat bags; and the biscuit stand, with rows of glass fronted tins set at an angle always attracted us. All through world war one when we were so severely rationed, Mr. Hinds looked after his customers.

Just around the corner lived Mrs. Hawkes, a dear comfortable soul. Always ready to laugh and joke, she would oblige in times of trouble or in emergency. A quick wash under the cold tap, a clean apron, and she was ready, whether sickness, a day's housework, a day's washing which was a terrific job for our family of six, maiding with the "dolly," boiling in the copper (stoked from outside, up the yard); mangling, using the old fashioned cast iron mangle with huge wooden rollers turned by a hand wheel, arms aching! and, oh, the ironing with so many starched garments! When mother was "confined" (the only word children heard when a new baby was due), Mrs. Hawkes helped with the family with grandma as supervisor.

Neighbours were wonderful. In times of distress there was always someone to turn to—a cup of tea with a chat was a 'must' in every house. As the kettle was ready on the hob, a quick boil up over the glowing fire and tea was ready. Kindness surrounded us and the sun seemed to shine all through summer.

At the corner of the lane, Mr. Ben Aston had his butcher's shop. Spotlessly clean, with fresh sawdust on the floor daily, his meat, of the finest quality, was tender and succulent. Joints were asked for by name and cut from the carcases hanging from huge hooks.

Just along the Terrace lived Mrs. Winfield, the mother-in-law, I believe, of Mr. Jim Partridge, an old Tipton Harrier. To her, we often ran, pouring out our troubles and to have her deal with our cuts and bruises.

The third side of the triangle consisted mainly of private houses with the "Old Crown" at the bottom end. I am vexed that I cannot mention all the people living there, but only a few. Mrs. Shuker had her little general shop, Wooldridges, two families of Jones and Mr. Ben Blewitt, a famous bricklayer were there. I think Mr. Blewitt is still living in the same house, but now must be getting on in years.

Time flies by! I wonder how many of our friends and neighbours are left?

Those really were the days!

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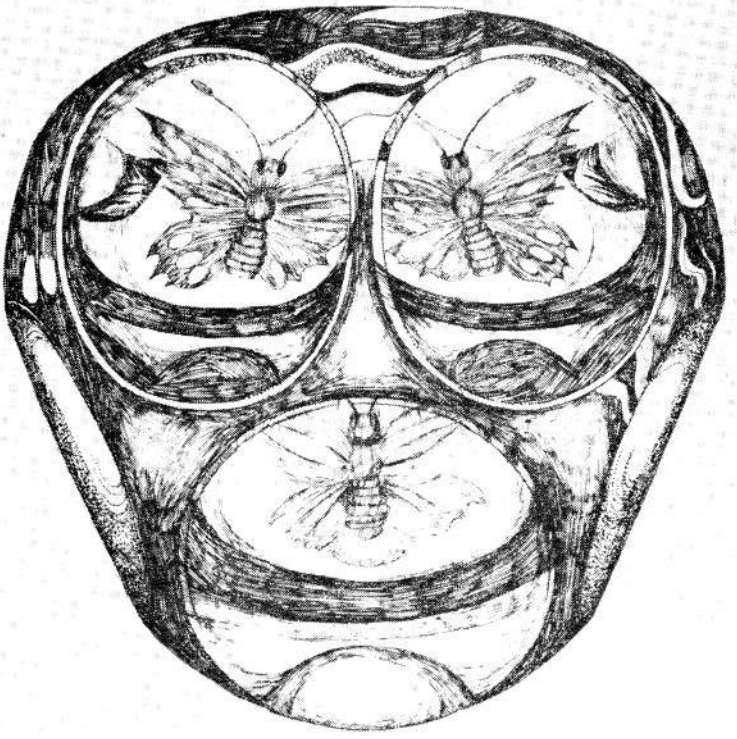


Webb Corbett have introduced a range of paperweights, designed by David Smith, each hand formed, and cut in full lead clear crystal. The half globe is then cased with an overlay of coloured crystal, dark blue, moss green, pale lemon yellow, amethyst, deep purple or turquoise. Windows are then cut by grinding and polishing through the colour on the top and sides to expose the clear crystal beneath. Either six large hollows or many smaller hollows are cut.

The base of each weight is decorated, either with a hand cut star, or one of a series of engravings—including, a flower, a butterfly, and a spider in her web.

WEST BROM'S LAST RESORT AGAINST THE KAISER

by J. ROBERT WILLIAMS

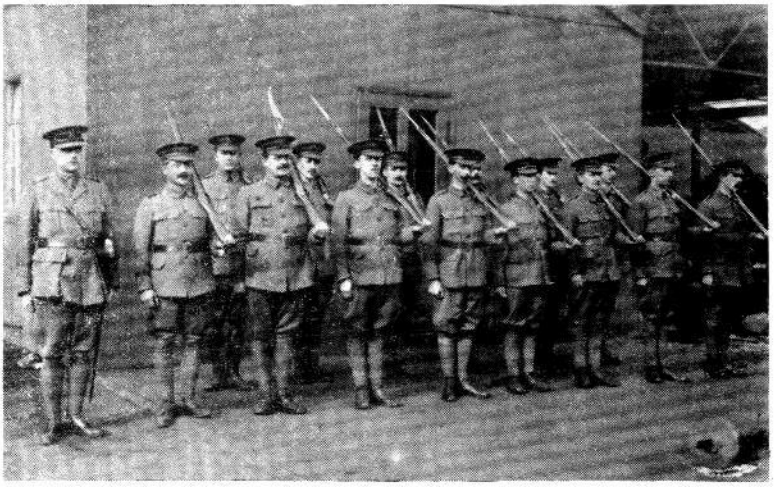
THE upsurge of patriotic feeling on the outbreak of war in 1914, caused many individuals throughout Britain to join together in volunteer units. These 'volunteers' were the 'Great War's' equivalent of the Home Guard. A Volunteer Rifle Corps was inaugurated at Wolverhampton on 7 September, 1914, and West Bromwich soon followed suit.

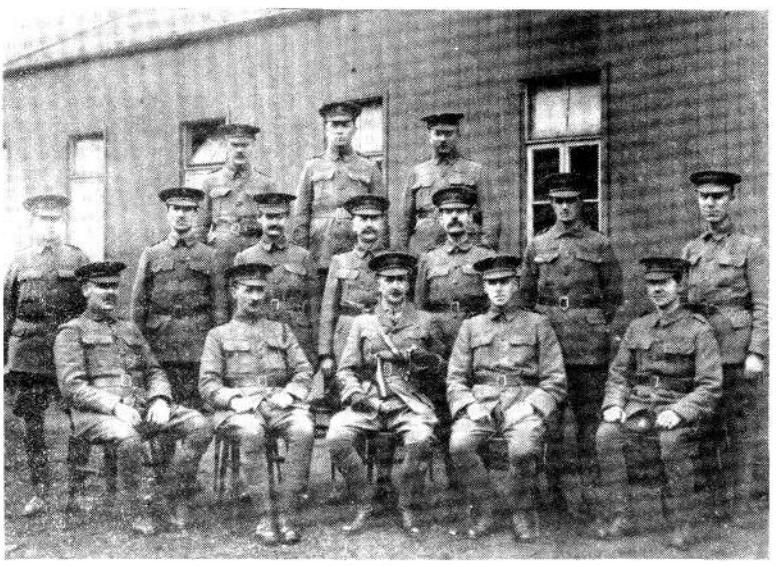
The Volunteer Corps were at first frowned upon by Whitehall, who feared their formation would interfere with recruitment for the regular army. However, upon certain stringent conditions, a measure of approval was later granted. The individual units were allowed to have a uniformity of dress "provided that the dress (was) distinguishable from that of regular and territorial units".

A green-grey uniform was generally adopted by the volunteers, instead of the normal khaki, and cuff rank rings replaced officers' pips and n.c.o.s' stripes. The officer in the top photograph has the cuff rank distinctions of a Platoon Comander and the Officer in the lower, those of a Company Commander. In the lower picture, the n.c.o. on the left of the officer has the two rank rings of a Section Commander (ranking as sergeant) and the n.c.o. on the right, the single ring of a Section Commander (ranking as corporal).

The cap badge of the West Bromwich Volunteer Rifle Corps was based on that of the South Staffordshire Regiment and comprised a crowned Stafford Knot in white metal. It is interesting to note that the other ranks in the first picture are armed with single shot Martini-Enfield rifles, of the same pattern, except for the calibre and rifling of the barrel, as the weapon used in the Zulu War.

The West Bromwich Volunteer Rifle Corps became a company of the 3rd Bn., Staffordshire Volunteer Regiment in 1916, which in turn became a volunteer battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment in 1918, only to be disbanded in 1919.





The West Bromwich Volunteer Rifle Corps at Handsworth Carriage Works, May, 1916.

Photographs reproduced by kind permission of the Regimental Museum of the Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's), at Lichfield.

N.B.—Can any reader identify these men?

West Bromwich Gun Trade (19th Century)

by Geoff. Stevens

BIRMINGHAM has been a centre of gun manufacture since the middle of the 17th century. Although the early gunsmiths in the area probably made the entire weapons unaided, specialisation was inevitable with the diverse skills required. The manufacture of the gunlock was probably the first branch of the trade to break away. Large numbers of these locks were required for the conversion of the military matchlocks that were in use during the Civil War period. Although this area of manufacture was established in Birmingham up to the end of the 19th century, it migrated rapidly to the Black Country.

Gunlock makers are mentioned in the parish registers of Wednesbury in 1705 and 1707, and by the 1820s, no less than 400 were engaged at Wednesbury and 600 at Darlaston.[1] Due to the skill required in welding the spiral seams of the gunbarrels, this operation also became a separate industry, during the 18th century.[2]

The manufacturing processes used in gun-barrel production are interesting. Prior to about 1830, the stub twist method was practised. The stubs of horseshoe nails, discarded by blacksmiths, were used. Being originally of the best wrought iron, these pieces of metal had been refined and the grain consolidated by the continuous hammering on the roads. The nails were packed on end in a hoop of six to seven inches and the whole welded into a solid lump. This was then drawn down between rolls to a skelp, one inch across and a quarter of an inch thick. The skelp was twisted around a mandrel to form an helix. Using, in most cases, three skelps, the tube thus formed was welded at white heat. Light blows were struck at the end of the tube, during this operation, in order to close the joints.

After 1830, the Damascus skelp gradually displaced the stub twist. This method, introduced by the Dublin gunmaker Rigby in 1818, used thin strips of wrought iron and carbon steel. These materials were welded in a compound sandwich to form a bar of, usually, $\frac{3}{8}$ inch square. One end of the bar was placed in a clamp and the other made fast to a hand-rotated spindle, thus giving a helical twist to the metal. A pair of tongs was used to arrest local distortion. Two twisted bars, one with a right hand and the other left hand twist, were forged square (separately) and then welded side by side. From the skelp formed in this manner, the barrel would be made. After winding on a mandrel, the helical seam was "jumped up" endwise using a small hammer: it was then welded in the fire.[2]

The story of the gun-trade in the Black Country during the 19th century is one of decline. In West Bromwich, as in the rest of the

area, the industry was essentially a domestic one and was run on similar lines to the nail trade. Due to this domestic trend in production, trade directories were likely to list only the larger concerns, and the merchants or "foggers." Thus, a true picture of the extent of gun-manufacture cannot be gleaned from this source. Nevertheless, some idea is given by these lists.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars had given rise to a great boom in the industry from 1793 to 1815. Following this period, the government (in 1818) promised three years work to the local gun trade.[3] It was at this time of plenty that 'White' listed 31 names in connection with the trade at West Bromwich, and 28 and 23 for Wednesbury and Darlaston, respectively. In addition, West Bromwich also had two bayonet manufacturers.[4] In 1781, a patent was taken out for a bayonet to be attached to pistols. William Grice of Birmingham petitioned against this, however, claiming that it was merely a variation of his own spring bayonet as used on blunderbusses, and made by him since November 1779.[2]

By 1830,[5] the manufacturers listed at West Bromwich had fallen to fifteen, and to fourteen by 1834,[6] when Wednesbury had 54 and Darlaston 43 establishments included. After Waterloo, the government had ceased to place orders for arms and, except for an upsurge during the Burmese War (1824-26), trade fluctuated, mainly in decline. From 1838 to 1849, new government orders for percussion guns gave a boost to the trade.[3] This, and orders from the East India Company for entirely new percussion locks (1840-42) helped increase the number of manufacturers in West Bromwich to 21.[7] In addition there were three bayonet makers. During this period, the increased demand for military weapons caused the manufacturers to ignore the less profitable sporting gun trade and by 1850, Belgium had taken over this market.[3]

By 1849, the government had become aware of the advantage of the French invention of barrel rifling and the "Enfield Pattern" of rifled barrel was introduced in England. The manufacture of gunlocks for this model brought increased trade to the lock forgers and filers of the Black Country from 1850-60.[3] Despite this, the number of manufacturers in West Bromwich fell to 14, by 1855.[8] At this time, Wednesbury had 42. A commission was set up to investigate the use of machines, and it visited the New York Exhibition of 1853, inspecting plant at Springfield during its stay. Its findings induced the government to extend the Enfield arms factory. By 1858, 2,000 rifles were being produced weekly.[2]

Until 1864, both factions of the American Civil War were supplied with arms, thereafter, gun manufacture declined.[2] In 1861, the number of concerns in West Bromwich had fallen to eight, including two bayonet makers.[9] 1865 saw a further drop to five, plus one bayonet manufacturer.[10]

In 1867, the French Government were anxious to adopt the Prussian-style needle gun and gave large orders to three British firms. Orders for 25,000 weapons fell to Webley, and Tipping and Lawden,

both of Birmingham. The whole of the 25,000 breech mechanisms required were provided by Spittle Brothers of Wednesbury. The gun lock filers of Wednesbury and Darlaston thus received a boost to their quotas.[3] In 1869, West Bromwich manufacturers remained at five, whilst there were thirty-seven in Wednesbury and sixty-one in Darlaston.[11]

A slight rise to eight, in 1872,[12] and a fall back to five manufacturers in 1876,[13] was the pattern at West Bromwich, followed by four (1888),[14] three (1892),[15] and one (1900)[16]. By 1904, the gun trade in the town can be said to have finished. Darlaston in 1889 exported 100,000 flint locks to Africa, each being filed for sixpence ($2\frac{1}{2}$ new pence), whereas the very same job had been raised from tenpence (4 new pence) to two shillings and sixpence ($12\frac{1}{2}$ new pence) in 1824.[3]

BRANCHES OF THE TRADE IN WEST BROM.

In 1818, West Bromwich had 12 gun lock filers and five pistol filers and one concern that did both jobs. One of the filers also made wood screws. Of the three establishments making gun locks in their entirety, one also made screws.[4] Gun lock making was extremely hard work. The two limbs of the lock had to be forged by skilful smiths and filed and assembled by the lock filers.[2] The lock filer was the most indispensable member of the workforce, a five year apprenticeship being necessary.[3] By 1830, the great demand for locks caused many of the smaller parts to be made in dies under the Oliver.[2] There was one gun barrel maker in 1818 who was also a maltster.[4] Mine host at the "Three Tuns," Hill Top, made gun furniture (i.e. heel plate, trigger plate, trigger guard, ramrod pipes etc.). There were three saddle-pistol makers (one victualler at the "Box Iron," Hill Top) and a pocket pistol manufacturer. A pistol maker and gun-lock screw maufacturer, and a gunlock and pistol maker also worked in the town.[4]

Some of the directories fail to distinguish the various trade groups, and in 1834, only the bayonet makers get a separate notice. It is interesting to note that George Salters included musquet (sic) barrels amongst their products at this period.[6]

In 1855, the town had four gun filers (two of whom were beer retailers also), six pistol filers (one a china dealer in addition), and four men that did both jobs. One firm made gunlocks and one gun furniture. There were two gun implement makers, one of which made machine screws as well. Of the four pistol makers, one manufactured guns also. One of the three bayonet makers was "Manufacturer to the Hon. Boards of Ordnance and the East India Company." He made mule and horse shoes and railway bolts and nuts in addition.[8]

In 1861 there was only one gunlock maker and no one engaged as lock filer only. A gun implement manufacturer also made bits, and three pistol makers, and one gun maker, were still in production. Two firms were making bayonets.[9]

By 1865, the lone gunlock maker had ceased production, but three pistol makers still worked, two of them making guns also. One of the pistol makers of 1861 had become a hosier. There was one bayonet

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maker.[10] 1872 saw the return of a pistol filer, a gun filer and a gun lock maker, perhaps due to the orders received by the Spittle Brothers of Wednesbury. Of the three pistol makers, one was also an ironmonger. A firm made gun swivels and another gun furniture. Gun iron and steel was manufactured by George and William Adams of Church Lane. High quality metals were required for gun making and it is interesting to note that Johnsons Iron and Steel Co. Ltd. had a muzzle loading firearm for their trademark. A relief of this emblem was emblazoned on the wall of the office to represent the standard of excellence supplied. It was said to date from 1838, but was cemented over in 1967, when the firm was taken over by F. H. Lloyds.

By 1876, the gun lock maker had ceased to work and the lock filer was a music seller. One of the pistol makers had become a milliner and haberdasher.[13]

Representatives of the trade in 1888 were one pistol maker, a gun-swivel maker, a gun furniture maker and G. and W. Adams, gun iron and steel producers.[14] By 1892, the last named ceased to be listed.[15] The executors of the late James Grice, gun furniture manufacturers, were still trading at Overend Street in 1900.[16] They were the last representatives of the trade.

DISTRIBUTION

The Hill Top area was the major region of the gun trade in West Bromwich during the early 19th century. In 1818, although there were gun-lock filers in Spon Lane and Brat Street (later Bratt Street) and a saddle-pistol manufacturer in New Street, by far the majority of the workers were in the Hill Top-Holloway Bank area. Hill Top retained its position in 1830, but one or two concerns were evident in the region of the Heath (the present town centre). By 1834, there were a number of firms scattered widely throughout the town, from Great Bridge to Bull Street and Churchfield, but Hill Top still had the greatest concentration.

1845 saw the Mare's (Mayers) Green/Reform Street district challenging Hill Top-Holloway Bank, and trade had also grown up at Sandwell Road and nearby Dartmouth Street. St. Michael Street also showed some activity in pistol making and filing. By 1855, Hill Top was represented by one name only, and the industry scattered wide. The majority of firms were by now well distributed in streets leading from the High Street, except for a small concentration at Churchfield-Newton Street. From then on, with the growth of the town and the decline of the gun industry locally, it is impossible to divide the firms into geographical groupings.

PROMINENT GUN-TRADE FAMILIES

Joseph Belcher arrived in West Bromwich, from Bristol, in the 1790s, along with five brothers. At 6ft. 1in. he was the shortest of the six, and the only one not working in the gun industry. Joseph was a pit-sawyer and used six and seven foot long saws cutting trees and doing

jobs at boat docks in the area. The other five brothers were gun lock filers and worked in a little shop at the rear of the "Hen and Chickens," in Hawkes Lane, Hill Top.[17] Thomas Belcher was a pistol filer in 1818[4] and James Belcher a pistol filer of Hill Top in 1845.[7]

White lists Elizabeth Sutton as a lock filer (pistols) near New Street in 1818.[4] It is not until 1845, when Samuel is a pistol maker and Thomas a pistol filer and china dealer, that the Sutton name appears again.[7] By 1865, of the two St. Michael Street gunsmiths, only Thomas remained, Samuel having become a hosier.[10]

The Siddons of Hill Top would require a chapter to themselves to do their industrial endeavours full justice, but a few lines will suffice concerning their involvement in the gun trade. In 1818, John Siddon was victualler of the 'Box Iron' Inn at Hill Top, and Jesse and Luke Siddon were manufacturers of guns, pistols and cast-iron tinned kitchen furniture, also at Hill Top.[4] The Siddons were to become big names in the cast-iron holloware trade.

A gun furniture manufacturer of Mount Pleasant, one Peter Grice, is recorded in 1818.[4] By 1834,[6] his address is given as the Heath and in 1845[7] as Lombard Street. Robert Grice, gunlock maker, also appears in 1818 and 1830.[5] By 1834, the most prominent of the Grices, James, is trading as a gun implement and machine screw manufacturer (as which he is listed in 1845). Reference is made, in 1855,[8] to Grice and Weston of the Overend Works and again in 1869,[11] as gun furniture manufacturers of Overend Works, Overend Street. As James Grice worked in Bull Street in 1845 (i.e. adjacent to Overend Street) it can

SOCIETY MEMBER PENS PRIZE-FIGHT LIBRARY

Tom Langley, whose book "The Tipton Slasher" was published in 1970 by The Black Country Society and sold 5,000 copies before going out of print, has since written no less than 32 books on famous prize fighters, mostly champions, from 1719 to 1890.

Each volume deals with a specific character and the Blackcountry's Tom Hickman (the Gas Man) and the Tipton Slasher are included in the series. The latter contains new material and illustrations.

Published by Vance Harvey, Horsefair Street, Leicester at £1.25 per copy. First three titles due in February.

Tom Langley was born in 1907 in Chasetown, and was educated at King Edward VI school in Lichfield where he became school boxing champion. At the age of 17, he enlisted in the Grenadier Guards. He served in the Birmingham City Police for 25 years and retired in 1952 as a sergeant.

be assumed that he had gone into partnership. If so, it would seem that the partnership was dissolved by 1876. After being listed as military gun furniture makers and stampers of agricultural implements in 1872,[12] the partnership does not appear again. During the 1880s,[18] the executors of James Grice produced gun furniture at Overend Street and were last mentioned as trading in 1900.[16]

Joseph Robinson was making pistols at Hill Top in 1818[4] and he, or someone of the same name, was still making pistols in 1872,[12] when he was an ironmonger and Highland pistol manufacturer. There are many entries referring to him in directories between these dates. Edward, Joseph and Philomen Robinson, all of Hill Top, are listed in 1830.[5] Philomen also occurs in 1834[6] in connection with the trade and is a pistol filer in 1845.[7] Edward Robinson kept a diary between 1838 and 1844, which reveals much of his life.[19] He lived at 81 Hill Top, and had a small gunsmiths shop which was run by his son, Leonard. It was still there in 1900. Edward was one of the founders of Ebenezer Church in Old Meeting Street and treasurer of several collection societies for the building of new Non-Conformist chapels. As well as being a leader of the local liberals, he was a paid letter writer for the Hill Top district, reading people's mail for them and writing their replies. In 1841, he was appointed enumerator and entrusted to take the count of people in the area between Holloway tollgate and a part of the old field. He found 322 males and 278 females in 110 houses.

John Tonks was a saddle pistol manufacturer, of Misers Row in 1818,[4] and also 1830.[5] By 1834, his address is given as Hill Top.[6] William Tonks worked as a pistol filer at the Heath in 1830, at Duke Street in 1834, and Dartmouth Street by 1845.[7] In the 1880s, Edward Tonks made guns and pistols at 7 High Street.[18]

In the 1840s, a new factory for producing guns was erected in Newton Street. The Cashmores, Paul, Edwin and Daniel—the three sons of James, followed their father into the gun trade. James Cashmore had a shop in Virgins End, now Reform Street, and the family factory was in Parsonage Street. James is mentioned as saddle pistol filer of Virgins End in 1829[20] and 1834,[6] and as a pistol maker of Virgins End and Churchfield in 1836.[21] Other Cashmores in the gun trade were Edward (pistol maker at the Heath in 1829,[20] Sandwell Road 1834.[6] and Victoria Street 1855[8]), another Edward (gun filer of Broad Street, 1845[7]), Jesse (gun and pistol filer, Walsall Street in 1845) and George (pistol maker, lived in Temple Street, worked in Sandwell Road, 1855, 1872[12]). The last named was a milliner and haberdasher on the High Street by 1876.[13]

It is the new factory, which stood on the site of the last four houses in Newton Street, and Paul Cashmore that brought fame to the family. The factory produced revolvers for the London and Provincial retailers which were inscribed "CASHMO" or sometimes Cashmore in full. These weapons were rifled and stocked in Birmingham. Paul Cashmore appears as a revolving-pistol maker in a directory of 1855,[8] and as a gun and pistol manufacturer (breech loader) in 1869.[11] A scrapbook, dated 1872,[22] describes him as a "maker of every description of breech

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In 1855, Paul (with Charles Pryse, of Pryse and Redman of Birmingham) had been joint patentee of a hinged ramrod used on his own revolvers, as supplied to Long and Witton and Daw.[2] In the 1850s the Pryse pattern revolver was made at the factory and in the '60s and early '70s a dual system muzzle and breech loading revolver. The latter were of the breakdown pattern very similar to contemporary Webleys, with rebounding locks and single or two lever opening catches. All the Cashmores were bell ringers at the Old Church and an employee, John Carter, invented "Carter's Ringing Machine," which could ring 5,000 changes. The machine is now in the Science Museum, London. The Newton Street works eventually closed in 1894 and was demolished a year later. Paul's son, Frank, stayed at the factory, 40 Newton Street, until the end and then worked for Messrs. Osborne, gunmakers, Birmingham.

[1] History of Wednesbury, Ede.
[2] The Gun Trade of Birmingham, K. Dunham.
[3] Wednesbury Workshops, Hackwood.
[4] History of Staffordshire 1818, White.
[5] Directory of Staffordshire 1830, Pigot.
[6] Directory of Staffordshire 1834, White.
[7] Kelly's Directory 1845.
[8] Birmingham and S. Staffs. Directory, F. White and Co., 1855.
[9] Harrison, Harrod and Company's Directory of Staffordshire 1861.
[10] Jones' Directory of the Iron District 1864-65.
[11] Directory of Birmingham and the Black Country 1869, White.
[12] Kelly 1872.
[13] Post Office Directory of Birmingham 1876.
[14] Kelly 1888.
[15] Kelly 1892.
[16] Kelly 1900.
[17] Newspaper cuttings of 1943, in a scrapbook, West Bromwich Public Library.
[18] Hulley's Directory of the Hardware District 1879-90.
[19] Photocopy West Bromwich Public Library.
[20] Pigot and Company's Directory of Staffordshire 1828-29.
[21] Reeve's History and Topography of West Bromwich 1836.
[22] Scrapbook No. 2 West Bromwich Public Library.

The story of Paul Cashmore's Newton Street Factory owes much to scrapbooks in West Bromwich Library.

THE VISITORS

Wallflowers, wallflowers, growing up so high,
We are neighbour's children and we are sure to die.
Excepting Billy . . . and he's the eldest boy,
He can hop and he can skip, and he can turn the mangle quick.

THEN a young girl's voice called urgently, "Billy, it's your turn," and the children's rhyme game continued. But Billy had opened the old stable type door and gone into the house, slipping quietly into the inglenook beside the fireplace. Breaking the silence of the room he said abruptly, "Mother, I am hungry, can I . . . ";

"William," interrupted his mother in a quiet, cultured voice, "Don't you see, we have a visitor."

The visitor was short and solid, almost as broad as he was tall, looking like a gypsy, with a rugged swarthy face. Opposite, sat Billy's stepfather, a big man well over six feet and muscular with it. On the left sat Billy's mother, dignified, but very small, almost like a piece of Dresden china.

Billy and the visitor eyed one another up and down, then in a gravelly voice the man spoke, "Over here, lad. Let's have a look at you." Billy stepped gingerly forward.

As the visitor walked around Billy feeling his back and muscles, he spoke again. "Yes, the resemblance is there all right; the eyes, nose, shoulders. Yes, he's like the Slasher all right. You are right, Ben. Bit small, but then he could grow out of that."

The two men laughed, but the woman was on her feet. "No you don't, no son of mine will ever be a bruiser."

"Away you go and play," said Billy's stepfather.

Later that night, when Billy returned, they had another visitor; this time a younger man with the build of an athlete, a nose that was slightly askew, and high cheek bones. Billy thought he would be able to take care of himself. The three men sat and talked quietly for a while, then went outside; Billy was told to stay indoors. Curiously, he glanced through the drawn curtains. There was a lot of noise, and he could see a circle of men, with two men stripped to the waist, fighting. Soon, there was a cry of "Police," and the crowd scattered, the three men returning to the house. Billy could see the young man was covered in blood.

When he had been cleaned up, the ale was put back on the table; soon all was back to normal. Then, the first visitor spoke: "Just like old times, eh Ben?" Billy's stepfather did not answer.

THE BEARS

"Yes, certainly like old times," said the first visitor unabashed. "We have had our fun. Did ever

Ben tell you about the bears?" This time, the question was addressed to Billy's mother. "No," she answered, tight-lipped.

"Well, it was like this," went on the visitor without waiting for further reply. The local bobby was leaning over the parapet of the canal bridge and looking at the canal. When Ben passed by, he could not resist it, up went the bobby's legs and into the canal went the bobby. The bobby swore to get his revenge, but could not prove anything, although as he said, nobody but Ben would dare to do it.

About two weeks later, Ben was having a pint at the 'Crosswells' (with his monkey watching his beer), when in walks the bobby. "Ah, Ben," he says. "Could I have a word in private," and they walked to the door. Ben stepped outside, the bobby gave him a shove and locked the door on him, laughing fit to bust.

We all asked what the joke was and the bobby said a couple of performing bears had got out of control. He had sent Ben to sort them out, as the owner could do nothing with them. We rushed to the window, worried for poor Ben, and there he was. The two bears dancing happy as you please on the end of a rope.

The bobby paid for the drinks! "I tried to get my revenge," he said, "but I forgot Ben had a way with animals." His tale finished, the visitor started another. "Did Ben ever tell you about Mrs. Mac and the Ragstone?"

But that was all that Billy heard, the warmth of the fire was too much for him, he was fast asleep.

Billy never saw the visitors again.

W.E.C.

WHO'S THE SOFTEST ?

THERE were some strange faces this week in The Woden, Wednesbury; faces we saw only once every three or four weeks. And so, of course, the talk turned round to shift-work. 'The money's alright, but yo' know that ay everythin!' 'Ah notice the gaffers am full on this stuff abowt werkin' shifts, but yo' ask them ter werk nights an' yo soon gerra a sharp answer.' 'Yo' know, ode Bill down the road? 'Is wife tode 'im as if 'e day stop werkin shifts, 'er'd gerra proper 'usband! Soon sorted 'im out.' After the ribald comments following this had died down, Ken Nation mused philosophically.

'Yo' know, ah werk at Goodyears, an' it ay a bad job. We've gorra big plerce, all covered in, all lit up so yo doe know when it's night or day. But when I'm werkin' shifts, ah look owt. Yo' con see all on a suddin' the rots an' mice start strolling around, so ah know it must be nights. Then yo' see all on a suddin' the berds start chirpin'. So we know it's day time. They know when ter come owt We doe. Ah sometimes wonder: who's the softest!'

J.M.F.

THE FACE ON THE BLIND

A. H. Bryan Holden

THE strange happenings related here took place in the Autumn of 1916 in a nailmakers's cottage in Cradley Heath. John and Mary Robbins had moved into the place as a newly-married couple in 1856. They lived there for the rest of their lives raising a family of six sons and three daughters. John died in 1912; his widow four years later. This story records the dramatic last few minutes of her life.

It was a rainy afternoon in late November and twilight was fast closing in. In the small bedroom, Mary Robbins lay dying of pneumonia. She was in a deep coma, her breathing heavy and laborious. Charles, her youngest son, sat at her bedside, staring into the fire. Outside, the wind moaned in the trees; the more violent gusts blowing the smoke back down the chimney and into the room, causing more grey ashes to fall through the firebars. Charles rose from his chair and poked the embers into a blaze, which sent a stream of sparks up the chimney like a swarm of scarlet insects. He lit the big brass oil lamp, drew the blind and settled to his silent vigil.

Since the death of his father, Charles and his mother had lived alone. They saw and heard little of the rest of the family. Only Richard, the eldest son, who at sixteen had left home to join the Army, kept in touch. He had become C.S.M. in the Shropshire Light Infantry, a famous foot regiment of the day. The war had taken him away to France and many weeks had passed without news. This had upset his ailing mother, for Richard had always been her favourite.

Suddenly, Mary Robbins awoke and sat upright. Her shrivelled face was ashen and her pale blue eyes stared without seeing. "Charles, I've been dreaming of Richard. He was calling to me, but I couldn't reach him." Her voice was a hoarse whisper. She fell back against the pillows.

"It's nothing, mother," comforted Charles. "Richard's all right. He knows how to look after himself. Remember how you worried when he was away fighting the Boers."

"If only it hadn't seemed so real," persisted his mother. "He was lying in the mud. I could see his face quite plainly. He was in great pain."

Charles put his arms around her thin shoulders.

"Is there anything I can get you, mother?" Her eyelids flickered and she tried to moisten her lips. Her words were barely audible. She did not answer his question.

"He promised . . . he promised to come and see me . . . he said he would come soon."

She closed her eyes again. Charles reached for the tablets on the dresser and pouring a glass of water from the decanter, he pushed one between her lips. He put down the glass; as he did so, the flame of the

lamp diminished and with a last despairing flutter went out. For a few seconds, Charles was frightened. But the lamp had only run out of oil and the wick needed trimming.

He carried the lamp into the circle of light around the fire, removed the glass funnel and cut the wick. He was about to fetch the oil when he noticed his mother was awake again, staring at the window blind. The strength had returned to her voice.

"Richard!" she exclaimed. "You've come to me, my son."

Charles followed her gaze. At first he could see nothing unusual, but then a phosphorescent glow spread across the blind. In the centre, he could discern a face. It was Richard's. He looked sad and wearied with sunken eyes; the skin drawn tight over his cheekbones. The firelight flickered and a wan smile appeared on the face of the apparition, which then vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

Mary Robbins' excited voice broke the stillness. "It was Richard!" she cried. "My son . . . . he come . . . ."

She sank back and her breathing became a whisper.

Charles started forward and grasped her wrist, feeling for her pulse. As he did so, a khaki greatcoat of Richard's which was used as a bedspread slid to the floor. Charles picked it up. It was heavy with mud and water. A tingling sensation ran through Charles. He fumbled in his pockets for a box of matches and in the spluttering yellow light he saw the jagged tear in the coat and the bloodstains.

Keeping his eyes on the blind, he again felt for his mother's pulse. She was dead.

This story was related to the writer by 'Charles'—now in his 88th year. Only thinly does fiction overlap fact.

A Little Black Country Colliery

by

A. E. Price

SOME time near the end of the First World War, there was an urgent need for coal and it was decided therefore to re-open a small mine which was situated at Coombs Wood, Blackheath. The mine, an adit sloping steeply down into the hillside, lay near a footpath which ran along the North-eastern boundary of Stewarts and Lloyds tubeworks. The owner of the mine was a Mr. Parkes of Blackheath, a small company was formed to work it, and my father was appointed secretary to the company.

The tunnel was initially about 70 yards long, sloping at an angle of about 45 degrees. A line of

tram rails was laid down it and winding gear installed on the surface. This consisted of a vertical boiler, about 4ft. in diameter and 10ft. high, hand fed with slack. The winding gear was a two-cylinder steam engine driving a rope drum about 4ft. in diameter. About a dozen men were engaged on the job, the head man being named Parsons. The engine and boiler were driven and fired by a certain Jimmy Jackson.

As a teenage schoolboy, I was sometimes given the job on a Saturday morning, of seeing to the payment of wages. I was given a cheque which I cashed at Barclay's Bank, Blackheath, opposite the old 'Royal Oak' inn, and I then went on my bicycle, down Gorsty Hill, turning left past the schools, along the undulating path to the pit. There I handed the money to the foreman, who counted it, and my official duties then ended.

To my great joy and pride, however, I was then allowed, by the kindly Jimmy Jackson, to drive the winding engine hauling up loads of spoil. The golden rule in winding was to be certain that all four wheels of the truck were on the level before shutting off steam. Otherwise, the truck would start to run back down the slope. Lowering a truck, and often several men, was done by putting the engine in neutral gear and letting the truck descend by gravity. The speed of descent was controlled by a pedal-operated brake on the winding drum. This often seemed alarmingly high to me and I never dared to attempt that operation.

As the length of the adit increased, some means of ventilation was found to be necessary. This was done by a small steam-driven fan pumping air down the pit through a sheet-iron duct called a "Trowing." As the pit became deeper, working it got more difficult, and although some saleable coal was won, not enough could be got to make the pit a paying proposition. I have no knowledge of when the pit was closed but I think it was only a year or so after the re-opening.

Some years ago I visited the spot hoping to find something left that was recognisable, but without success. There was some brickwork which appeared to have formed the entrance of an air-raid shelter. Could this have been the use to which the old tunnel had been put? It certainly would have made a really deep shelter.

Perhaps some reader may remember this little project and may be able to supply more facts than I have been able to recollect.

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CARNIVAL DAY

by

Rowena O. Brookhouse

"WELL 'er cor be 'The Forces' Sweetheart,' anyroad."

"Naw—that's bin dun afore."

My mum sighed wearily while Mrs. Smith gave me a look of grim determination. I was a problem, but she was not going to be beaten. "P'raps ower Rog and 'er cud goo together t'be summat," she mused.

I sat on the floor and began to play with the spills while my mother and Mrs. Smith, the local seamstress and general organiser, discussed my role in the imminent carnival fancy dress parade. The red spills would make a good house and perhaps the green ones could be a garden. I heard my mother's voice. "'Ow about the Bisto kids? We'm not short on holey stockin's."

"That wuz dun at Blocksidge two 'ear agoo."

Mrs. Smith and Bloxwich carnival were of the same vintage, both starting their life at the turn of the century. As the years passed, they grew closer together until that carnival and others in the area were the main interest in her life. She followed the carnivals as a punter follows races. Details of the classics were yearly filed away in her mind. "Ony road on, Rog'd better be Sifta Sam. If they goo together as summat, and one's off the 'ooks and cor be theer, it's spoiled fer thuther un."

Mrs. Smith drew her breath in concentration Unrestricted by a single tooth, her lips disappeared inside her mouth with the force of suction. I watched with interest, and tried without success to imitate this feat. I returned to my spills and made a family. A six year-old girl could offer no advice. Carnivals were for grown-ups, not children. We were merely marionettes, our dress and actions decided by parents and friends.

The actual carnival day was, of course, enjoyable. To march, resplendent among a crowd of colourful characters was thrilling. It was better still to be borne along on the back of a decorated lorry. The sun poured down, its warmth, like hot syrup, filling the town. Banks of heads towered above us bordering the route. We marched, basking in the sunshine and adulation of the crowd. Mums simpered and sweated, dads called and waved, babies cried, everyone stared. They had all come for "three pennoth o' gawp."

"Doh they look lovely?"

"Ar. Bostin' ay they?"

"Theer's ower Linda. Look, theer!"

"I s'l gi' yer the back o' me 'ond if yo doh stop blartin!"

"Oo cum fust?"

"Chuck these coppers on that'n."

"What's 'er got up as?"

"Yoh'n a noggin yed, cor yoh see 'er's a suck?"

Last year, as "Superstition," I had walked next to a girl dressed as a sweet. The year before, in the frills and black stockings of a can-can girl, I had followed a child disguised as a lump of coal. And this year . . . . . ?

Mum and Mrs. Smith were chatting eagerly. They must have thought of something.

"Ar thats right and if yo' con get 'old on some blue stuff, that 'ud do fer . . . . "

Mr. Spill was walking home from work one day.

"That's settled then. It'll be a good'n this 'ear. And ower Rog . . . "

He was going home to his wife, Mrs. Spill and their little baby boy. Suddenly, disaster struck the household. My mother's hand scooped up the spills and deposited them back in their tin.

"Come on then. Let's goo and tell yer dad what yo'm gooin' t'be. Wo' 'e be surprised when 'e 'ears!"

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Post Boxes made in the Midlands

HAROLD PARSONS

TOWARDS the end of last year, the Post Office issued to prospective direct mail customers a colour wall-chart showing roadside post boxes in use since the first was introduced by Anthony Trollope in the Channel Islands in 1852-53.

Of the 17 boxes illustrated, all are painted in the familiar red except two, and these are illustrated here—alas, in black and white! That on the left, bearing the letters VR, is a highly decorative box, painted gold, introduced to London and major cities in 1857. Designed by the Department of Science and Art, it was hand cast by Smith and Hawkes of Birmingham.

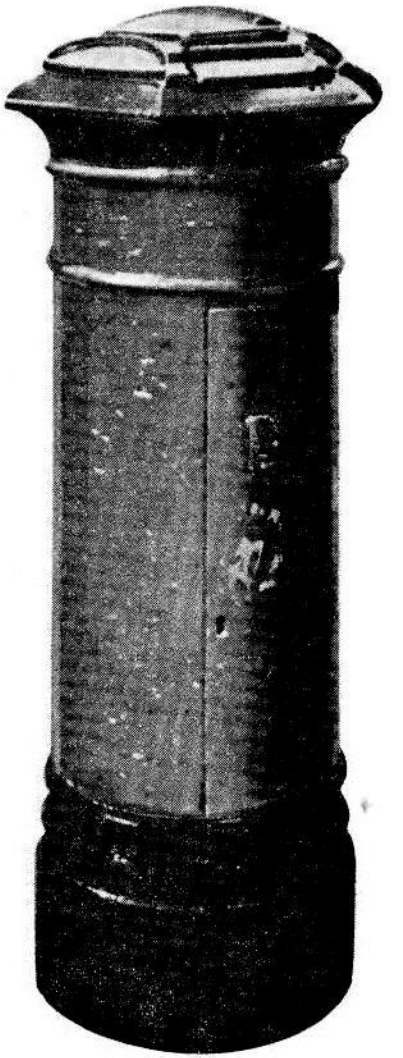
The post box on the right, painted green, is an economy version of the previous design, intended for country use and cast by Cochrane and Company of Dudley—hence our interest in reproducing it. Two survivors, painted green with gold lettering, still serve Cork in the Irish Republic.

Is it possible that interested parties could secure one of them for the Black Country Museum? It would be especially attractive, were it functional and with a descriptive plaque, placed at the museum entrance.

Although the earliest, they were not the only post boxes to be made at Cochrane's. Britain's first National standard pillar box, introduced in 1859, was cast there, as also were boxes of a hexagonal design, which replaced the former in 1866. They remained standard issue until 1879. However, the chart gives the firm's name at this time as Cochrane, **Grove** and Company. Information on the chart is drawn from a book entitled 'The Letter Box' by Jean Young Farrugia, of the P.O., and published by Centaur Press Ltd.

What of Cochrane's? Dudley Public Libraries Transcript—'Dudley and the Black Country 1760-1860', by V. L. Davies and H. Hyde, tells us that the Woodside Ironworks, later taken over by A. B. Cochrane, were opened in 1841 and became a firm of international standing, employing over 1,000 men. It was forced out of business during the difficult years after world war one.

Does any reader know where 'Grove' came into the picture?



MORE REMINISCENCES OF WALSALL HISTORY

by

Henry E. Green

"I HAVE a pass for myself and my man from Captain Stone, Governor of Stafford." These words spoken by a certain Jane Lane of Bentley, and the scrap of paper which she held forth to the Roundhead trooper who demanded to know where she and her groom were going, saved the life of King Charles II, and aided his escape from England in the year 1651. The Roundhead trooper is nameless, he is dead and forgotten, but the name of Jane Lane will be remembered for ever in history as the lady who saved a King and a crown.*

The other person mentioned, Captain Stone of Stafford, also achieved certain notoriety by the part he played in the Civil War, and certainly he unwittingly aided and abetted the escape of Charles II. Although we have certain facts about this gentleman, it is necessary to use a little imagination to find out what he really was. There is little doubt that he took part in the Civil War for his own gain. He appeared to be an adventurous mercenary, probably fired by what he saw and heard of other person's gains, both as regards their own financial position and also the rank that they attained as the war progressed. He was not alone in this respect; a fellow Walsallian, Colonel 'Tinker' Fox had already raised and equipped a troop of horses at his own expense, and it was probably the tales he told that fired 'Captain' Stone with enthusiasm and made him do likewise.

The Stone family were a very old established Walsall family, first mentioned in 1556, when the name of John Stone occurs in connection with a grant of land. The same John Stone was also Mayor of Walsall in 1571; he also had a son, John, who in 1570 was described as a 'carrier,' and was granted the lease of "four days earth" of arable land in the common field called 'Wyndmill' field, on the death of his father in 1571. In 1584, this John Stone was also Mayor of Walsall, then being described as a 'yeoman' and living on 'the Hill."

The name Henry Stone is first mentioned in 1602, and he also held the office of Mayor in 1604.

The Stone family would appear to have been Walsall's first estate agents, for there are numerous mentions of transactions by them regarding the sale and renting of land and property in and around Walsall.

In 1629, Henry Stone, Mayor of Walsall, was involved in an action brought against him by Edward Leigh of Rushall, for wrongful imprisonment when the latter was charged with unlawfully playing

bowls at Bloxwich.

The Henry Stone with whom we are at present concerned, appears to have been somewhat of a mystery man, reputed to have come to Walsall from Plymouth. He has been described as a 'merchant,' but there is no proof of this. Whoever he was, there is no doubt that he saw the outbreak of the Civil War as an opportunity to line his own pockets, and did not hesitate to spend money on the raising and equipping of a troop of mounted soldiers, or more exactly, a troop of mercenaries.

He must have had some influence in the county, for in May 1644 he was summoned by the Earl of Denbigh to a council to discuss laying siege to Rushall Hall, which was being held by Colonel Lane, an ardent Royalist, and whose garrison were proving somewhat of a nuisance to the opposition. The siege of Rushall Hall commenced on May 26, 1644 and ended on May 29 when the garrison surrendered, after some parleying with the Earl of Denbigh. It was said that a force of 2,000 troops with several cannon attacked the hall, but casualties were very light on both sides.

The conditions of surrender allowed the officers to leave, each with his weapons and his horse, the common soldiers to leave un-armed and the governor to be allowed sufficient of his own property to be carried away in one wagon. A commentator of the time said " that the Earl of Denbigh behaved himself very gallantly in the taking. They took in the hall over ten thousand pounds worth of goods and wares that had been plundered from the carriers coming from London and other parts going to-

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wards Lancashire, that being observed to have been one of the most thriving garrisons of the Cavaliers in all that County, this service will much advantage the Country and they may have more free passage for the time to come."

The new Governors of Rushall were Captain Tuthill, and Captain Stone, who soon resumed their skirmishes in the district when "they fell upon a party of the King's near Lichfield, took Major Henningham, and the gentlemen and officers of the name of Devereux, 25 common soldiers, 40 horse and arms, a coach and horses, divers portmantles (?) and a good pillage.

It is quite probable that Captain Stone was with the Earl of Denbigh at the siege of Dudley Castle, which took place on June 12, 1644. On December 11 of the same year, Colonel Leigh and Captain Stone were given the task of investigating the forces of the various garrisons in the county, "and to take care that assignations may be equally distributed."

The following year (1645) Captain Stone was appointed a member of the Commission for the County of Stafford, but in spite of his added duties, he continued to make lightning attacks on parties of Royalists. One day he was involved in a skirmish at Bushbury, the next at Newport, on both occasions killing several opponents and taking others prisoner.

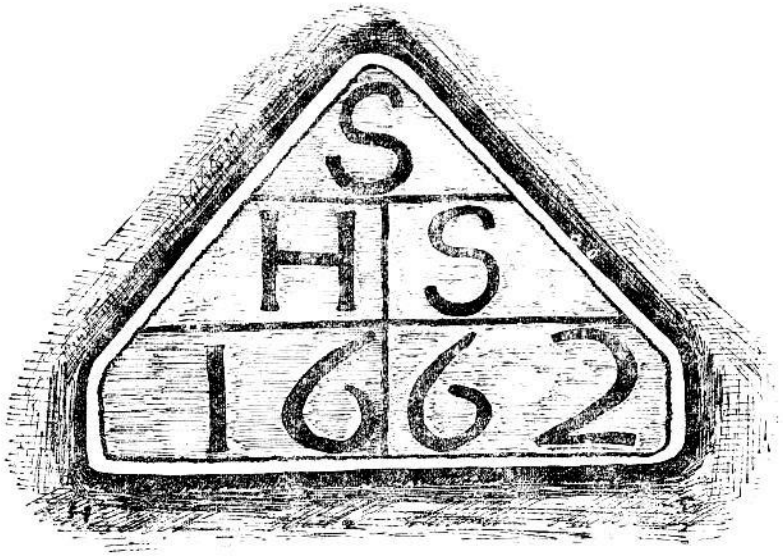
During the siege of Lichfield which ended on July 10, 1646, Captain Henry Stone so distinguished himself that he was rewarded by being appointed to the post of Governor of Stafford Castle, and this is where we refer back to the opening words of this article.

As far as Staffordshire was concerned, resistance to the Parliamentarian cause seemed to die out towards the end of 1646, although there were left many ruined and despoiled castles, mansions and churches. No doubt, Henry Stone acquired his share of the plunder. We have no idea how long he remained Governor of Stafford Castle but as we have said, he was certainly there in 1651 when he issued the pass to Jane Lane.

For many years, on an old building in Birmingham Street, there was a plaque bearing the initials S.H.S. and the date 1662. They are said to be the initials of Henry Stone and his wife Sarah, and the date is reputed to be that of a house built in that year, supposedly left to Henry Stone by an uncle, and on which the original plaque or carved stone was erected. The one we are now mentioning is a copy, for when the original house was demolished, the old stone was taken away and was said to be in the care of the Cowley family. It has long since been lost or destroyed.

We have no record of the period during which Henry Stone lived in Birmingham Street. It is said that he married in 1665 at West Bromwich, and had a family, all of whom died before him. Consequently, when he died, date unknown, his estates passed to three grandchildren. Their guardian was involved in some suit in Chancery, and the interest in the estate was disposed of. For a period, the house was converted into an inn with the sign of 'The Wheatsheaf', remaining so until 1813, when it was in such a bad state of repair that it was demolished.

In Pearce's History of Walsall,



published in 1813, there is a reference to "Samuel Mason, Deputy Constable for the Parish of Walsall, and gaol keeper, opposite the Wheatsheaf, Birmingham Street.

I have a strong feeling that Henry Stone was a Walsall man, for during his escapades in the Civil War, he appeared to have a very good knowledge of the countryside around the town.

He is another of Walsall's citizens about whom we know so much and yet so little, but who carved for themselves a niche in the chequered history of the town. Henry Stone's own particular bit of history, the triangular plaque, is now, I am pleased to say, housed safely in the Walsall Art Gallery and Museum, a mute reminder of a stormy period in the past.

N.B.—The story of Jane Lane and the King will be found in 'The Blackcountryman' Vol. 5, No. 2

A PARKING TICKET

(143 years ago)

'Wolverhampton Chronicle,' Wednesday, 19th January, 1831.

"On Saturday last, Thomas Burgess, the driver of a waggon belonging to Mr. George Shiston, of Grindle, was fined a mitigated penalty and costs, under the Wolverhampton Town Act, for wilfully leaving his waggon in Bell Street for a longer time than was necessary for loading or unloading the same."

J.R.W.

A Black Country Carol

It 'appened many 'ear agone,
As yo ull all recall:
A babby naime o' Jesus Christ
Was born t' save us all.
'Is faither was a werkin' mon,
Jo 'ad no claim to faime;
'Is mother 'er was only a wench,
And Mary was 'er naime.

They 'ad ter goo ter Bethlehem
On account o' the guverment.
But the plaice was welly packed wi' folk,
And there wor no room ter rent.
Now Mary 'er was clemmed ter jeth
And the babby was redy ter come;
So they shook down wi' th'osses and cows,
'Cos they couldn't find e'er a wum.

The babby come at jed o' night
Wi'out trial or mishap.
The parents 'earts were fit to bust
Wi' pride at the little chap.
The angels they wun mekin' a din
As the star shone overhead,
When shepherds and a two-three kings
Come wanderin' to the shed.

They gid the babby gifts o' go'd
And other expensive stuff.
Now werkin' men cor do the saime
'Cos we doa earn enough.
But we con werk wi' honest 'ond
And sweat wi' all we might
And so mek all Black Country folk
Dacent in 'is sight.

Mary Chitham.

John Brimble
writes on :—

ITEMS IN THE SOCIETY'S HISTORICAL COLLECTION

IN the past, whenever a disaster occurred through either natural phenomena or industrial and mechanical accident, resulting in the multiple loss of life, it was usually followed by morbid souvenirs in the form of sheet poems, serviettes and post cards.

People's curiosity with death, often seen as macabre, did in this instance prove worthy, as these memorium momentos were sold to the public as a means of raising funds in aid of the families and dependants of those who had died. The sheet poems contained verse of not particularly high standard, but deeply emotional and full of compassion, giving a sense of unity in grief.

The Society's historical collection contains a number of these items commemorating local disasters, notably that which occurred at Hamstead Colliery, West Bromwich in 1908, in which 27 miners lost their lives, and an explosion at Dudley Port, Tipton, in 1922 which resulted in 19 teenaged girls being burnt to death in the subsequent inferno.

The most curious item in the collection, however, is a sheet poem, the subject of which is not relevant to the Black Country, but was penned by a local man, John T. Hotchkiss of 19 Titford Road, Langley, and printed by Roden and Son, Printers and Stationers, Church Street, Oldbury.

The sheet—a poem on 'The Black Week'—refers to four disasters which took place in the space of one week between October 14-17, 1913, the total death toll being 590 lives. The tragic week began with the burning wreck of the German vessel 'Volturno,' on the 11 October, when 136 lives were lost, whilst three days later, one of the worst disasters in history occurred, when an explosion killed 420 men at the Universal Colliery, Senghenydd, South Wales, a generation of the male population of one community being almost entirely lost.

The words of Hotchkiss are highly emotive and could easily have applied to the Black Country or any other mining area.

He begins:

Gallant brave miners with nerve power like steel
The spell of danger he does not seem to feel,
As our brave soldiers to the cannons mouth go,
So our brave miners face death down down below.

and concludes:

The christian miner does lay his armour down,
With his dusty cap for a brilliant crown,
Lays aside his pike for a brave victor's palm,
Gone home to heaven where no pit fires alarm.

Hotchkiss also writes of a train disaster at Liverpool on October 15, when 6 lives were lost, and of a German Zeppelin which burnt up in mid-air on the 17, with the loss of 28 lives.

Of the latter, Hotchkiss wrote:

The German vessel a huge airship sublime,
Was changed to a wreckage in a moment of time,
Twenty-eight brave men did shockingly perish,
With brightest prospects which they did cherish.

The sheet, which contained 176 lines of verse set around a print symbolically depicting the four tragedies, was sold for one penny. All profits for the first six months were to be given to the fund for Widows and Orphans at Cardiff.

John T. Hotchkiss had previously written poems on the liner 'Titanic,' and on the late General Booth.

There is also in the Society's collection, a poem on the Senghenydd Colliery Disaster written by George Baker of Tipton, who also penned verses on the Hamstead Colliery and Dudley Port disasters.

'Gug! Gug! Gug! Is that all as yo con say, yo great lummock?'

Lee-Howl Pumps

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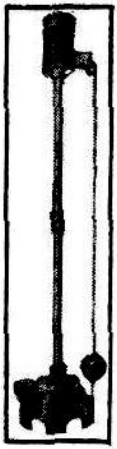
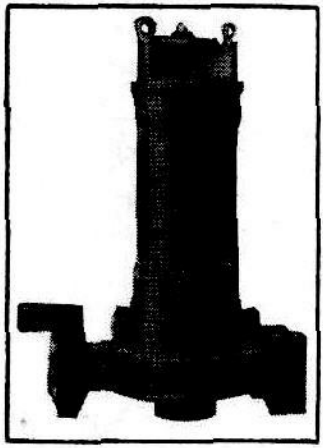
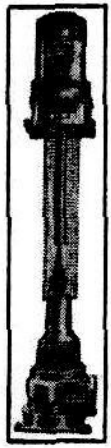


'EXPELEAU'
Domestic Sewage Pump



'TIPTONIA'
Submersible Sewage Pump



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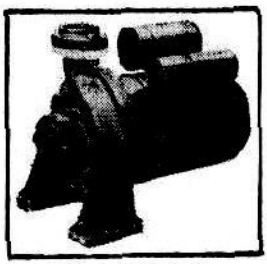
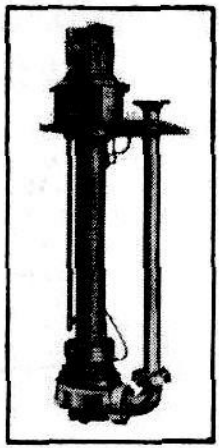
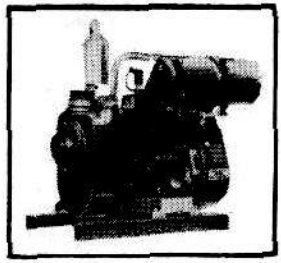
For Sewage and Semi-solids



Horizontal End Suction
Centrifugal Pump



Vertical 'Non-clogg'
Wet Sump Pump



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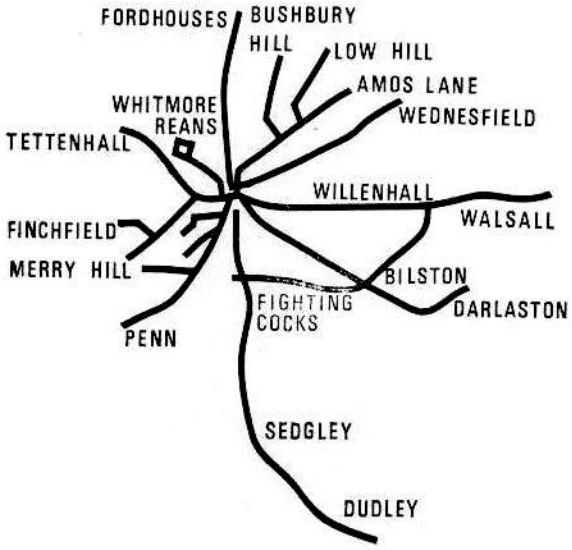
The 50th Anniversary of the —



WOLVERHAMPTON TROLLEYBUS

The Wolverhampton trolleybus was 50 years old on 29 October, 1973. This 'bird of passage' provided a smooth, clean, and efficient means of public transport in Wolverhampton for 44 years. Roy Clark, an enthusiast actively engaged for many years in preserving for posterity an example of a Wolverhampton trolleybus, summarises below the rise and fall of the popularity of the electric bus.

THE Wolverhampton trolleybuses made their final journeys over six years ago and it is now sometimes difficult to imagine where the overhead wires could once be seen. In places, the odd traction pole can be seen standing as if a reminder of this once famous system. In other places, new roads have been constructed across the path of the

former trolleybus routes. Even the motorbuses which have replaced the trolleybuses do not always display on their destination blinds the names of the districts once visited by the electric buses. A new generation of youngsters now growing up does not even know what a trolleybus looks like.

The trolleybus, that strange hybrid between a tram and a bus, has now completely disappeared from the streets of the towns of the United Kingdom. A few last remaining vehicles have found their way into the hands of private collectors or have been acquired by museums. One such vehicle owned by the Black Country Museum was on display in Wolverhampton on Saturday, October 27, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the system.

The 'trackless trams,' as they were once known, entered service on the Wednesfield route on 29 October, 1923. The tram track to Wednesfield was in need of replacement. The experimental Nechells trolleybus route had been inspected by members of the Tramways Committee and Mr. C. Owen Silvers, General Manager of the undertaking; they were all evidently impressed by what they had seen. The first vehicles supplied to Wolverhampton were made by Tilling-Stevens and were of a box-like construction with solid tyres. They were an instant success and it was not long before the tram route to Bushbury was also converted, the new vehicles actually running further along the Stafford Road to the 'Vine.'

In 1926, the Transport Committee recommended the replacement of the remaining trams by trolleybuses, and the change-over was completed by 1928. The corporation purchased their early vehicles from the Maidstone firm of Tilling-Stevens, but it was natural that when two local firms started manufacturing trolleybuses, the corporation should purchase the local made products. There was close co-operation between Guy Motors Ltd. and the Transport Department and the world's first six wheel trolleybus, fitted with pneumatic tyres appeared in 1926.

Sunbeam Commercial Vehicles Ltd. started producing trolleybuses five years later, but were equally successful in this venture. From this period, the corporation purchased either Guy or Sunbeam trolleybuses in batches of roughly equal numbers.

The new double deck vehicles were needed to serve the new housing developments in Bushbury Hill, Penn, Oxbarn, Low Hill, Merry Hill, Finchfield, as well as to provide a more frequent service on the routes where trams had been replaced. By 1934, the extensions were completed and there were 50 miles of route. The system had become a showpiece and delegates from many parts of the world came to inspect it.

The popularity of the trolleybus as a means of town transport remained as high as ever after the war and Wolverhampton in common with other operators needed to renew its fleet in order to catch up with wartime arrears. The new vehicles delivered between 1943 and 1950 gradually replaced the pre-war fleet.

The post war popularity of the trolleybus, however, was not to last. Some 50 towns and cities throughout the United Kingdom had operated them at one time or another, but during the late 1950s, a nationwide campaign to get rid of them gathered momentum. Wolverhampton fell in line with this trend in 1961 when the transport committee decided to abandon the system gradually. Many reasons were given. Most of the vehicles were said to be nearing the end of their useful lives. Overhead wiring and underground cables needed renewing and this would cost a great deal of money. Furthermore, re-routing trolleybus routes because of road works was also costly. The trolleybus was said to be 'too inflexible for modern traffic conditions.' Whether the trolleybus caused traffic congestion or not is a matter of opinion. One thing is certain, however; in the crowded traffic conditions which have existed in towns in recent years, the trolleybus could not be used to full advantage. Its smooth rapid acceleration cannot be used successfully in areas where the average speed of traffic is less than 10 miles per hour.

When Wolverhampton Corporation announced the death warrant for the trolleybus system in 1961, the decision was greeted with approval from some quarters but with sadness from others. The correspondence columns of the local press were full of the arguments for and against abandonment. The advantage of using home produced fuel and the cleanliness of the trolleybus as opposed to the dirty diesel were pointed out by those who favoured retention of the trolleybuses. A mere six years after the last trolleybus ran to Dudley, it is now fashionable to talk of 'the energy crisis' and the need to be independant of imported fuel. Environmental factors and pollution are also now 'in' words. It is perhaps a pity that the people entrusted to make decisions on our behalf did not then have more vision. But this may be expecting too much.

However, the people of Wolverhampton themselves might have had the opportunity of expressing their opinion on this matter as we find the Swiss do in their referenda.

On 27 October, 1973, The Black Country Society celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of the trolleybuses on the Wednesfield route by issuing a commemorative envelope with a special one day handstamp in conjunction with the exhibition of the preserved Wolverhampton trolleybus in the centre of Wolverhampton. Two thousand only of these special covers were printed.

Handstamp as used on First Day Cover

Tipton Free Library

John Brimble

ALTHOUGH a permanent Free Library was established in Tipton at a later date than certain of its neighbours, the question of the provision of such was raised many years earlier.

The story begins with a public meeting of Tipton ratepayers held at the Police Court, Church Lane on 16 March, 1877, the pursuant notice having been posted on church and chapel doors throughout the parish. The meeting, under the chairmanship of James Whitehouse, was to decide whether or not the Free Public Libraries Act be adopted for the parish of Tipton. It was proposed by Wm. Lees Underhill, seconded by Thomas Davies that the Act be adopted, and although an amendment that the Act should **not** be adopted was proposed by Thomas Walton, seconded by Joseph Mills, the motion was carried by a large majority on a show of hands.

This was merely a gesture, as nothing concrete resulted, and on 27 June, 1880, the Local Board of Health decided that due to the depressed state of local trade the time was innopportune to adopt the Free Libraries Act. This meant, of course, that the ratepayer—Board members were averse to increasing their own rates at such a lean economic period. Thus, the establishment of a much needed amenity to the community was postponed.

Despite this there was still pressure to bear on the provision of free libraries, and on 24 March, 1883 a public meeting of ratepayers was again held at the Police Court, under the chairmanship of James Whitehouse, when it was again proposed by Wm. Lees Underhill and seconded by James Solly of the Great Bridge Ironworks, supported by Peter D. Bennett, J.P., managing director of the Horseley Works, Tipton, that the Libraries Act be adopted.

A Free Libraries Committee was constituted and held its first meeting on 9 June, 1884, those present being James Whitehouse (chairman), Edward Bayley, W. T. Travis, Richard Mason, Henry Plant and Revs. Tozer and Cornwell.

The free libraries movement which was active in the district, seemed only able to give advice rather than make any material contributions, for in September, 1884 a deputation waited upon the committee. It included notable local figures such as James Solly, Dr. A. S. Underhill and Frederick T. Cox and its leader, Peter Bennett, J.P., managing director of the Horseley Works, said that it was felt that £1,000 could be raised towards the renting of a central building to be used as a free library and reading room. He could, however, give no guarantee. He was told in reply that if the suggested sum could be raised, gentlemen

from his group would be co-opted on to the committee to help administer the use of the money.

The whole business faded into obscurity and nothing further happened towards establishing a library for some five years. In fact, there are no records of the Free Libraries Commitee meeting between 1888 and 1889.

In 1890, however, progress was at last made, when it was decided to rent a room at Horseley Heath from a Mr. Clift at a cost of £13 per annum, and a large room belonging to Samuel Matthews at Toll End for £18 per anunm, for use as reading rooms. These were equipped each with a gas stove, a reading desk in each of the front windows, two tables in the Horseley Heath room, three in the Toll End room and eighteen chairs in each. They were to be open from 9.00 o'clock in the morning until 9.30 in the evening and were stocked with following journals and newspapers:—

Daily Post	Punch
Daily Gazette	Judy
Daily Mail	Band of Hope
Express and Star	British Workman
Daily News	Cassels' Magazine
Standard	Chambers' Journal
Midland Counties Express	Good Words
Staffordshire Advertizer	Leisure Hour
Graphic	Sunday at Home
Illustrated London News	Sunday Magazine

These were supplied by newsagents Miss Ray and Mr. Meese each to their respective rooms.

The rooms were officially opened to the public on December 9, 1890. by the Member of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Philip Stanhope, who during the proceedings showed support for a public library in Tipton and expressed his willingness to contribute £100 for the purchase of books, should a permanent building be found.

It was the intention of the Local Board to establish a reading room in each of the six wards. Horseley Heath and Toll End wards now having been provided for, it was the turn of the Tipton Green ward. In 1890, William Hipkins offered to erect a room at Owen Street for the purpose but this was not accepted. The following year, however, Mr. Ryder stated that he was prepared to erect certain buildings in Owen Street on the site of old houses, opposite the shop owned by Daniel Hipkins to be used as a reading room for a period of seven years at a fixed rent. The room was to measure 22 ft. by 30 ft. This was accepted and the new reading room was opened on 24 February, 1892 by Daniel Hipkins, at the time chairman of the Local Board and its Free Libraries Committee. A keen advocate for the provision of public library in Tipton, Daniel Hipkins offered the sum of £25 for the purchase of books for a future library. This was followed by the offer of Joseph Powell of £5 for the same reason.

Soon afterwards the Dudley Port and Tibbington wards were provided with reading rooms, with the acquisition of rooms at Oak Terrace and Bloomfield respectively.

In April, 1894 with five rooms in existence the annual upkeep was £195.

Finally, in 1894, the Ocker Hill Ward was provided with its reading room, taking a room at Lea Brook owned by a Mr. Higgins.

The libraries question had first been raised in Tipton in 1877, yet seventeen years later when the Board dismantled, the dream of a building stocked with books as a local centre for learning had not been achieved. It was not until twelve years later, in 1906, when the Central Library, Victoria Road was opened by Coun. W. W. Doughty that the vision materialised. The following year the branch library at Toll End was opened.

The irony is that the money for these was provided by profits from iron and steel in the form of a grant from the industrialist benefactor Andrew Carnegie, whilst profits accrued from local industry could not provide a cultural establishment for those who helped make the profits.

How About This Then?

Where have they all gone?
The sons and daughters of Aynuk and Ayli?
The folksy characters our nostalgia peoples the Black Country with.
Did they ever really exist?
Any more than the romantic characters of a film producer's gay Vienna?

If they did,
They have left the Coronation Streets of Tipton, Cradley Heath and Gornal,
And are residing (not "living," mark you, but "residing"),
In Streetly, Hagley, and The Wergs,
They doh spaek like we do a-whum,
Because the men want to get on in the industrial empires who employ them.
The wives go to coffee mornings and cheese and wine parties,
And the daughters go pony-riding and learn how to say "Ertually."

And the Black Country isn't black any more,
It's grey . . . and colourless,
Grey perspectives of houses and works and scrap yards,
Like T. S. Eliot's "Waste Land."
And Aynuk and Ayli wouldn't want to live there
Any more
Either.

Donald Foster.

Dare I print it, 'e says!—Ed.

The Corngreaves Hotel.

CHRISTMAS

(and after)

You, who this Christmas,
Have crammed a few precious illusions
Into one jubilant day,
Tear down your festoons
From office windows
And shabby workaday walls;
Peel the season off again,
Like a dead skin.

Traces of an old ecstacy
Like stars of concussion
Flicker painfully across
My brain's charred vault.
Here comes the uncertainty
Of re-living; Now the ache
That levels out at length
Into a burning monotony.

Even the morning sun congeals
Into shapeless blobs
Of dingy gold; The streets groan
Under strait-jackets of ice.
Up from the deep beds of grey mist
Factories lift their shoulders
And grope about the sky
With tired arms of smoke.

J. William Jones.

The Corngreaves Hotel, on the corner of Corngreaves Road and Grainger's Lane, Cradley Heath, is still recognisably the same building as it was when this photograph was taken, in about 1900. *The proprietor of the hotel, and the founder of the saddlery business, was Joseph Cole* (4*th from left, in shirt-sleeves and white apron*). *His wife is standing on the step in the doorway. The other members of the group are presumably some of the hotel's customers.*

The sign advertising the saddle and harness business survived until three or four years ago over the shop of Joe Cole, Joseph Cole's grandson, who still carries on the business only about one hundred yards from the old Hotel.

UNCLE WILL

by Primrose Rostron

WILLIAM Grazebrook (1791-1878), grew up at Audnam House, near Stourbridge. In 1785, his father, Michael Grazebrook had married a cousin, Mary Anne Needs. She was a grand-daughter of Benjamin Grazebrook, who had earlier left Oldswinford to marry a banker's daughter in Gloucestershire.

At Audnam, Michael and Anne raised a family of eleven children, and there is a family tradition that their father carried a small dog whip in his pocket to keep his high-spirited family in order.

Michael was a busy man with colleries and ironworks in Netherton and Halesowen, besides the glass works at Audnam.

Mary Anne was reputed to dress in black or grey satin with a beribboned cap, then the fashion.

William was their second son, and in 1813, he entered the family businesses being paid a salary of £180 a year "for his services and keep of horses." He remained a bachelor, greatly loved by "Johnny" and his other nephews and nieces, whom he taught to ride.

Uncle Will's gruff exterior hid a heart of gold and he was the mainstay of the family, taking his unmarried sisters and brothers to live at Park Hall, Kidderminster, when their parents died. Horses were Will's great love and as a small boy he arose at dawn to canter around the fields near Stourbridge on his schoolmaster's pony.

Many of Will's hunting friends visited the Grazebrooks at Audnam, including Old Squire Lockley from Boscobel, who had a hunting accident and died at Audnam. Before he died, he asked Will's brother, Charley, to go to his house at Boscobel to bring back a piece

of the original King Charles's oak. So Charley rode over and asked for " this bit of old wood," and returned to Audnam. Many years later, Will's nephew, Johnny (J. P. Grazebrook), carved some ornaments from it. These were ear rings for his aunts and a large shawl brooch for his wife, Harriet.

Incidentally, Charley later gave up civil engineering for farming, supplying Stourbridge with milk from his farm at Wollaston. He was one of the first farmers to experiment with chopped gorse as fodder for cows.

One day, Will rode over to visit another hunting crony, Sir Thomas Boughey of Aqualate. At the door, a manservant told him that his master was 'dying.' Greatly shocked, Will mounted his horse to return, when Sir Thomas appeared in the best of health! Apparently, he had been 'dying' his hair and whiskers to attract the ladies!

It was the golden age of foxhunting, and for 40 years, Will acted as Honorary Secretary to the Albrighton Hunt. On his retirement he was presented with a silver tea and coffee service (still in use), along with an illuminated address with names of the donors.

In 1836, the Stourbridge poet, E. J. Whitehurst wrote some verses about the personalities of the Albrighton Hunt, while remembering Stourbridge for " the glories of her ale."

This vignette of the Albrighton Pack makes entertaining reading. The Hunt included the Master, Squire Giffard of Chillington; " gruff Will Grazebrook urging on the pack," and a whipper-in swearing at a truant hound, was reproved by the Rector of Badger.

Charles Noel of Bell Hall was " lolling on his nag," and " Rum Jim Hellier " of Wodehouse, Wolverhampton was " mounted on a screw." While Henry Bradley of Rockingham Hall, Hagley, " bounds o'er the flight of rails " on his chestnut mare and George Grazebrook of Pedmore " sails away " in pursuit.

There were several hunting parsons in badly cleaned boots, riding carty looking mares. These included " frequently falling Foley in the mud," (Rector of Kingswinford), Jacky Wylde (Rector of Belbroughton) and Parson Turner of Hagley, resplendent in " sky blue breeks and coat of raven grey."

There was Parson Jesson of Enville, and Parson Whitemore of Stockton arriving at a gate, which was locked and barred. " Jump it, or over let me go," cried Squire Boycott of Rudge Hall, who was a friend of the racing journalist, Nimrod (C. J. Apperley).

(Continued)

First Day Covers

(1) WESLEY RIOTS

(see article Page 7)

(2) 50th ANNIVERSARY OF WOLVERHAMPTON TROLLEYBUS

(see article Page 46)

Order now while stocks last

From : THE PRESIDENT
98 BESCOT ROAD
WALSALL

Each 20p, plus 4p postage

Will Grazebrook had a verse to himself.

'But who is he, steady as old time.
O'er rough, o'er smooth pursues his even course.
Ruby his phiz, his nag's condition prime.
Tho' fired on three legs be that gallant horse.
Oft is that horseman nearest to the pack,
His cheering halloo pierceth every ear,
And when both steeds & horsemen waxen slack,
Right forward will they press the sound to hear.
Which fires the horse & shames the riders' fear."

E. J. Whitehurst, 1836.

There is a small profile drawing of Will in his hunting kit, aged 40, looking tall and slim, by Robert Dighton, which once belonged to Will's brother-in-law, Colonel Ferdinando Lea Smith (and later in the possession of Ferdinando, Lord Dudley).

Colonel Lea Smith, a veteran of the Peninsula War was also mentioned by E. J. Whitehurst:

"Cheering the pack with many a shout,
As if he had his merry harriers out."

Peace Celebration Medal Oldbury 1919

Seven thousand of these medals were struck for the schoolchildren in Oldbury. These were made in aluminium. One hundred similar were cast in bronze, for headteachers and officials.

Of particular interest is that the first tank used in the first world war was made at the Metropolitan Carriage Works in Oldbury, and that tank salvage donated by this firm was used to make the medals. Mr. Dudley Docker and Colonel Knothe, who were connected with the firm, paid for the medals to be made.

RECENT DONATIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S HISTORICAL COLLECTION

- Lace iron; Election poster dated 1935; Official programme of the opening of the James Slater Memorial Organ, Darlaston Town Hall, 1903; Memoriam cards, Hat pins; Post card, etc.
  Donated by Kate Fletcher, Mount Road, Tettenhall.
- Cast iron name plate.
  Mr. Bowden, Wightwick, Wolverhampton.
- Meat jack; coffee grinder; gramophone needles
  Mr. Walters, Caswell Road, Sedgley.
- Boxes Licence, 1929.
  Mr. Swallow, Perry Hill Road, Oldbury, Warley.
- Sunday School anniversary card, Canal Street Chapel, Tipton, 1958.
  Mr. K. Hodgkins, Peel Street, Tipton.
- Handbook of the Tipton and District Permanent Benefit Building Society, c. 1935.
  Mr. and Mrs. D. Dwyer. Trafalgar Court. Birmingham New Road. Tividale.
- Photographs, c. 1925.
  Mr. Stevens, Yew Tree Hills, Netherton.
- Two football medals.
  Mr. E. Williams, Palfrey, Walsall.
- Lapel badge and token, exact titles unknown.
  Mr. C. Emberton.
- Dark green mineral water bottle with marble stopper; wire-rimmed spectacles.
- Sunday School prize bookplates, 1896-1913.
  R. Wilkes, Burnt Tree, Tipton.
- Pork Pie moulds, from an old established butchers' firm, three generations, approx. 120 years, now extinct.
  Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, 423 Bilston Road, Wolverhampton.
- Documents and photographs relating to Hill Top and St. James' Church.
  Mrs. M. Clarke, 72 Birchfield Way, Yew Tree Estate, Walsall.
- Old 10/- note.
  Mr. B. Dean, The Cottage, Dancing Green, Pontshill, Ross-on-Wye.
- Wooden Barber's Pole.
  Mr. Lovesey.
- Two commemorative brochures pertaining to Tipton.
  Mrs. E. Langford, Whitehouse Street, Tipton.
- Cast-iron door knockers.
  Mr. Perkes, Clarkes Grove, Tipton.
- Photograph of Ocker Hill bonfire, 1911.
  Mrs. Stanley, Simon Close, Tipton.
- Black cape trimmed with jet beads.
  Mr. D. Hudson, Tipton.
- Old items of clothing.
  Pot hook and gale hooks.
  Mrs. Lucy Woodall, Highgate Street, Old Hill.

DUDLEY'S HISTORIC BUILDINGS

An example of the increasing awareness of the Black Country Society by Local Authorities was illustrated in July when the Planning Department of Dudley County Borough asked us to report on their schedule of buildings of architectural and historic interest. This work was carried out during the summer by the planning sub-committee of the Society.

BUILDINGS TO REMAIN
ON PRESENT STATUTORY LIST

Zoo Estate Offices, Broadway.
Conservative Club, Castle Hill.
Zoo Buildings, Castle Hill.
Green Man Inn, Castle Street.
Nos. 271 and 272, Castle Street.
Drinking Fountain, Market Place.
Charlton House, New Street.
No. 7, Priory Street.
No. 19, Priory Street (Old Police Station).
Old Town Hall Building, Priory Street.
Junior Conservative Club, Priory Road.
Priory Hall
Bayliss Charity School, Tower Street.
Unitarian Church, Wolverhampton Street.
Nos. 28, 29 and 30, Wolverhampton Street.
Nos. 196, 197 and 198, Wolverhampton Street

Kingswinford

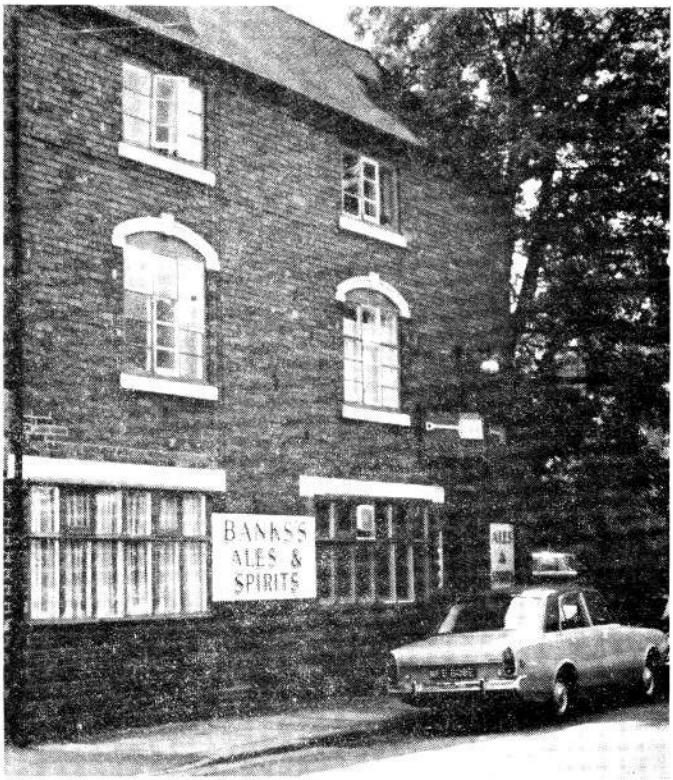
Nos. 691, 701 and 709, High Street.
Holbeache House, Holbeache Lane.
'Oldstead,' Moss Grove.
Summerhill Hotel, Swindon Road.
Broadfield House, Stream Road.
Nos. 8, 9, 10 and 11, The Village.

Wordsley

Wordsley Hall, Brierley Hill Road.
Former Sunday School, High Street.
Glass Cone, Stuart Crystal Glass Works.

Mushroom Green

Chain Shop, adjoining No. 14, Mushroom Green.



THE MALT SHOVEL, DUDLEY

BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY

Christmas Draw, December 19th, 1973.

1st Prize: Hamper. Won by Mr. I. Giles, 31 Harcourt Drive, Lower Gornal.

2nd Prize: Electric Blanket. Won by Mr. Lewis c/o M.E.B. Tipton.

3rd Prize: Car Headrest. Won by Mrs. Barwell, 52 Beach Road, Woodcross, Coseley.

In all, 24 Prizes were drawn.

Coseley

Sedgley Beacon, Beacon Hill.
The Old Mill, Oak Street.

Sedgley

Ruiton Windmill, Vale Street.
Ruiton Chapel, Vale Street.

Note:—Dudley Castle and Dudley Priory are classified as Ancient Monuments.

The Black Country Society's Recommendations and Observations

Mushroom Green Chain Shop: The condition has been allowed to deteriorate until it is in danger of collapse. If the building is to be saved. restoration work must be put in hand immediately. The adjacent house (not listed) is important to the overall setting, and its restoration would greatly enhance the chain shop itself.

Charlton House, New Street, Dudley: Careful handling is required with future renovations, as the building has lost some of its visual impact.

Sedgley Beacon: A somewhat forlorn appearance, due to neglect and dominance by adjacent water towers. Repairs to surrounding wall and railings would help.

Ruiton Windmill: In a poor condition. Surrounds untidy, but derelict quarry side adjacent has exciting possibilities for leisure.

Green Man Inn, 271 and 272, Castle Street, Dudley: During recent renovation work, the original stone corbel table was removed and replaced by brick corbels. Although carefully carried out, the purity of expression of that facade has been reduced. This serves to illustrate that even small alterations over the years can reduce the visual quality of a building. The Green Man entry is one of the most exciting spaces in the town and must be maintained. With the Malt Shovel at the far end, it serves to connect two of the most attractive pubs.

Buildings to be Deleted from Lists

Supplementary List: 71 and 72, 83, 211 and 212, 214, 216, High Street; 22, 193 and 194, 206 Wolverhampton Street, 61 and 62 Vicar Street; Brookes Bros. Warehouse, Tower Street; House adjacent windmill, Vale Street, Sedgley. These buildings are now insignificant due to extensive alterations, and no longer warrant listing.

Statutory List: St. James Methodist Chapel, High Street, Pensnett. Good situation, but difficult to find justification for listing. However, it is important than an example of a Non-Conformist Chapel is listed and an alternative is suggested.

Buildings to be Upgraded to Statutory List

Group formed by: 1 Wolverhampton Street; The Talbot, Wolverhampton Street; 3 and 3a Wolverhampton Street; 6 and 7 Wolverhampton Street. Despite being in poor condition, this group must be conserved. No. 1 has the best shop front in Dudley, and the Talbot is the best example of a small town pub of the period. Its interior should also be protected. The shop fronts of 3 and 3a, and 6 and 7, are poor, but the structural continuity of the upper stories is critical, as is the spatial enclosure of the street at this point.

The Malt Shovel, Tower Street: A good example of the local style with well positioned inn-sign graphics. The relationship with the Green Man via the entry is important.

No. 6, Priory Street: The last example of this type of 18th century town house to survive intact. The value of the whole group, 3a-7, is most important.

The Old Cat Inn, Wordsley High Street: An attractive building in excellent condition.

BUILDINGS TO BE ADDED TO STATUTORY LIST

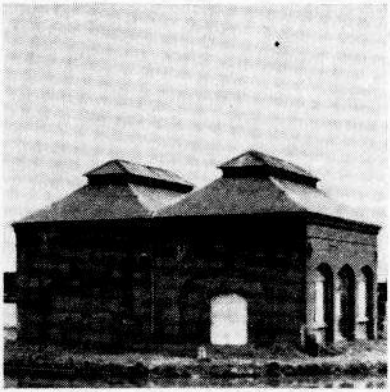
The Crown, Priory Street: A high Victorian extravaganza on a corner site, pinpointing the contrast between the narrow and wide sections of Wolverhampton Street.

199, 200 and 200A, Wolverhampton Street: This section of street is of high architectural and townscape quality. 28-30 and 196-8, already listed are superb Georgian buildings, which the late Victorian offices (199 and 200) and the Edwardian Head Post Office (200a) compliment in a fine manner.

The Saracens Head, Stone Street: A fine building of several periods, which dominates the bus terminus area. The group value with 19-22 is most important.

Limestone house adjacent zoo entrance; Limestone wall bounding zoo, Castle Hill; St. Edmunds Church School: This part of Dudley, dominated by the castle, has always been an area of local limestone building. These three buildings typify this tradition which is unique to this quite small area and thus of prime importance to the local identity. The limestone house, formerly a lodge, is probably the only dwelling of this material in the area.

156 Watsons Green Road, Kate Hill: An 18th century farmhouse of brick and plain tiles, with brick porch and hoodmoulds. Most unusual feature is the stepped parapet gable, probably unique to the Midlands.



Canal Pumphouse and Lock Cottage; Park Head Locks off Peartree Lane: Both buildings are an integral part of this total canal environment. The pumphouse, typifying the later stage of the canal building tradition, is now used as a warehouse by a steel stockholder. Its condition is fair but needs attention to prevent further deterioration. The lock cottage has recently been renovated. The whole area from Peartree Lane to the canal tunnel warrants the creation of a Conservation Area.

The Odeon Cinema, Castle Hill: One of the 1930s Odeon chain of super-cinemas. Built in 1937 to the design of Harry Weedon, this example remains in virtually original condition. Considered by many to be one of Weedon's finest works.

5-7 Dean Street, Sedgley: Possibly the last stone terraced dwellings in the area. This enclosure around the Parish Church is of fundamental importance.

The Court House, Gospel End Street, Sedgley; The Swan Inn, Gospel End Street, Sedgley; The Red Lion, Bull Ring, Sedgley: Even though Sedgley has been spoilt to a large extent by demolition and unsuitable new development, the old village layout is still held together by these three pubs. In townscape terms, they are as important as the Parish Church.

Former Nail Warehouse, Brick Street, Sedgley: The last surviving nail warehouse, stone built with slate roof and cast iron round headed windows.

The Limes, Catholic Lane, Sedgley: Attractive large late Victorian house in pleasant setting, dominating park.

124 Sedgley Road, Woodsetton: Formerly a toll house. Single storey, brick, with parapet eaves. In good condition.

Baptist Chapel, Caddick Street, Hurst Hill: One of the oldest Nonconformist chapels in the area (1804).

Cannon Foundry Buildings, Havacre Lane, Coseley: The most complete foundry complex in the Black Country on an ideal site. The setting up of an industrial Conservation Area, taking in the foundry, the canal, the Boat Inn, and the older residential properties to the south, would seem justified.

18 Havacre Lane, Coseley: A good example of a typical small pre-industrial dwelling. Freestanding, two storey brick and plain tiles with parapet verge.

Five Ways Inn, Lower Gornal: Built 1821, the best remaining pub in Gornal Stone and the dominant building at the Five Ways junction. Relies on adjacent buildings for visual support.

Coopers Bank Farm, Lower Gornal: The obvious choice for a building representative of agriculture in the borough. Requires some renovation.

112 Dibdale Road, Lower Gornal: A handsome building with good stucco detailing.

Tudor Primary School, Upper Gornal: A typical, but very attractive Victorian school, one example of which must be preserved.

Original steel works offices, Dudley Road, Brierley Hill. A late Victorian office group with interesting brick detailing and round headed windows.

Canal Stables, Delph Locks, Brierley Hill: Disused, but in sound condition. Late 19th century single storey red brick with blue brick arches. A vital part of the canal scene.

Cinder Wall, High Street, Pensnett: One of the best examples of cinder walling, in one of the best settings, bounding Pensnett Parish Church.

Victoria Place 56-63, Wartell Bank, Kingswinford: A group of eight terraced cottages, built in 1856. The most complete and unadulterated example of this type of housing in the area with many typical features of the period. The original doors and windows remain throughout, giving a superb unity to the row. Communal water pumps at the rear are still in situ.

The Old Court House, Dudley Road, Kingswinford: An integral part of the village green area. The present Conservation Area should be extended to include this building.

The Cross Hotel, Kingswinford Cross: This building dominates the cross and maintains a dignity which would otherwise be lost if relying solely on the modern buildings.

The British Oak, Stallings Lane, Kingswinford: The best remaining example of the larger type of vernacular house, dated 1684. Its future is threatened by the construction of a new pub adjacent. Immediate action must be taken to save this building.

30 and 32 Dock Street; Canal Cottage, Wordsley top lock; Cast iron cantilever footbridges, Wordsley Locks.

Warehouse, Mill Street, Wordsley: Formerly a seed warehouse. Although this type of building was never common in the Black Country, this one deserves conservation purely on its own merit.

Review Article

A Capful o' Nails, by David Christie Murray. Black Country Society: 50p, plus 10p p. and p.

IT is certainly not surprising, in view of its history, that the Black Country has produced few professional writers of national reputation. Its inventive genius has lain elsewhere. It is therefore the more necessary that we should not neglect those we have, and the Black Country Society is to be congratulated on making available at a very moderate price, a reprint of David Christie Murray's novel, **A Capful o' Nails,** first published in 1896.

David Christie Murray was born in 1847, in West Bromwich, where his father kept a book shop in the High Street. He was not, certainly, of Black Country stock, but he was born and bred in the Black Country and knew it through and through. Few remember him now, and fewer still have read his books, but in his day he and they were highly esteemed—by, among others, Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who both wrote in praise of his work.

A Capful o' Nails is a story of the Quarry Bank nailers of a century and a quarter ago. It hinges upon the iniquitous practice, universal among the 'foggers'—the petty dealers who supplied the nailers with their material, and purchased the finished product from them—of using three sets of weights, one set to buy with, one set to sell with, and one set to show the inspector. What is particularly significant about this, from the point of view of social and industrial history, and what Murray takes particular care to point out, is that it was so much part of their daily lives as to be accepted by the nailers virtually as a law of nature, as little to be questioned as the weather—or as the price of coke and bread, the other two essentials of their economy, which were equally beyond their control.

For a workman—one of themselves—to oppose the system, and to propose industrial action in opposition to it, was to invite the anger and reprisals of the petty tyrants to whom they were in abject subjection, having to buy from them, sell to them, and then to go to them yet again in order to procure the basic necessities of life—for, although prohibited by law from keeping 'tommy shops,' the foggers were the actual if not the ostensible owners, and made a second and equally rapacious profit from the already depleted earnings of the nailers. Any such man, therefore, was as likely to be villified by his own kind as by the foggers, and it is this fact upon which Murray works in the development of his plot. He is for the nailers with a passion the more effective for being controlled, but he sees them with unsentimental eyes, as an ignorant, prejudiced, often brutal, and wholly demoralised community. He describes a working mother's behaviour towards her own child which recalls the treatment of their workhouse apprentices by the lockmakers of Willenhall, a similar domestic industry, which was sufficently brutal to be notorious even in those times.

Murray describes the workshops in the miserable two-roomed cottages, with their four or five little anvils, one for each of the family from boys and girls of seven or so upwards. The desperate hand-to-mouth economy of the industry, the smallness of the scale on which it operated, is graphically indicated by the fact that nails were taken to the fogger for sale by the capful. The nailers and chainmakers of Quarry Bank and Cradley, and the lockmakers of Darlaston and Willenhall, were the most depressed and wretched of the Black Country workers. Operating singly, or at most (and more usually) in families, lacking the will or the wit to combine, lacking the united voice which had brought some relief, and indeed, at that particular time, some small measure of prosperity to the colliers and iron workers, perpetually in debt and bound hand and foot to the middlemen, they were looked down upon even by their own class. As Murray very truly observed: 'You bear what you are born to, and this is what makes slavery possible.'

Quite apart from its importance as a contribution to—or as a commentary upon—the industrial and social history of the region, **A Capful o' Nails** is a good book considered simply as a piece of writing, as literature. A better book, indeed, than Murray himself believed it to be, for in a preface to it he says:

> *'This little book was written in dead earnest, and on re-reading it I am forced to own that it might have been more attractive as a work of art if its singleness of purpose had been less apparent. In its main lines the tale is quite true. I have written of what I knew, and I have nowhere exaggerated by one hair's breadth.'*

It is indeed its singleness of purpose, its patent ring of truth, that makes it so good a book. There is an economy of plot, of characters, of style, which is wholly commendable. There is an admirable tautness about it. There is not an ounce of padding in it. The plot hinges, not upon some bizarre or unlikely event, as with so many of Murray's contemporaries, but upon an act of mean and petty violence such as is all too common today, and was no less so then. The events which lead up to it and issue from it are set forth in a plain unpolished fashion suited to the place and people described.

The book, as Murray said, was written in dead earnest. (Nevertheless, the author's considerable gift of humorous invention is sometimes allowed to appear, and in the absurd but sad character of Mr. Jerry Brambler, we have a tragic-comic creation of potentially Dickensian proportions. The first meeting of the juvenile Jack Salter with the plump and flaccid Jerry is admirably described, and would form an excellent subject for an illustration by 'Phiz.') The delineation of the principal character in the book, the nailer John Salter, emerges clearly and convincingly as the story progresses. The picture of Salter working at his forge, with Adam Smith or John Stuart Mill propped against the wall in front of him, so that he could read a line or two while engaged in the purely mechanical work of the bellows, and repeat them to himself while applying himself to the anvil, lingers in the

memory as that of a Black Country Felix Holt or industrial village Hampden. Allardyce, the pale ' Papish ' curate, who has left the dreaming spires of Oxford, the Oxford of the Oxford Movement, of Newman and Pusey, to labour in his Lord's grimy vineyard of Quarrymoor, and whose destiny becomes caught up in that of the self-educated nailer, is a type no longer fashionable in fiction, for whom, nevertheless, our sympathies are engaged by Murray's plain and unsentimental portrayal. Both are, indeed, characters no longer to be met with in fiction or in

Artist ' Clebak's ' splend d drawing for the cover of ' A Capful o' Nails '

fact, in the particular mould in which they were familiar to Victorian readers—the philosopher-artisan and the high-minded, but class-conscious, clergyman.

In the revulsion against everything Victorian—both the good and the bad—which occurred earlier in this century, the ideals for which they laboured and sometimes died, seemed either mistaken or (what was more damning) irrelevant. It is as well to be reminded sometimes of what sort of people they were. The world is poorer without them.

John Salter is a Black Country man and speaks the Black Country tongue. The use of dialect is always a problem for an author who

writes, as Murray did, for a national readership. If he does not do it well it fails to satisfy his local readers, and they rise up in a body and denounce him; if he does it too well it is, if not unintelligible, at least difficult, for those not acquainted with it. By and large, Murray manages well:

'We'em goin' to get up a bit of a strike.' said Father.

'Bin you?' said old Blowhard, swinging round to his little anvil, and raining a shower of tinkling blows on the hot iron. 'Then yo' can count me out on it.'

'Strike?' said his wife, looking up from her work, but hammering with increased dexterity and vigour. 'We've got to strike all day and half the night. Thee listen to no such rubbidge, Joe. It's easy to say strike, but who's goin' to fill wer bellies?'

How many readers of "The Blackcountryman" one wonders, are familiar with the word 'flick,' as used by Salter when he accosts his fellow-nailer, Old Blowhard: 'I want a word wi' thee, ode flick,' or with the term 'tongue wulkin'—'But suppose it's t'other chap as gives thee a tongue wulkin'—how then?'—to indicate a thorough dressing-down. Or the expression 'to raise a pretty ran-dan' around one's ears? It is in such details that Murray's knowledge of his native Black Country is of particular interest.

As with all books that belong in a very special way to a particular locality, the author, for very valid artistic reasons, disguises the identity of the places most intimately concerned in his story (as with Borrow: who, for instance, would care to say with any certainty that it was in the Dingle at Willenhall that Lavengro had his epic encounter with the Flaming Tinman?) There can, however, be little doubt that the Quarrymoor of **A Capful o' Nails** is Quarry Bank. There may be a clue to the precise location in the reference to the brickmaking which went on there alongside the nailmaking: '. . . . the air was always heavy with smoke and the sickening smell of burning clay. I do not know if the baking of bricks everywhere creates such a stench as it did there. Perhaps there was some peculiar quality in the clay of that district, but the odour was frightful, and wayfarers passing the brickkilns would run for a hundred yards, pinching their noses with thumb and forefinger.' There is, of course, a Brick Kiln Street in Quarry Bank. Whether the 'peculiar quality' of the clay was that which produced the Staffordshire blue is an interesting question.

As to the only other place playing any considerable part in the story, anyone who has read the description of the parish church of Castle Barfield and its immediate environs in the second chapter of Murray's book **Rainbow Gold** (now very rare indeed—Black Country Society please note) can have no doubt that the Castle Barfield of that book was intended for the author's home town, West Bromwich (why Murray should have chosen to call West Bromwich, Castle Barfield, it is hard to imagine. West Bromwich has not, and has never had, a castle—or even the remotest recollection of one). Whether the Castle Barfield of **A Capful o' Nails** is also West Bromwich is by no means

so easily demonstrable. 'We were about a mile and a half from Castle Barfield, which was, and still is, the great centre of population in that neighbourhood . . . .' Now, by no sort of yardstick or tape measure could Quarry Bank be said to be a mile and a half from West Bromwich. Nevertheless, the town, 'with its shops and lights, and its knots of loungers, and that evanescent wonder, the passing of the coach from Birmingham to Wolverhampton' was most probably Murray's home town.

In the eighteen-fifties there were horse-buses (sometimes described as coaches) running through West Bromwich to both Wolverhampton and Dudley (**Transport in West Bromwich,** Arnold J. Mason, B.A., Omnibus Society, 1963). However, it is strange that Murray should not mention the Stour Valley line railway, which cut right across the way from 'Quarrymoor' to West Bromwich, and which had been opened in 1847, the year of his birth, or the Great Western line to Wolverhampton, only a little way farther on, which had been opened in 1854, the year in which the events of the book are most likely to have ocurred. If the 'evanescent wonder' of the Wolverhampton coach (or bus) was so memorable a sight for a small lad from outside the 'big' town, what of the wonder of a passing train, the newest of technological wonders?

There is, however, a short but graphic description of a blast furnace, just beyond a hump-backed canal bridge, which may possibly be the Bromford Iron Works: 'The furnace flames leaped up through the grimy air, and the dim scene was perplexed with a very tangle of chimnies, some of which volleyed fire, whilst from the rest came great columns of smoke, drifting madly in windy weather, but on still evenings sending up each a spiral line with a jewelled coronal on top, which took the colour of the low sun as evening clouds do.'

That is well observed. There can be no doubt, **A Capful o' Nails** is altogether a 'must' for Black Country enthusiasts. Incidentally, those who saw 'The Nailmakers,' the Black Country musical documentary by the late Malcolm Totten, and Jon Raven, presented at the Brum Studio of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in May, will be interested to know that Murray's book was used for that work. It is the authentic voice of the old Black Country.

Cover Illustration

Typical Black Country wooden pit-head frame, based on the one that was dismantled for re-erection at the proposed Black Country Museum site. This stood until recently, overgrown and derelict, at the Brierley Hill Brickworks of Price Pearson.

Drawn by Ron Moss.

They Serve the Black Country Society

Derek Simpkiss
(Membership Secretary, and Sales and Distribution Manager)

Born 1932, Bilston. Educated at Etheridge Schools, Bilston. Married with two daughters. Employed in the electrical engineering department, Bilston Iron & Steel Works for 25 years.

Interested in all aspects of Black Country life, work and culture, and collects anything and everything printed on the Black Country and on the iron industry. Fiercely proud of Black Country birthright and steel-making traditions.

Ex-member of the executive committee of the Friends of The Black Country Museum; member of the Iron Industry Advisory Panel. Black Country Museum, and member of the Institute of Supervisory Management.

Spends any time left over at his caravan in Shropshire, relaxing with family, plus a little fishing and with a keen interest in the Severn Valley Railway

Austin Moseley
(Commitee member, Black Country Society)

Born 1930, Tividale. Educated mainly at the Dudley Technical College. Married with two sons. Lecturer in Engineering Design at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, having previously worked in industry in chemical engineering.

Interested n painting, drawing, **especially** painting, and has exhibited his work throughout the area. Also interested in the past, present and future of the Black Country.

Mr. Moseley has prepared the drawings for the Black Country Society's calendar for the last four years, and has also contributed drawings for the society's Christmas cards. He has published various articles in his college journal.

Mr. Simpkiss

Mr. Moseley

CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

The demise of the "Blackpool Big Wheel" as recorded by Geoff Stevens in your last issue was read with great interest by my father-in-law, Lawson Lester.

A coin commemorating the erection of the wheel was given to him early this century by his father, Samuel Lester, late of the "Cherry Orchard" Inn, Wrights Lane, Old Hill.

. On the obverse side is a depiction of the wheel. Around the edge on its left are the words, "Auto-Music Company Ltd." and on its right, "Blackpool Gigantic Wheel."

On the reverse side is the following:—

"Height 214 feet. Weight of wheel and cars 400 tons. Weight of axle 28 tons. Erected within the space of 6 months."

The coin is gold coloured, 1¼ inches in diameter with a milled edge.

Sor w'en the Reliance fairndry tuk a ton, tew or three, et 'oodn't 'a bin missed frum annyweere—even frum th'oxle!

S. P. Grice

Christopher Road, Halesowen.

* * *

Sir,

My husband has been lent a copy of **The Blackcountryman** by someone at work (Winter 1969, Vol. 2, No. 1 issue).

Please, could you tell me how we could be subscribers to your magazine, and also if there are any back numbers available, and how much they cost, as we are very interested in the magazine.

We have been in South Africa since 1968. My husband was born and bred in Gornal, Sedgley, and we would like to keep in touch with home.

Barbara Hampton.

Doonside,
Kingsburgh Natal.

The B.C.S. recently entertained a group of young Europeans at The Vine Inn, Brierley Hill, with a short talk and display of historical items and publications. This letter has been received from their leader, Miss H. Hrach.

Dear Dr. Fletcher and Members of the Black Country Society,

It was a very interesting evening we were allowed to spend with you. All of us enjoyed it very much. Besides enjoying the atmosphere of an old English pub and having a very good beer (which I understand is part of the life in the Midlands), we were very glad to learn more by talking with you about the people and life in this part of your country. So the group and I thank you very much for inviting us to your pub and having such a wonderful time.

Helga Hrach.

The Experiment in International Living.

Sir,

I am working on a biography of my great-grandfather, Samuel Storey, M.P. for Sunderland, 1881-1895. In the early 1880s he was a partner in a newspaper syndicate financed by the American millionaire, Andrew Carnegie. The syndicate built up a chain of newspapers which included the **Wolverhampton Express & Star, Midland Counties Express, Midland Counties Guardian, Wolverhampton Chronicle, Walsall Free Press** and possibly the **Northampton Guadrian.** They also founded a short-lived paper in Birmingham, the **Midland Echo.**

I would be interested to hear from anyone who knows anything about these papers at that time or about people connected with them, in particular Thomas Graham (Wolverhampton), Edward T. Holden (Walsall), Samuel S. Campion (Northampton), John Kilbourn, Hugh Gilzean Reid, Theodore Fry and William Horton.

Miss P. J. Storey.

29 Macdowall Road,
Edinburgh, EH9 3EQ.

* * *

Sir,

Through you, I would like to apologise to readers of my work on West Bromwich, recently published by the Black Country Society, for errors which I failed to eliminate on reading the proof. Page 11, line 25 should read: 'Sir Samuel Clarke' not 'Sir Charles.' On page 27, line 19 'a subsidiary of the Abbey of Hales in the diocese of Worcester' should be deleted.

D. Dilworth.

Pennyhill Lane,
West Bromwich.

N.B. 'West Bromwich before the Industrial Revolution' is available from the Society (40p plus postage).

* * *

Sir,

These are the words of a song that my grandmother used to sing:

"The Turkey saw the Bear,
A watching at his lair,
Our enemy stood watching at his ease,
If I should make a spring,
Remember I am King,
So kindly keep your distance, if you please, Mr. Bear."

I have put in the capital letters believing that the song had some political meaning.

I would be most interested in finding out more about it, if that is possible. Perhaps a reader of **The Blackcountryman** may be able to help.

Janet Smith.

Pound Road,
Oldbury, Warley.

* * *

Sir,

I write in connection with the photograph of a steam traction engine (**Blackcountryman,** Spring 1972) and the comments by Mr. Boulton (Summer 1972). I have discovered, quite by chance, that the showman's engine mentioned by Mr. Boulton is now in the possession of a Mr. Connor, of Charleston Farm, Grindale, Nr. Bridlington, Yorkshire, where it is being restored to its original condition by him and a small band of helpers.

The dynamo bracket had been cut away, the coal bunker had been modified, and some of the canopy stanchions removed. Replacement of these has meant having special plates bent and rolled for the bunker and bracket, and obtaining brass bosses and twisted brass stanchion trims from the original suppliers to Fowlers.

Supplies of paint, as originally used by Fowlers have also been obtained, with details of the original green, gold and red lining. It is hoped to have the engine back on the road some time in 1974, in all its former glory. Incidentally, this engine, after purchase, was driven by road by Mr. Connor from Bedford, and got as far as Newark on the first day! Mr. Connor informed me that the engine is the last but one made by Fowlers; which would confirm Mr. Boulton's comments; I do not think, however, that this is the engine shown in the photograph.

For the technical (which I am

not very) the engine is a 9 H.P. Compound, and is practically silent in operation, and the owner claims that it cannot be heard from a distance of twenty yards or so!

All this information is straight from the horse's mouth; I met Mr. Connor quite casually in a country lane, and he seemed quite happy to invite me to his farm to see his latest acquisition. He also has two other smaller engines, a 7 H.P. and a 4 H.P. (sounds daft, don't it), which are regularly used around the farm or at rallies and demonstrations in the area.

If maybe, other readers find themselves in the area of Charleston Farm, I feel sure that Mr. Connor will be pleased to see them.

C. Taylor.

All Saints Road,
Wolverhampton.

* * *

Sir,

With reference to footnote (iv) of my article "The Halesowen Cavalry," which appeared in **The Blackcountryman,** Autumn 1973.

The town of Wednesbury also raised a volunteer military formation at the time of the French wars. A manuscript in the reference section of Wednesbury Library discloses the resolutions passed at a vestry meeting, with regard to the formation of a Voluntary Association, in 1798.

The manuscript is quoted here in full, with the kind permission of Wednesbury Library.

"COUNTY OF STAFFORD
April 30th, 1798.
WEDNESBURY LOYAL
VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION
At a meeting held this day at the Vestry:—
The following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to:—

RESOLVED—That in persuance of the fifth and sixth clauses of the circular letter from the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, one of His Majesty's principle Secretaries of State, to the Lords Lieutenant of the Counties suggesting the propriety of encouraging Armed Associations for local defence, and that 'even though the offer of their services" should be limited respectively, to the town in which they are raised, and within a few miles thereof, such services would be accepted of by His Majesty—We do hereby agree to form ourselves into such armed Association, for the defence of our most gracious king (whom God long preserve) our excellent Constitution, and the protection of the Town and parish of Wednesbury, and not be called out to a greater distance from this town, than five miles, unless it is voluntary consented of this Association.

THAT We, the members composing this Association, for the purpose of strengthening the hands of the Government, the security of private property, and the preservation of good order, in this town and parish, at the requisition of the civil power, commanded by officers elected by ourselves, and approved and commissioned by His Majesty, do associate, unite, and by the ties of honour declare ourselves to be one inseperable Corps, to be called the Wednesbury Loyal Association, and do promise and engage to obey the orders of our Officers, in the attendance, discipline and duties of the Corps.

THAT a plain neat uniform, consisting of a blue coat with scarlet collar, military lappel, scarlet edging, and small gilt buttons, having the letters W.L.A engraved thereon, and a Crown over the letters; a white kerseymere waistcoat, and blue cloth pantaloons; be found and provided by every member of this Association, at his own individual expense: but it is the wish of the Association to receive arms from the Government.

THAT This Association shall consist of one Captain, one Lieutenant, one Ensign, three Sergeants, three Corporals (to be

chosen by ballot) two drums and sixty rank and file, at the least; (and that Samuel Addison be Captain, John Constable, Lieutenant and John Harper, Ensign).

THAT Samuel Addison, John Constable, John Harper, James Alexander, Henry Tibbats, Thomas Hawe, Thomas Russell, William Rock, James Allport, Benjamin Constable, Simeon Constable, William Kendrick, Thomas Negus, Joseph Spittle, and John Rock be a provisional Committee, to take the necessary steps to procure His Majesty's most gracious approbation, of the services of this Association.

THAT Any further regulations, not altering the preceding resolutions, may be made at a General Meeting, by a majority of the Association present.

THAT a copy of these resolutions be laid before His Majesty, for his most gracious approbation.

GOD SAVE THE KING

Signed for eighty persons and upwards . . . . (There follows the fifteen signatures of the committee members listed above)."

The opening of the second paragraph of the resolutions, throws a light on the purpose of the raising of the Volunteers, beyond the more obvious necessity of war. " . . . . for the purpose of the strengthening the hands of the government, the security of private property and preservation of good order." Quelling civil disturbances and maintaining the status quo was more in the minds of the volunteers than altruistic patriotism.

Volunteers paid for their own uniforms and this prohibited the poor labouring classes from joining their ranks.

The restriction of service to within a five mile radius of the town ensured that the volunteers could protect their premises in the town without any fear of being obligated to 'fight' further afield. Of course this is not to say that if the 'crunch' came, the volunteers would not voluntarily consent to engage an invader beyond the five mile radius. However, despite prevalent invasion scares, the immediate threat to the bourgeois came from the industrial and agricultural labourer.

Robert Williams.
Amblecote, Stourbridge.

* * *

Dear Mr. Simpkiss,

Thank you for sending " A Capful o' Nails ", I have enjoyed reading it very much. It is a real piece of social history, and there was certainly a clergyman very like the Revnd. Allardyce in the 1870s. He was the Revnd. Angelo—if I remember the name correctly—Vicar of St. Mark's, Ocker Hill, Tipton.

An old lady, who was 90 in the early 1940s when I knew her, was confirmed by him and told me conformed by him and told me much about how concerned he was for the welfare of his parishioners, how their poverty stricken condition weighed on him until in a fit of depression he cut his throat.

Another old gentleman gave me the exact date of this tragic happening. It was March 8, 1888. He (the old gentleman—whose name I forget) was 8 years old at the time, and sold newspapers. He remembered how quickly he sold out that night.

It would be interesting to know more about this kindly clergyman —all the old people (in their late 70s or 80s in 1945, 6, 7) remembered him personally or had heard their parents speak of him. So I hope we may sometime have an article in the **The Blackcountryman** about this kindly man.

Muriel W. Caesar.
Nunnery Road, Canterbury.

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