

THE BLACKCOUNTRYMAN



3/6

Vol. 1

No. 2

NUMIS-PHILAT

40 HIGH STREET, BRIERLEY HILL, STAFFS.

Stamps

Coins

Accessories

Approvals

All Coins and Stamps bought and sold

Hours : Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri., Sat., 10.30 to 5.30 p.m.

Late night Friday till 7 p.m.

CASTLE COIN STAMP CO.

115 SALOP STREET - DUDLEY - WORCS.

Telephone 55747

**COIN, MEDALS AND STAMPS
BOUGHT AND SOLD**

Postal and Approval Service

Hours : Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri., Sat. 10.30 to 5.30 p.m.

Late night Friday till 7 p.m.

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	2
Society News	3
The Black Country Is Britain	
<i>The Rt. Hon. Lord Wigg, P.C.</i>	7
Bilston Enamel—A Lost Art	
<i>J. A. Wylde</i>	9
When The Big Pipes Cum Ter Wensbry	
<i>H. Fletcher</i>	12
Question and Answer	
<i>Molly G. Williams</i>	13
A Town By Any Other Name	
<i>John Brimble</i>	14
The INGOT	15
Our Dorothy	
<i>Harold Parsons</i>	18
The Billy Russell Page	21
Snow, Pigeons and Charity	22
Coats of Arms of the Black Country	
No. 2 : Warley	24
Black Country Fingers Grasp the World	27
The Cog	
<i>Harold Parsons</i>	30
Two Rogues of 'hampton	
<i>Jean Marsh</i>	33
Where and What	36
Once There Was An Abbey	
<i>Vivian R. Lupton</i>	38
South Staffs. Works Managers	
<i>W. M. Larke, C.B.E.</i>	40
Yell's and Beyond	45
Two Gentlemen of Yell's	
<i>James H. Ruston and W. Homer</i>	49
Venice of the Midlands	
<i>F. Pepworth</i>	57
Tipton Wake	
<i>John Brimble</i>	60
From the Archives	62
Book Review	64
Correspondence	66

Published by The Black Country Society.
 Printed by Reliance Printing Works, Halesowen, Worcs.
 April, 1968.

Copyright of contributions is the property of the author.
 Editor: H. Parsons, Heathcote, White Hill, Kinver. Tel. Kinver 2154.
 Advertisement Manager: W. Homer, 48 Common Road, Wombourne,
 Wolverhampton. Tel. Wom. 3932.

EDITORIAL

SUCH was the demand for the first issue of this magazine that a reprint was necessary. That is all that need be said, really. Success has greater impact than any amount of editorial spiel, and anyway the victory is yours—readers, advertisers and distributors alike, all geared to the conviction that the Black Country needs its own authoritative publication in the world of print.

Brushing the webs of praise from our eyes, what lessons have we learned from the first issue? Firstly, that a stiffer cover is desirable for something that is to be treasured and, we believe, retained in bound volumes on the family shelves. Secondly, we have discovered that readers are loath to mutilate their copy by tearing out the application forms printed within its pages.

Both points have been rectified. Application forms for regular issues of The Blackcountryman and for membership to the Black Country Society are now printed on a loose leaf insertion. Please make use of it (tho' not in the traditionally vulgar manner!)

Let no-one think that interest in the Black Country, its traditions, culture, history and industry is to imply a condition of staid senility. The proportion of teens at Black Country Society meetings proves that, on the contrary, it is definitely 'making the scene'.

Further issues of the magazine will bear this in mind.

Meanwhile—no complacency. Rather, consolidation and a steady build up to a really large circulation.

Ten thousand? Twenty? Is it too much in an area of some $2\frac{1}{2}$ million people?

THAT many? . . .

Arr, we'm found as 'ow them
Brummagem folk like it an' all!

SOCIETY NEWS

The Black Country Society has now entered its second year of existence. The first two months of the new year were quite eventful.

PERHAPS the most outstanding feature of this period has been the publication of the Society magazine, 'The Blackcountryman.' It has long been said that the area needed its own publication dealing specifically with local topics, and from the keen interest shown in the magazine it would seem that the Society has provided the answer. The original 2,000 copies were quickly sold and a reprint became necessary in order to cope with the demand. Scores of letters of congratulation have been received and it is pleasing to

see that large numbers of Black Country exiles, living elsewhere in the country, have written for copies. As happened with our Christmas cards, it appears that a number of copies of the magazine have found their way to Australia, Canada, and other distant lands.

The magazine has so stimulated interest in the Society that many readers have chosen to become members.

On the evening of Sunday, January 7th, comedian Billy Russell was made a Honorary Vice-Presi-



Mr. Billy Russell receiving the Hon. Vice-Presidency of the Black Country Society from Sec. J. Brimble. (Left) H. Parsons, Editor, Black Countryman.

dent of the Society for his services to the Black Country during his many years in the entertainment sphere. His appearance at St. Thomas's Church, Dudley, to speak in support of its 150th Anniversary Appeal Fund, provided the Secretary with an opportunity to confer the title, and for members of the Society to meet Mr. Russell.

Later in the month—on January 17th—a dinner was held at the Ward Arms Hotel, Dudley, to mark the first anniversary of the Society.

and sporting manner in true Black Country tradition, and when it ended the Society team were declared the winners. Similar domino matches have been arranged for the near future.

During the month a letter of congratulation regarding the Baggeridge Medallion was received from his Lordship the Earl of Dudley, who had previously been presented with medallion No. 1. He sent his good wishes to the Society and for its future.



ANNUAL DINNER

Photo: George Bowater

Despite the short notice given, over 60 people turned up to enjoy an excellent meal and the entertainment afterwards provided by folk singer Jon Raven.

It is intended to make this dinner an annual event, with the possible inclusion of a dance.

A week later the Society branched into the sporting field, when a domino team composed of members challenged a team at the White Swan, Burnt Tree, Tipton. The evening went off in a friendly

The medallion, incidentally, also received good publicity when it was shown on B.B.C. television.

On Sunday morning, 18th February, a small party of Society members donned overalls, safety helmets and lamps, and made a three hour tour of the underground workings of Baggeridge Colliery. Although covered with coal dust on their return to the surface, members thoroughly enjoyed their journey into the bowels of the earth.

As the colliery closed in March, this was the last chance the Society had to visit.

Three days later, a Society meeting took place at the Union Inn, Tipton. Mr. Henry Green addressed members on the subject of the Limestone Workings of Walsall. The speaker, who is a first hand authority on this little-known subject, gave a most enlightening talk, illustrated with a number of rare photographs and plans. The attendance at this meeting was extremely high, over 70 people being present.

The various sub-committees of the Society have continued with their good work. The Drama

Group are busy rehearsing new sketches, and special attention is being given to a project whereby they can visit hospitals, old folk's homes, clubs, etc., thereby bringing the Black Country Society to the people.

The Photographic Section is still actively engaged in reproducing old prints and in taking shots of the present-day scene; the whole forming an already impressive collection.

The History of Local Transport Section is also collecting a considerable amount of relevant material.

John Brimble.

BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY SPRING PROGRAMME 1968

Wednesday, April 17th, 8.0 p.m.

The Oak & Ivy Inn, Oxford Street, Bilston (A41).

COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

A talk by Mrs. Edith L. Ford, Secretary, West Bromwich Council for Community Relations.

Tuesday, May 21st, 8.0 p.m.

The Vine Inn, Delf. Brierley Hill. (On the Brierley Hill—Cradley Heath 'bus route. Book to Delph corner.)

THE CHAIN AND NAIL TRADE

A talk by Mr. Ned Tordoff, illustrated by his own songs.

Wednesday, June 12th, 8.0 p.m.

The Union Inn (Upstairs Room), Union Street, (Off Owen Street), Tipton.

THE THEATRE IN THE CLEARING

Sketches presented by the Drama Sub-Committee.

BARGES

Rings flashing at her ears),

know;

6

The Black Country IS Britain

The Rt. Hon. Lord Wigg, P.C.

WHEN I was a youngster in the infants class of my elementary school, I thought the world was a beautiful place. The sky was blue, the grass was green, flowers came in spring, the sun in summer and the snow in winter. It seemed to me that life was pretty good.

Later, I half listened to some of the lessons in school about "the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate . . ." etc. These facts of life seemed a bit cock-eyed to me, even at my tender age. And I never could accept the crack-pot principle of a need for two nations—the rich and the poor.

About the age of nine I clearly recall a geography lesson on The Black Country. I can even remember the words in the text-book under a hazy, murky splodge of printer's ink which was supposed to be a picture of "a manufacturing district in Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire." The caption explained "The presence of coal-mines and iron-works gives the landscape a black appearance." Outside my class-room window the sun was shining and birds were singing, and here I was looking at a picture of the heart of this England in the twentieth century.

Perhaps it was at that moment that I became a Socialist, and I began to hate those who through personal greed and self-seeking and lack of thought could rob their fellow-men of their birthright of beauty and decent living conditions. A few years later, when my mother brought me to the Black Country—where she was brought up—to visit the grave of my grandparents, I realised the enormity of what had been done to the fair face of the Midland fields by Victorian industrialists who had torn the guts out of the land, had said “where there’s muck there’s money” and then had retreated to their country hide-outs, leaving their workers to sweat it out in the smoking, noise-some shambles their industrial ambitions and avarice had created.

Of course it is true that Britain depended then, as now, on the strength of its work-people, the skill of its craftsmen, the inspiration of its inventors and the business acumen of its financiers. But there must always be a guiding principle of humanity running through the whole complex. Otherwise the little man, the least able, the weakest and the neediest is left in the cold.

Thank God that enlightened people at last saw the errors of those who made the country black during the Industrial Revolution. When I left the Army the Midlands as a whole was already beginning to throw off the air of decay and squalor which had oppressed it for a hundred years. Just how bad things had been, and what revolutionary changes were taking place can be read on pp. 6 to 40 of the “Review of the Public Health Services of the County Borough of Dudley for the period 1922-1939.” Historians and sociologists should read this important document. It is engraved on my heart and conscious as a record of “man’s inhumanity to man.”

Just as a nation can only be as great as its individual citizens, so it is with a geographical area. The Black Country, which from the eighteenth century onwards gave its mineral resources and its mind and muscle to make Britain wealthy, had developed a group of warm-hearted, tough, hard-working, shrewd individualists. These were the sort of people to know, to understand and to love and to serve during my twenty-two years as Dudley’s Member of Parliament. Amongst them I number some of my closest friends.

The interesting thing is that the so-called “Black Countryman” is a relatively modern phenomenon. Trace back his ancestry and it is just as likely to land you up in Dumfries or Dowlais or Durham or Dover as it is to set you down in Dudley. Black Country folk are an amalgam of all our people, from North, South, East and West—and today from overseas. Which is the reason, of course, for the title of this article.

WHEN we think of the Black Country we think in the main of heavy industry, coal mining, iron making and founding, and not in terms of beautifully produced articles of enamelled copper. Such work was done in Bilston and other parts of the Black Country during the middle part of the eighteenth century. Although these articles are much sought after by collectors today, many were commonplace things in everyday use at the time of their manufacture.

Enamelling is an ancient craft, existing examples of which date

BILSTON ENAMEL . . .

back some 3,000 years. This art was practised by the ancient Greeks and Romans and is also displayed in relics of Saxon and Celtic ornaments. The forms of application differ considerably from the present time, and in many instances the enamels were applied to precious metals such as gold and silver.

The main types of enamelling art are Cloisonné, Champlevé and Basse Taille. These processes were worked on a metal ground, and in the case of Cloisonné the design was formed by brazing fine wire to the base metal, and filling in between with coloured enamels which were subsequently fired. This

process was flourishing in the 10th century in and around Southern Europe and was developed to a high degree in China. Some of these enamels are of exceptional beauty.

The difference with Champlevé enamel, which developed somewhat later, was that the base metal was hollowed out to take the enamels. Some of the finest work of this type was produced by the Limoges School in France.

In the case of Basse-Taille, developed in France and Italy, the design was produced by carving below the surface of the metal and then filling in with enamel.

In Limoges, direct enamel painting was also developed, and many fine examples are in existence. This method is more akin to the

A Lost Art of the Black Country

process used by the Bilston enamelers, designs being applied directly to a coloured enamel ground.

Enamelling was started commercially in this country about the middle of the 18th century, Bilston being the main centre in South Staffordshire, where goods in japanned metal were being produced much earlier.

Battersea, however, enjoys a distinction somewhat greater than it deserves, as the factory was only

in existence for some three years from 1753.

English enamels may not be regarded by some as great art, many of the products being designed for the average purse, and commercial considerations played an important part. As today, the competitive factor was very real, and ways and means of producing more cheaply had to be kept well in mind.

Typical examples of the kind of articles produced by the Bilston enamellers were snuff boxes, needle cases, candlesticks, scent bottles, bonboniers, medallions, plaques, bodkin holders, etui and pictures carrying a wide variety of designs applied by transfer and hand painting.

The basic articles were produced in thin copper to which was applied a whitish enamel. This enamel was of a fair thickness when compared with modern vitreous enamel.

The simple description of old Bilston enamelling is the fusion of powdered glass to metal, applied in paste form. When fired in a muffle or kiln, the enamel is fused to the metal, colours being introduced by various metallic oxides. After each colour application, the article was further fired, then the edges finished off with a brass metal strip or other pliable material.

CHIEF FACTORS

Some of the chief factors enhancing the quality of Bilston enamelware was the improvement in the quality of copper and the introduction of larger muffles. It is believed that transfer printing was used extensively at Battersea, the range of designs being very considerable. It is thought the expenditure on

designs and engraving may well have led to bankruptcy, which is said to be the reason for the Battersea factory closing down.

DIPPING

It is interesting to note that about 1776, the method of applying paste enamel was superseded by dipping, which gave a much better finish to the edges and tended to reduce cost. It is said that the designs of Battersea enamels were influenced somewhat by Chelsea porcelain and this could well be due to the proximity of the two works. No doubt at that time, as now, there were exchanges of craftsmen and designers and this could apply further afield especially when the Battersea works closed. Furthermore, with the closure of Battersea, some of the engraved plates for transfer printing could well have been procured by the Bilston factories. This may well have been the reason why much Bilston work is mistaken for Battersea.

The main enamelling works in South Staffordshire were situated in and around Bilston, but there were other works at Wednesbury and Birmingham. Here again it is more than possible that designs were influenced by the porcelain makers of the Potteries and Worcester. There were quite a number of enamellers active in Bilston during the middle and latter part of the 18th century, one of the best known being Benjamin Bickley. Some outstanding work was done by Matthew Boulton at his Soho works in Birmingham.

It is sometimes suggested that these enamels were first produced at Battersea, but local records show that enamelling work was being

done in South Staffordshire before 1750.

The Bilston enamel trade was in being at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution which contributed to its decline. It was about this time that the area was developing in a way that was to earn it the name of the Black Country. With the advent of coal, iron and clay mining, blast furnaces and foundries opened up, and no doubt the industrialists were more interested in these new developments, thus contributing to the falling off of the enamel trade.

In retrospect, one wonders how and why trades and industries disappear. Take, for example, the making of wrought iron, for which Staffordshire was world famous; it would be safe to say that no

wrought iron is made in the Black Country today.

With the pressure of these new heavy industries, which were boosted by the Napoleonic War, labour may have drifted away from the enamelling trade to obtain better wages. In addition, certain export markets would be closed, thus causing a recession. This all too familiar situation probably meant that skilled workers left the industry never to return, as by the end of the eighteenth century the number of active enamelling firms was very small indeed. Before the middle of the 19th century, production had reduced substantially. The new industries, stimulated further by the opening up of canals, may have offered better conditions of work, although still fairly grim by

Nearest to the Black Country

FOR YOUR 1968 CANAL CRUISING HOLIDAY

Dartline Cruisers

CANAL AND RIVER HIRE CRAFT

WOLVERHAMPTON

Four-berth and six-berth diesel engined Canal Cruisers for hire. Built on traditional narrow boat hulls, with tiller steering. Based on Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. Luxuriously fitted out with running water, stainless steel sink unit, full-sized gas cooker with oven and grill, refrigerator, comfortable 6 ft. berths and fitted wardrobes. Electric lighting throughout.

WRITE FOR FREE BROCHURE FROM :

DARTLINE CRUISERS

(Proprietors : J. B. ATKINS, M. ALBERTS)

44 Lyndhurst Road, Penn Fields, Wolverhampton

today's standards. One can, however, imagine the conditions under which Bilston enamels were produced: small, dark, ill-ventilated shops, acids and chemicals filling the atmosphere with 'foul vapours'. Small wonder that workers suffered ill-health and, in some cases, premature blindness; a poor reward for their nimble skills of art and craftsmanship.

Yet, in spite of all the technical skills and progress of the present

day, one wonders if the work of these old craftsmen could be reproduced and if so, to what extent. Certainly it is being tried, and one firm in particular, Copper Enamels, Deepfields, has recently come into being with the dedicated intent of training craftsmen in the production of artistic enamels to equal those that originated in the area more than two hundred years ago.

J. A. Wylde.

WHEN THE BIG PIPES CUM TER WENSBRY

AH must a bin abart ten at the toime when the big pipes cum ter Wensbry. Mon gas pipes they wuz—und Laws of Kidderminster laid um. We all lived down Dudley Street in them days, an' the pipes cum right down the middle o' the road. We kids 'ad a bostin toime, cos the blokes 'ad ter keep all the 'osses an' carts in ower yard.

The poor owd navvies day arf a-ter werk in them days. If yo wouldn't werk, the bummer ed check yer out the trench! Ah con see um all now: the blokes 'ad all got yorks rownd the trousers, an in the yorks they kep the clay pipes—so they wouldn't bost, see. Ah, there wuz no restin' on the shuvell in them days. Every mortal thing 'ad ter be shifted owt be 'ond; pick an' spaed, that's all they 'ad then!

But we med a bit owt on it, an' all, cos when these navvies dug down they cum ter the coal—it wuz ser near the top, see. All the wenches an' chaps cum runnin' owt, me an' all, ter pick up them lumps o' coal. Many a bucket we 'ad fer nuthin'. An' the woman next do'er ter we—'er 'ad a bit of a cafe an' 'er used ter serve break-fusses fer the gaffers. All on we kids got rownd in the brew'ous, an' anthin' that wuz left er'd gie ter we. Yo should a sin what wuz left sometimes. Them navvies, they'd fry up the baecon on the shuvell over the fire an' ate it up, swaet as a nut! But them gaffers, they used ter leave no end o' stuff. They'd got no appetite. Funny, wor it?

H. Fletcher.

Question . . .

Aynuk, dew yo remember wen we woz nippers in the good owd days
Wen Darlison woz noted f'nuts an' bolts, an' Willinall fermus f'kays?
We only lerned readin' an' ritin', and 'ow tew add up on a slert,
But nah they lern forrin lingo, an' they doh get the caern if they'm
lert.

These days if they want t'goo swimmin' they lern in a posh swimmin'
pewl,

But we lernt in the cut wi' the fishes, an' the werter stunk summat
crewel.

Them days there wort no posh bathrewms, we wshed in th'ode merdin
tub,

An' orl we got woz a lump o' carbolic wen Ma used t'gie we a scrub.

There wort no new fangled fish fingers, or the rubbish they seem't'ate
these days,

We 'ad chitterlins an' faggits an' pigs' puddin, or a good bersunful o'
gray pays.

They day a' no canteens f'dinners, an' we wotched aht fer th'ode
mon's roth

If we day 'urry up wi' the bersun with 'is dinner in, rapped in a red
cloth.

We day get bosted wi' munney like the kids dew these days, ode pal,

Th'ode mon useter cum wum stewed tew 'is gills an' then start t'set
abaht th'ode gal.

These days wi' their child sikolergy! There wort such saft things then,

Orl we got woz a good threrpin' an' tode not ter dew it agen.

There wort no wall t'wall carpet, we 'ad sond on the floer insted,

An' a nice 'am 'angin' on the ceilin' an' a pig or tew in the shed.

But as I am thinkin' it over as I sit in me ode pidgin pen

I doh think I'd like t'chernge plerces, f'times as is nah, f'times then.

. . . and Answer

Ah Ayli, Ah remember, but thez a lot o'things thee'st left aht,

Like grayhahnd an' wippit rercin', an' wen they 'ad cock fightin' bahts.

We kids useter serve terter pillins fer ode Mrs. Joons up the lern,

'er used 'um t'shuv in the pig-swill, an' we 'ad a few suck t'sher.

We day 'a such things as iderdahns on a code winter's nite on ower
beds,

We 'ad an ode coot o' me ferthers, or a bodged rug me muther 'ad
med.

'Er useter mek rugs bi the duzzen with ode coots an' ode cloos we'd
wore aht,

An' an ode flower bag from the corn-shap; nah yo doh see none abaht.
Me muther use t'wesh in the brew-ahse, 'er gorrupt at six t'begin,
We kids orl 'ad a tern at the mangle an' mind wi fingers day get
stuck in.

Dost remember wen we went t'Brewd, wen they 'ad a trip wi' the pub,
An' the brerk broke dahn an' th'oss bolted, an' they fahnd they'd
forgot the grub?

The kids woz all sqaylin' an' chelpin', the wimmin was blahtin' as well,
Then wen they manidged t'get th'oss back, the men orl cussed it like
'ell.

We useter goo' t'thode music 'all, an' sing till we woz fit t'bost,
An' 'ad a gud loff in the bargin', an' a copper woz orl it cost.
Ah, them woz days t'remember, we sher see the like on 'em agen,
But I cor 'elp feelin' nostalgik as we sit in the ode pidgin pen.

MOLLY G. WILLIAMS

A Town by Any Other Name

THE name Tipton has given rise to many amusing anecdotes regarding its origin. It was not originally a large hole into which stone was tipped, as seems to be a popular belief. The name, in fact, appears to be derived from a Saxon chieftain or warrior named Tibb or Tibba, who probably decided that he and his family and followers would settle in a clearing in the vast forest which once covered the area. This small settlement therefore became known as the 'tun' or town of Tibba; hence the name Tibba's tun.

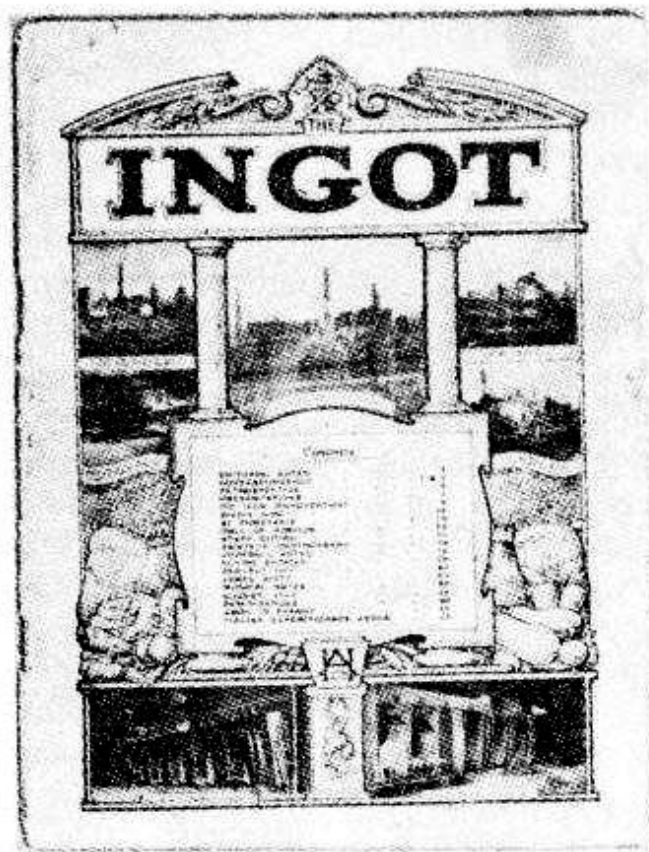
The name remained in a similar form for several centuries, the Domesday Survey having mentioned that in Tibintone five carncates of land were held of the Bishop of Lichfield by one William, and records of subsequent years reveals such spelling as Tibinton, Tybinton, Tibbenton, Tibeton, Tybeton, Tybynton, Typinton, Stybinton, Tybington, Tybenton, Typpynton, Tibinton, and Tippington.

The present name Tipton appears to have first occurred during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, for it can be found as such on a map of 1577. The name Tibbington however still lives on in Tipton. One of the wards of the town is the Tibbington Ward, and covers the area where the original Tibbas community lived in Saxon times.

The contraction of the name Tibinton or Tibbington to Tipton seems a considerable step, but when realised that Tipton is known as Tip'n in the vernacular, this is easily understood.

John Brimble.

In 1919, a year before it was acquired by Stewarts & Lloyds, Alfred Hickman Ltd., Bilston, published its own works magazine "INGOT".



A much-treasured copy has been loaned to "The Blackcountryman". The following extracts remind us of days when a trip to Bewdley was a great event, and that the humorous aspect of showing ladies round a steel works hasn't really changed . . . OR HAS IT?

STAFF OUTING TO BEWDLEY

A PARTY of 28 started from the works at 1.15 p.m. by motor charabanc and arrived at Bewdley at 2.55 p.m., after having had a splendid ride through beautiful country. All well, we arrived at our destination, and the majority of us had a walk along the riverside and

were photographed by Mr. W. H. Willis.

One or two of the party went boating, and at 5 o'clock the "roll-call" was sounded at the George Hotel, where the whole party, feeling fit and hungry, did justice to a substantial meal very ably provided

by the hostess, Mrs. Cooper. After tea Mr. F. Webb proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. S. Armstrong for the very able way in which he had carried out the arrangements for the trip. This was seconded and carried unanimously. We then had a musical turn. Several of the members of the Male Voice Choir sang "Comrades in Arms," and songs were also rendered by other members of the party.

When the musical programme was finished "some went in one direction and some went in another". Some preferred outdoor recreation and some the opposite. The time passed all too quickly, and at about 8 o'clock a party of about a dozen men "wet their whistles" and had another musical programme until 9 o'clock, when we loaded up, a "tight" load.

It was then that the fun began, each one feeling merry and bright. We came back through Cookley and Kidderminster, and I may incidentally remark that we called at a place called the "Island Pool" and that the host made us all welcome. It being a beautiful moonlight night, some of the boys went up the garden and discovered plum and apple trees—but I must say no more! I have not said they had any fruit, although their search was not a "fruitless one."

At 10.15 p.m. we had a final attempt at loading up, this time being a non-stop until we got to Goldthorn Hill, where some of the party got out and bade us good-night.

The remainder arrived at Bilston at about 11.45 p.m., after having spent a top-hole day under ideal conditions.

J. Penn,
One of the Nibs.

Anybody got a copy of that photograph? Any of the 'boys' still around?

We should like to know what really went on up the garden.—ED.

IGNORANCE IS BLISS

WHEN I first came to the works to learn the art of making iron and steel, not being of much use to anyone, I was usually detailed to show visitors round the place. One November night I was dining at the house of a certain august person, and in the course of conversation his wife asked me what I was doing now. I told her, "Oh, how interesting," she exclaimed. "Do tell me how you make steel?"

I protested that it would be a long and technical matter and suggested that possibly she might like to pay us a visit sometime and see the various processes for herself. "Oh, that would be lovely, and may I bring Evelyn too?" Evelyn being her daughter. "Certainly," said I.

It was arranged that they should be at the works office at 11 a.m. the following morning. At five minutes to eleven I fell in outside the office. In those days I was not so well acquainted with the habits of the gentler sex as I am now. At 11.30 I looked at my watch and said to myself "I will give them another five minutes."

Just as I was walking away, they arrived. "What a charming day," said Mrs. Z. "Do you know what

that abominable man in . . . wanted to charge me for a hat? ”

The first part we visited was the Blast Furnaces. The lady looked a little shocked when I told her what they were, but made no comment. They were both deeply interested in all the material put into the furnaces, but thought I was pulling their leg when I told them that iron came out of the bottom of the furnace. They absolutely refused to go up the incline on the waggon, so we went round to the front side.

“What is all this lovely sand for?” she asked. “That is the pig bed,” said I. “Oh, how interesting. I had no idea you kept pigs here; do they live in that little hutch at the end there (pointing to the wing minder’s cabin). Do let us go down and see them.” Making a move in that direction, she stepped in the launder.

When I explained they were not the kind of pigs she meant, but pig iron, she said: “How silly; why give iron such stupid names?”

Just then the iron began to run from the tap-hole. “Whatever is that stuff,” she asked. “That is iron,” I replied.

By now she was convinced I was pulling her leg, and got rather annoyed. She said possibly she did not know much about works but she did know iron when she saw it.

Thinking it best not to pursue the subject further, I took them to the Siemens landing. When I told them I was now taking them to the Siemens furnace they immediately forgot all about the iron, and became most interested. “What a good idea,” said Mrs. Z, “then I suppose this bit is worked entirely by demobilised sailors. I think that is perfectly splendid of you. And

do you have another furnace for soldiers? You know I am very much interested in the welfare of discharged and demobilised sailors. I must talk to them.”

NO PATIENCE

When I explained that it was not spelt ‘seamens’ but ‘Siemens,’ after the designer, she was most disgusted, “Really, what silly names you do use. First you talk about pigs when you mean iron, and now you call an ordinary old furnace a Siemens furnace. I have no patience with you men.”

At this moment they began to pour a heat of iron into the 500 ton mixer. This pleased both ladies immensely and they kept quiet until it was finished. Then Mrs. Z turned to me and said, “That **was** pretty. Do you think he would do it again if I asked him?” I said that I did not think there were any more ladles ready, and so we went down the landing and found them just ready to cast in the 40 ton furnace. So we waited and this again fascinated them, but at the same time they were evidently a little worried by the heat, and asked why we bothered to get everything so hot, it seemed to be such a waste of coal.

We then visited the Power Station, which they at once dubbed “a nasty, oily, noisy place.” They were very surprised to hear that the engines worked all night as well as by day and, being somewhat observant, one of them remarked that as there were so many engines doing nothing why did we not run them all during the day and let them all stop at night, so that the poor things could have a rest?

“ People are always asking why I don't move somewhere nicer, but having lived here all my life, my friends and interests are all centred in Dudley and district.”

OUR DOROTHY

“ OH . . . its our Dorothy. I remember you.” That's how she was recognised a few months ago when she called on one old lady during her Meals on Wheels visiting.

“ It gave me quite a thrill,” said Dorothy Round, England's No. 1 lawn tennis player of the late 'thirties, and twice women's tennis champion of the world. She won the women's singles in 1934 and 1937, and the mixed doubles in 1934, 1935 and 1936, partnering the Japanese player, R. Miki and then Fred Perry.

Dorothy was born 58 years ago in Park Road (now Parkway Rd.), overlooking Grange Park, Dudley, youngest of four children, and the only girl. The family business, Mark Round & Son, Building Contractors, has been active in the town for the greater part of a century, and Dorothy was fortunate in having a home which boasted that somewhat rare status symbol, a private tennis court.

“ Everybody except mother played. Until I reached my seventeenth or eighteenth birthday, my brothers were all better players than I was.”

She must have had this factor in mind when she wrote in her book “ Modern Lawn Tennis ”: Always play, for choice, with someone who is a better player than yourself. It is much better for you to be jackal to a lion in tennis than to be a triton among the minnows. Your game will go on improving only if you keep it polished up against better players than yourself.

So, in modern jargon, Dorothy apparently ‘ had it made ’—tennis court, good opponents, “ and a father who could afford to pay.” But, of course, it wasn't quite as simple as that. Her own recipe for success lists these ingredients:

ABILITY (a gift)

OPPORTUNITY (a home court and good opponents)

DETERMINATION AND HARD WORK

Characteristically, she places the most exacting last. It is impossible to transcribe to cold print the hours of painstaking and exhausting work that goes to the making of a championship tennis player.

"My first idea was to be a Physical Training teacher," says Dorothy. "Then I was invited to join the Priory Tennis Club, Edgbaston, Birmingham."

That exclusive Club set her on the way to putting the Black Country on the map wherever she went in the world.

"People used to laugh at my accent," she recalls, adding that she is not a devotee of people retaining their accent. "I don't think I mentioned the Black Country very much. If people didn't know where it was, or even where Dudley was, for that matter, I used to say I came from near Birmingham."

Dorothy remembers when Priory Road virtually ended at Dudley Girls' High School, where she was educated. What is now the Priory Estate was farmland. How could she have foreseen, turning into the school gates, that not only would a vast housing estate spring up a quarter of a mile further on, but that she herself, internationally

KNOW YOUR BLACK COUNTRY

In this issue our quiz is specially designed for
all lovers of the hop.

1. In what Black Country pubs will you find:
 - (a) A whippet named ROSIE in the bar?
 - (b) A weighing machine in the bar?
 - (c) A double six domino in the bar?
 - (d) A tree trunk in the passage?
2. "Forget the frost, forget the snow,
Beer's the best, home brewed by Joe."
Where will you find this rhyme, and who is Joe?
3. Where is:
 - (a) The Bull Terrier Pub?
 - (b) Old Mother Shipton's Pub?
4. Where in the Black Country is it said that the pubs had holes built in the walls and why?
5. Where in the Black Country can you still hear of a top and bottom Wrexham? What are the correct names of the two pubs?

ANSWERS Page 72.

We invite our readers to submit questions and quizzes for this feature. All entries used will be acknowledged. Please send your suggestions to the Editor.

famous, would one day play exhibition tennis there at the opening of the Priory Park.

Recalling the Whitsuntide Fetes that used to be held on Dudley Castle, Dorothy says: "The summers always seemed to be so much better. On Whit Monday we always used to put up a tent on the lawn at home, and fetch ice-cream."

Dorothy Round was married in 1937 to Doctor Douglas Little at the Wesley Methodist Church, Wolverhampton Street, Dudley—the same church where she used to teach Sunday School. "It was the year I won the Championship for the second time. I had no idea the wedding would attract so much attention. People had a half day. The streets were crowded . . ."

Declaring that Black Country people are genuinely warm-hearted, Dorothy added that no town could have been more excited at her triumphs, or more ready to acknowledge them. "If I had belonged to London or the South, it would have passed almost unnoticed."

Today, of course, with a 29 year old son teaching in London and a 21 year old daughter working as a secretary in Wolverhampton, Mrs. Little supersedes Dorothy Round in the public eye. She has been a Magistrate for the past nine years, is Chairman of the Dudley Voluntary Association for Mental Welfare, and was formerly a Governor of Sir Gilbert Claughton School.

Interest in tennis has never flagged and she is President of the Worcester Lawn Tennis Association, coaching girls during the Christmas holidays at Dudley's old swimming baths—covered over for the purpose, and a popular Midland venue for professionals coaching junior players.

Dorothy thinks that in general the standard of play is not as high as it used to be, but that really top-notch players are perhaps rather better. Certainly there are better facilities locally than when she was learning. "I always had to go to London."

Dr. Little (he died in 1958) was a well known golfer and county hockey player. It is not perhaps surprising that Dorothy took up golf also. She became a Staffs. County player, and still plays on Enville Golf Course.

Although she has played tennis all over the world and been everywhere, she still lives within a mile of her birthplace. "People are always asking why I don't move somewhere nicer, but having lived here all my life—my friends and interests are all centred in Dudley and district."

The house in which she is now living was once the site of another privately owned tennis court on which she used to play as a girl.

Somehow, it seems very fitting.

H.P.

The Billy Russell Page

“HORTICULTURAL FRUSTRATION”

'Ave I got troubles . . . here let me interdooce yer
Look at the flippin' fungus round me fuschia
An' me 'stursiums are sufferin' from neurosis
There's Black Fly on me beans . . . Club Root in me greens
An' there's a touch of Eelworm in me *salpiglossis*.
I try hard to make a show . . . All I want is just to grow
Loverley flowers and veg . . . like yer sees upon the barrers
But with all the perishin' wet . . . look at wot I get
A lot o' dirty great big maggots in me marrers.
Me fritillarias they are failures . . . there's earwigs in me dahlias
It' enough to give any bloke the needle
All me leeks 'ave to rot . . . an' now to top the lot
Me spuds 'ave got the Colerader Beetle.
A garden is a lovesome thing, God what . . . some poet wrote
Wot a lot 'a rot
Still I wouldn't give my little plot away
Though every pest it seems to lure 'em
We don't 'ave to endure 'em
They say there's a certain way to cure 'em.
LET US SPRAY.

She: We're having mother for dinner on Sunday.

He: I'd rather have cold ham and salad.

Aynuk: The Council dow do nothin' for we.

Ali: 'Owst mean?

Aynuk: Well yow pays yer rates dow yer with yer rent . . . an' look at
the state a the roads down ower street . . . there's 'oles a foot 'igh

SNOW, PIGEONS & CHARITY

'AS cold as charity' might have been an apt comment by the organisers of the pigeon shows at Ettingshall and Darlaston on Saturday, January 13th. A heavy fall of snow in the morning followed by a rapid thaw in the afternoon made conditions underfoot treacherous and unpleasant. Entries and attendances at both shows fell accordingly, but nevertheless by the end of the day many good birds had changed hands and a useful amount had been raised for charity.

The show, organised by the Darlaston and District Social Services Club to raise money for the assistance of local aged and blind people, was very well supported. Entries came from Darlaston, Wednesbury, and Walsall. The club was fortunate to obtain as gifts for auction 44 birds from many of the outstanding local lofts; their quality was shown later when the large sum of £171 10s. 0d. was raised by the auctioneer. In the show itself the prizes were well distributed; it was good to see the names of some of the younger fliers appearing with those of their more experienced colleagues.

Turner Bros. took two first prizes and also gained the award for the best bird in the show. Joseph Fellows, whose success at Coseley we reported in our last issue, did not make quite such a sweep of the board at Darlaston, but did walk away with one first prize, the award for the best bird of the opposite sex in the show, and other lesser prizes. Messrs. Evans, Pitt, Jones and Wood also appeared amongst the first prize winners. At the end of the day the secretary, Mr. Wall, was able to report that a total of £220 had been raised. It was a remarkable achievement and the organisers and participants must be congratulated on a show that attracted the attention of so many local fanciers.

At the Bull's Head in Millfields Road, the Ettingshall Flying Club was worse hit by the weather. Their show arranged to raise money for the aid of local handicapped children attracted a high quality entry and some good donations. But entries were down and spectators were not so numerous as this highly successful club usually expects. Nevertheless, the auction of pigeons raised £62, and those flyers who did attend obtained some excellent bargains from the best local lofts. One of the five classes in the show had to be cancelled and winners in the others were mainly local fliers who had managed to get their birds along in spite of the weather. Mr. R. Jackson and Mr. and Mrs. Cresswell took the prizes for the best bird in the show and the best bird opposite sex.

Despite setbacks, Mr. Turner, the secretary, announced that £87 13s. 0d. had been realised by the show.

We must pay tribute to all the people who gave their services, time and sometimes their pigeons to help to raise money for the less fortunate people of Bilston and Darlaston. When pigeon flying is discussed there must be mention always of those fliers who, by their generosity, have in this way brought some happiness to others in the Black Country.



WED. . . .

**Sir Alfred Owen
presented the
Trophies and
Prizes to
Pigeon Flyers
of Darlaston,
Walsall and
Wednesbury
at the
Old Park Inn,
Wednesbury.**



. . . FEB. 7th

**Our Photographer
was busy
amongst Officials
of the
Local Charity
Organisations,
Prize Winners
and spectators.**

Photos: Alan Price



Coats of Arms of the Black Country

No. 2: WARLEY



Warley, the newest of the five Black Country county boroughs, was formed on 1st April, 1966, by the amalgamation of the former County Borough of Smethwick and the former Boroughs of Oldbury and Rowley Regis, and obtained a Grant of Arms on 30th June, 1966.

The achievement contains emblems derived from the Arms of the three former authorities. The lower part of the shield is divided diagonally into four parts and carries in the upper and lower parts, a gold lion rampant on a green background. On either side there is, on a gold background, a caduceus surmounted by a club. The upper portion of the shield contains a green lion passant on a gold background. The helmet, which is an esquire's, takes the form of a tilting helm and the crest is a gold Saxon crown from which issues a green demi lion rampant holding an arrow in his paw. The mantling is in gold and green, and the supporters, which are red, consist of a lion carrying an arrow in his mouth and a dragon with an anchor in his mouth. Most of the emblems are taken from the arms of families prominent in the history of the area. The lions rampant on the shield are from the arms of the Robsart family and the caduceus and club are from the arms of James Watt. The lion passant on the chief of the shield is from the arms of the

Somery family, while the double-tailed green demi lion in the crest is taken from the arms of the family of Sutton, Lords Dudley. The arrows appear in the arms of Matthew Boulton. The heraldic description is as follows:—

Arms: Per saltire Vert and Or two Lions rampant in pale Or in fess on either flank a Club in bend sinister surmounted by a Caduceus in bend proper on a Chief Or a Lion passant Vert.

Crest: Issuant from a Saxon Crown Or a demi Lion rampant double queued Vert holding with the dexter paw an Arrow barb downwards proper, mantled Vert, doubled Or.

Supporters: On the dexter side a Lion Gules in the mouth an Arrow proper and on the sinister side a Dragon Gules in the mouth an Anchor Or.

Motto: Unity and Progress.

THE INSIGNIA—

As a newly-formed County Borough, Warley did not possess any insignia of office but through the generosity of a number of prominent industrial undertakings in the Borough, it now possesses a Mace, a Mayor's Chain and Badge, a Mayor's Occasional Badge, a Deputy Mayor's Badge, a Mayoress' Chain and Badge and a Mayor's Consort's Badge. Robes for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were also provided in this way.

The Mace is 36 inches long and is in heavy gauge hallmarked silver, hard gilt. The head of the Mace is surmounted by the traditional Crown and around the head is engraved the name of the authority. On the front face of the head is a hand cut and enamelled Coat of Arms. On the reverse side is a silver plate with the engraved inscription recording the gift of the Mace. Below the head of the Mace is the Civic or Mural Crown leading down to the central boss, upon which is displayed alternate arrows and anchors.

The Mayor's Chain contains 25 links in silver gilt, each link incorporating the anchor, arrow

and Saxon Crown. The Badge is in gold of various colours and incorporates the Coat of Arms in gold, silver and enamels.

The Mayor's Occasional Badge is in hall-marked silver gilt with a pierced decorative framework. The centre is enamelled amber with the Coat of Arms, in relief, in silver gilt, silver and enamels.

The Mayoress' Chain in 18 ct. gold is 26 inches long and consists of 24 links. The Badge, which is also in 18 ct. gold, has an outer pierced ornamental framework set with pearls surrounding the central oval enamel painted Coat of Arms.

The Deputy Mayor's Badge is oval in shape with a pierced formation at the top and bottom. The centre carries the Coat of Arms in 9 ct. gold and enamels.

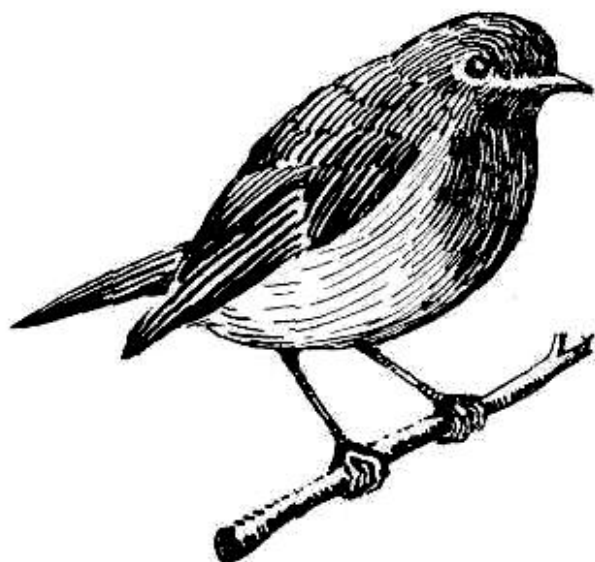
The Mayor's Consort's Badge, which is circular, is in 9 ct. yellow and white gold and consists of an amber enamelled centre with the Coat of Arms in relief executed in gold and enamels and it is surrounded by panels, ornamentally lined, alternating with wider panels carrying enamelled motifs taken from the Coat of Arms.

* * *

SEND
COPIES
ABROAD

For £1 (including postage) your relatives and friends abroad can receive four consecutive issues of "The Blackcountryman."

Send to: J. Brimble, 49 Victoria Road, Tipton.



BRITISH GARDEN BIRDS

Original Staffordshire enamel paintings
in full colour. 20 varieties. Framed.
6in. square.

2 Gns. each, plus postage

Write: Box JAW/B
HEATHCOTE, WHITE HILL
KINVER

BLACK COUNTRY FINGERS GRASP THE WORLD

NO, of course, the Black Country isn't all 'yesterday' and 'old hat' and immersed in the past. Neither is the Black Country Society, nor "The Blackcountryman."

Individually and collectively alive to the role which the region is playing in the present day, with the current emphasis on export, we have been monitoring the activities of Black Country firms in the world market place.

Does £10,000 worth of frying pan lids to Denmark from The British Heat Resisting Glass Co. Ltd., Bilston, suggest a sizzling stroke of business? Is our education improved to learn that Coseley Buildings Ltd., Wolverhampton, are selling complete school buildings in the West Indies, and what about the Brockhouse Organisation of West Bromwich securing an order for £146,000 worth of trailers for a sugar company in Kenya?

Sweet news, indeed! As also is the news that Horseley Bridge and Thomas Piggott Ltd., Tipton, are sending heavy pressings to the U.S.A. (competing with Uncle Sam on his own ground), and that Rubery Owen, Darlaston, has obtained its sixth order for the installation of automatic foundry plant in Japan.

A contract received by Chubb and Sons Lock and Safe Co., Wolverhampton, for the supply of cash dispensing machines for a French bank, adds up to £80,000—thank you! And Stewarts and Lloyds, Coombs Wood, are hotting up business in Spain by supplying direct-fired heater components for a Spanish oil refinery, while the Bronx Engineering Co. Ltd., Lye, have notched orders for machines to Algiers, Spain and Belgium, as well as a Finnish order for a 1,000 ton hydraulic press brake.

Tube-fabs Ltd., Walsall, didn't get the bird in Turkey: they got an order for stainless steel pipework for an oil refinery, and the Wednesbury factory of Yale tractor shovel division are 'digging the scene' with £80,000 worth of tractor shovels to the Burmese Government.

This is by no means a comprehensive round-up. How could it be when we only publish quarterly? **But it's all happening.**

Firms, tell us **your** export achievements.

REFLECTING THE TEEN SCENE :

Any Black Country Organisation, Group or Club, be it Folk, Pop, Drama, Pot-holing or Pottery, that would like to be featured in a future issue, contact the Editor.

WHERE AND WHAT?

Readers were asked to identify two pictures reproduced on page 36 of our last issue.

Space will not permit the printing of all replies. Here are two:

Number 1 is over Shelley's chemist shop, Church Street, Bilston, opposite the Market Hall.

Aesculapius was the Greek God of medicine, and was killed by a thunderbolt after rousing the anger of Zeus for raising the dead. His symbol was a serpent twisted round a staff.

I have no idea what he was doing in the Black Country.

Number 2 is in Oxford Street, Bilston. It is, or was, called the warm entry. Its walls were always warm from the factory furnaces on either side, and was used by courting couples, especially in the winter.

*Mrs. E. Carrier,
33 Burcot Avenue,
Dean's Road Estate,
Wolverhampton.*

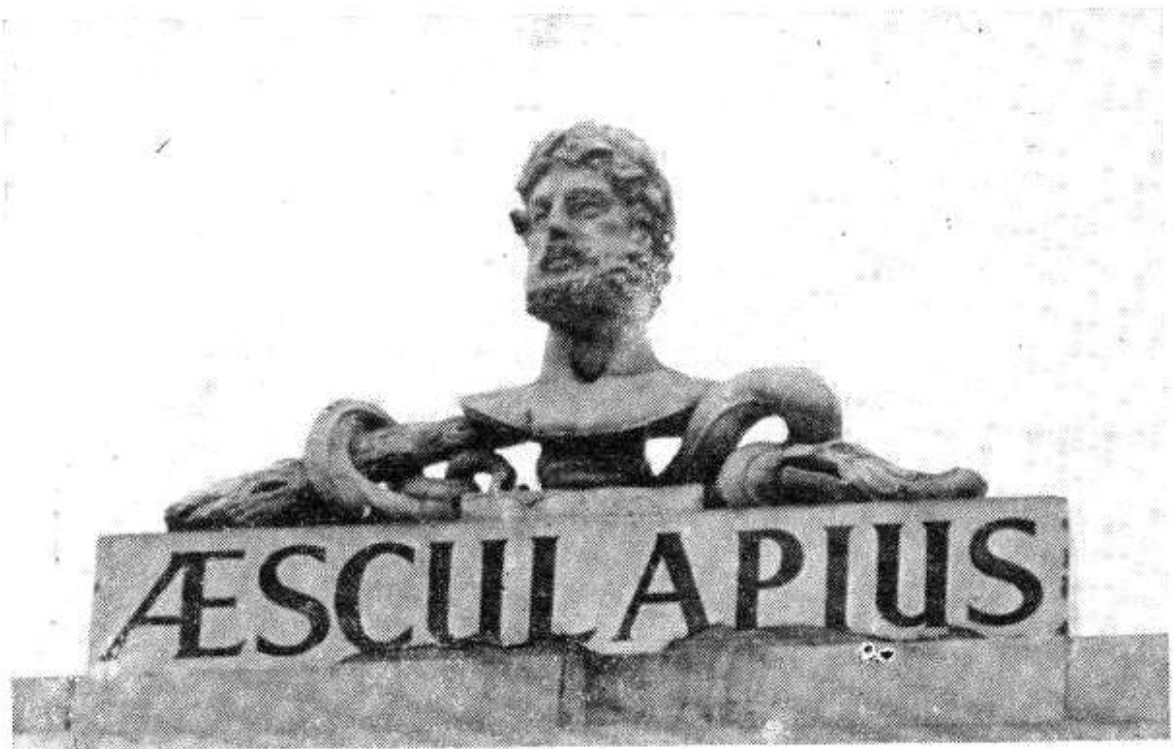
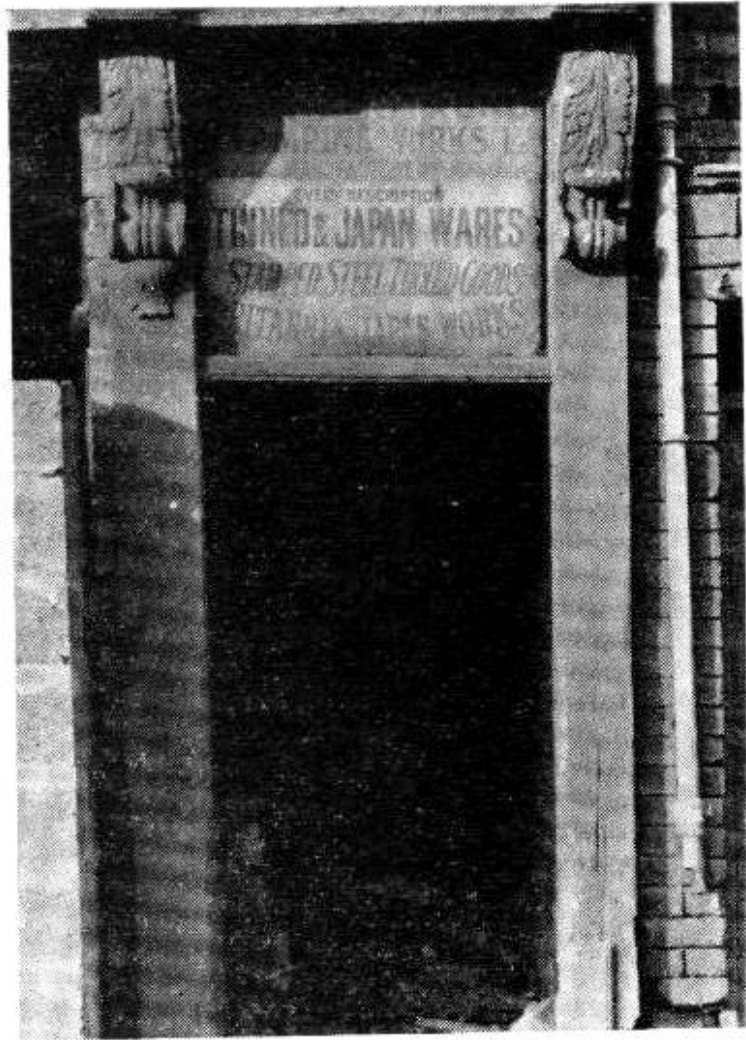
* * *

Aesculapius was the Greek God of medicine. The one pictured is on top of Shelley's chemist's shop in Bilston.

The other picture is the trade plate over the entry of which used to belong to my grandfather Armstrong. They used to call it the warm entry because it kept warm when the boiler was on, which was for the stamping machine, etc. Courting couples used to go down out of the cold and rain. It was known as Armstrong Stamping Works, Oxford Street, Bilston.

*Ken Armstrong,
Great Bridge Road,
Bilston.*

The passage is in Oxford Street, Bilston, and is known as the Warm Entry. The boiler of a Japanning works made the wall on one side warm, hence the attraction to courting couples.



The foreign gentleman is the God of Medicine. He appears over Shelley's chemist's shop, Bilston.

THE COG

Harold Parsons

SIXTY years he had been with the firm. Inside the canteen, Long Service presentations were taking place. Already the lesser fry—the mere twenty-five and forty year servants—had been up to the top table and shaken hands with the Directors. He was the last. The star-turn of the evening.

Brace yourself, Joe. This is it . . .

"Mr. Joseph Mercer . . . as a token . . . our esteem . . . accept . . . behalf . . . company . . . this gold watch . . ."

Joe heard the speech in snatches, as if he were eavesdropping in another room. Then the applause. Someone nudging his ribs. Urgent whispering.

"Tek it."

"Tek the watch, Joe."

Bewildered. Dazed. A mixture of pride and regret jostling with, oh, so many strange emotions, he submitted to the plaudits of his colleagues.

Joe escaped as soon as he could, slipping out by a side door into the factory yard. A reaction of emptiness lodged in his stomach as he turned down the darkened lane of workshops to the very oldest part of the factory. Here it was that he had begun. All those years ago he had brought his impish youth, his bright eye and the strength of his arm, to this now decayed barn-like structure.

Slates hung jagged, astraggle warped beams. Bird's nests clung to ledge and buttress. There was the corner by the blacksmith's hearth where he had smoked his first fag, crouching low behind the tin sheeting, the precious cigarette

soaked in sweat from having lain over-long inside the greasy lining of his cap.

The men had ragged him as they fashioned metal on the anvil.

"Yo mind it doh bite thee, lad."

"Lighted end guz ferthest from yer mouth, yer knows."

Then the urgent cry: "Gaffer's cumin'"—and quick as quick back to work. Fetching, carrying, brewing tea. Hammering, sawing, brewing tea. Always, it seemed, brewing tea.

So Joe mused, turning the yellowed pages of memory.

The faded evening light barely penetrated the building. But then, the old place had never been a palace of sunshine, and anyway, Joe had no need of light. What he saw was etched crystal clear in his mind. He saw Meg. She stood at her machine beneath the high wall. A comely wench indeed, with apple cheeks, jet-black hair, and a smile that captivated.

Was it really so many years ago?

"Doh be shy, our kid. Tek 'er over the cornfields."

"Yo'll be orlright. 'Er'll goo with anythin' in trousers."

"'Ush yer mouth, cor yer?"—and off would come Joe's jacket, his fists flailing.

So his mates riled him because he couldn't conceal the way he felt about Meg.

Dinner times, they used to squat on the canal bank eating their snap and watching the horse-drawn barges moving in and out of the factory wharf. Sometimes Meg would join them and Joe would make a place for her on a pile of sacking, a specially favoured place of his own, where you could command a wide sweep of the canal and see the lock-gates opening and shutting.

Now and then a barge would tie up and they would chat with the boatmen and their kinfolk. They were the gypsies of the waterways, their cabins as gawdy and resplendent in polished brass as any Romany caravan.

One of the water gypsies told fortunes. Not that you believed a word of it, of course. You chaffed about it afterwards, laughing and mocking. But not Meg. Never Meg. And one day, when they had jeered and tantalised the fortune-teller, rocking the barge till the pots and pans tumbled from their hooks, Joe found Meg sobbing.

He did not know that she was herself of the waterways: that through these same midday interludes her mother had fallen in love with a factory-hand, so that she had foregone her life afloat and wed him, to her lasting unhappiness. Joe had no way of knowing these things. But he comforted Meg, and she warmed towards him.

Seventeen, he was then. Seventeen, when he wooed the girl to a point bordering on an engagement. To celebrate the **understanding**, Joe gave her a lucky silver charm. But it wasn't lucky. For Meg's day was not renowned for its attention

to industrial safety measures. No accident Prevention Officer to ensure everything in order. One morning, as Meg worked her machine the overhead belting snapped and the leather thong whipped down with a crack like a pistol-shot, striking her on the forehead.

It was, they said, instantaneous.

Sixty years and a day he had been with the firm.

"Bay yer gooin' ter turn it in, Joe, lad?"

"Yo'n dun yer whack. Gi' sum other bloke a chance."

But Joe had no wish to retire. Having remained single in loyalty to Meg, and with all his waking life centred in the firm, there was little else. 'Sides, he was fit, weren't he? Bit o' rheumatics in winter. Eyesight not so good. What of that. He could still do a day's work.

The presentation watch, brought along today to show to his mates, would henceforth be set aside to wear at weekends and holidays.

Back to routine, then. Ah . . . but not quite. This presentation business had stirred up memories. He slipped away from his bench and was once more inside the old shop.

Now, however, it was full daylight, and he saw something that had escaped him the previous evening. The shop was in process of demolition: not the slow demolition of Time, but the ruthless demolition of Man. Joe's employers, ready enough to reward an old servant on the one hand, were equally ready to be done with cumbersome antiquity on the other. The old shop must be cleared away. That was the order. Fair enough! No use

arguing with progress. This place that had witnessed countless man-hours of sweat and toil, that had produced goods for export the world over when quality meant more than quantity, had served its purpose.

Three and six a week, Joe earned when he first started work. Six in the morning to six at night. Nothing to boast about. Hardly a state of affairs to bemoan. Even so it was a part of his life. Once the building was gone it would be, somehow, as if those years had never been.

Joe crossed to the rusty hunk of metal that had been Meg's machine. A gang of men clustered round it. They had broken up the concrete bed and were levering the machine onto rollers. Presently it would be pushed away, just as long ago the body of Meg had been pushed away from the spot where she had fallen.

Quietly, Joe edged nearer. The men were laughing and talking.

"'Ow much yer reckon it'll fetch fer scrap, Alf?"

"Scraip the rust off of it, there's nowt left." The speaker hit the

machine with a spanner. Rust and scale flaked to the floor.

Subconsciously, as if searching for some tangible link with the days that had been, Joe took his new watch from his pocket and felt the rough surface of the engraving. Yes, it was true. Sixty years!

"This watch belongs ter you, Meg," he whispered. "Yo've bin 'ere all through the years with me. It's yo' what's kep' me 'ere all me werkin' life. Lissen to our watch, Meg. Our watch . . ."

Now the machine was hoisted on one roller. The men heaved and strained ("Out o' the way, Dad"); brusque, busy men, anxious to be finished with the task and out into the sunlight. Then the mass of the machine moved from its bed. Joe uttered a cry and lurched forward. The watch dropped from his nerveless fingers and fell beside the object which the moving of the machine had revealed.

It was the silver charm he had given to Meg.

H.P.

Romance a' la B.C.S.

The first romance within the ranks of the Black Country Society is revealed with the engagement of Miss Linda Payton, 15 Gospel Oak Road, Ocker Hill, Tipton, to Mr. A. W. Hughes, 89 Bescot Road, Walsall.

Miss Payton works at the Central Library, Dudley, and Mr. Hughes is employed at the 'Midland Red,' Bearwood.

The couple, who met through the Black Country Society, are both committee members and share a common interest in the Drama Section, of which Mr. Hughes is director.

Black Country Mysteries & Oddities

No. 2.

WOLVERHAMPTON can claim the distinction of being the birthplace of two of the most notorious criminals of the eighteenth century.

It's something of a coincidence that their most sensational exploits took place in the same period, that of the early 1720's.

The better known of the pair has always been Jonathan Wild, perhaps the first master-criminal ever to operate in this country. But the other one, William Wood, the coiner, achieved the ironical distinction of obtaining Royal backing. Moreover, instead of getting himself hanged at Tyburn like Jonathan Wild, he held the government of the day to ransom and retired on a handsome pension of £3,000 a year. That, I should say, makes him unique.

In this present day of mass media like Television and Radio, most crime stories blow up and are forgotten in a matter of weeks—unless they reach the dimension of the Great Mail Bag Robbery. But most children in the Black Country of my day had heard of Jonathan Wild. He was as much an heroic and household figure as Robin Hood. We read avidly any re-issue of his story that appeared in the newspapers.

He was an unusual character, cool, audacious, and clever enough to twist the half-baked criminal laws of the day to suit his own greedy ends.

Two Rogues of 'hampton

Jean Marsh

As a young man in his home town, he was outwardly respectable, a tradesman, a maker of buckles. But while still in his teens he began to get the experience that was to be useful in the more fruitful field of the Metropolis.

It is said that his first venture into crime began when he was offered some goods that he realised were stolen property. He was much too smart to buy them for himself. Even in those days of inadequate crime prevention and detection, the receiver was punished as savagely as the thief.

So instead of buying the goods, Jonathan got in touch with the owner—anonously, of course. He said he could recover them for a reasonable price, provided no questions were asked, no charges brought. The deal was made, and the proceeds shared between Wild and the thief.

It looked a nice safe and easy way to make a profit. So Jonathan began to put crime on a neat business footing. He organised all the more reliable thieves and pick-pockets, planning their robberies, making sure that they only robbed people who were in a position to pay well for the return of their property.

Because he kept up his veneer of respectability and was content with reasonable pickings, things went well for some time. If one of his band rebelled or tried to hold on to the swag, Jonathan became what we now call a "snout"; he quietly betrayed the erring thief to the authorities. His band soon learned to obey orders.

But in a small town like Wolverhampton—as it was at that time—the secret of his activities eventually began to leak out. Jonathan decided it was time to move to a wider and more profitable field.

A REAL LIFE JEKYLL AND HYDE

He was already known to many of the London thieves, and was soon able to operate on a much larger scale. Most of the stolen property was now smuggled abroad for sale, Jonathan organising the traffic through a rascally ship-master. He bought himself a small ship eventually which sailed regularly under the pretence of honest trade. It plied between London and Ostend, Jonathan having opened a Belgian branch of his buckle-making business.

He became at this time a real-life Jekyll and Hyde character. As a wealthy and respectable tradesman, he was known to the City of London authorities, and soon began to play his old double role of stool pigeon.

This began in 1716 when a theatre-goer, returning home from Sadler's Wells was set upon and murdered. This wasn't the work of any of Jonathan's gang. He wouldn't allow anything so crude and unprofitable. But through his men he was able to find out the identity of the five toughs responsible. He passed the names on to the City Marshal, and even joined in the pursuit and arrest of the criminals.

He got rid of most of his rival crooks in this way, becoming such a successful thief-catcher that he was given freedom to do a good many things that not even the police are allowed to do today. He had the audacity to issue lists of stolen property—providing it was not property stolen by his own people—offering rewards to anyone returning the goods to J. Wild at the Old Bailey. He in turn collected a greater reward for their return to the victims.

His own gang soon abandoned petty thieving. Jonathan trained the better-spoken of them to mix in wealthy circles where the more worth-while pickings were to be found.

This double life went on until 1724 when, as so often happens, quarrels amongst his own people brought about disaster.

The Revenue officers became suspicious of Jonathan's ship-master, a Captain Johnson. No doubt Johnson smuggled in dutiable goods as freely as he took out stolen ones. He had to be replaced, and rather unwillingly joined the rest of the gang ashore.

But Johnson was accustomed to giving orders, not obeying them. He soon quarrelled with a surly thief named Edwards. Out of

revenge for Johnson's rough treatment, Edwards shopped Johnson. But Jonathan helped his former skipper to escape, and Edwards found himself arrested with some stolen lace in his possession. He in turn implicated not only Johnson but also Jonathan.

The case made a tremendous stir, not only in London, but also in Jonathan's home town. Investigations into his association with Johnson brought to light the whole of Jonathan's double life. He was eventually charged with being a receiver and also an organiser of criminals. The sentence in those days was death.

He was hanged at Tyburn in May, 1725, and buried at St. Pancras. But his coffin was later found to be empty and it is believed that he was removed for reburial somewhere in Wolverhampton. For years people tried to discover just where.

William Wood, the other Wolverhampton-born criminal was a very different type of man. He was an ironmaster, producing his own iron and copper. A man of means.

But he must also have been a greedy man. He soon saw a way of turning his copper into gold by using it in coinage. The Irish market looked the likeliest for his efforts.

It was the reign of George I, the king newly arrived from Hanover. He also was a greedy man who ate so much pudding that he was called Pudding George, and gave rise to the nursery rhyme, Georgie Porgie, Pudding and Pie.

As one greedy man helping another, King George let William Wood have the licence to make the coins, ha'pennies and farthings. For a fee of £300 a year, of course.

It is also believed that William bribed George's mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, for her assistance.

The coins made were of equal size and weight to those already in the Irish currency. But the quality was greatly inferior. Moreover, William made a far greater number than his licence allowed, getting his own agents to go over and sell them for good golden sovereigns. He flooded Ireland with the spurious coins to such an extent that a crisis developed.

When it was realised what had happened, tremendous anger was roused in Ireland. George I found himself with a rebellion on his hands, and William Wood was tried in absentia in the Irish Parliament and pronounced guilty of fraud.

However, he had already obtained another licence to coin ha'pennies, pennies and twopenny pieces for our then American colonies. So William didn't intend to be forced out of this profitable business without a fight.

There isn't any doubt that he threatened to expose those whom he had bribed for his patents, so Prime Minister Walpole saved face by granting him his £3,000 a year pension.

A crook, no doubt. But one with brains and ingenuity as great as that of Jonathan Wild.

BLACK COUNTRY RELICS &
ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

**WINDMILL
ANTIQUES**

(J. H. RUSTON)

95 WINDMILL HILL
HALESOWEN, WORCS.

'Phone (evenings):
Dudley 54815

PUZZLE . . . WHERE AND WHAT? . . . PICTURES

Where is it ?

What is it ?

CLUE :

*This could be
a defensive
outpost*

against invaders of the Black Country.

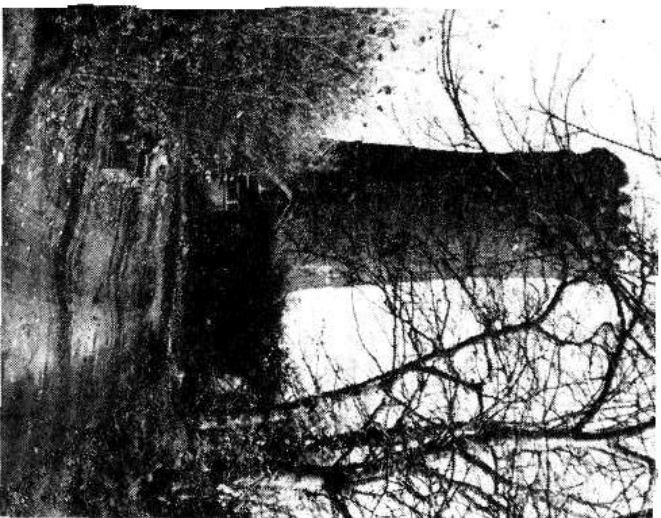


Photo: Alan Price

Where is it ?

*What was
mined here ?*

*What are the
buildings in
the background ?*

CLUE : Look at those squat chimneys!

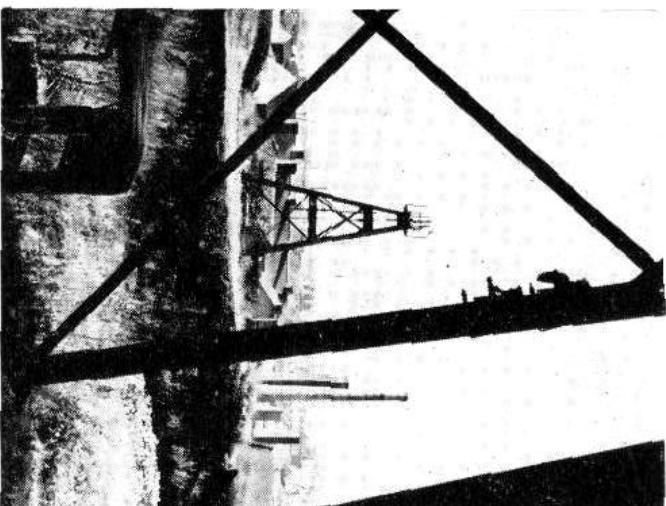


Photo: Alan Price

Answers to the Editor

LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN

No. 1

A rhyme from Lower Gornal

c. 1920

Mrs. Morgan's gone to jail

For milking the cow with the iron tail.

This rhyme refers to the reputation of a local woman for diluting her milk with water. The 'cow with the iron tail' is, of course, a picturesque way of describing the water pump!

There are said to be other verses of this rhyme. Do you know of them?

The Black Country Society is preparing for publication a book of the songs and games of children of the Black Country. In each issue of this magazine we shall print one song or game from the area, and we invite readers to help in this work by sending to the editor details of any children's songs or games they may remember, as well as those currently used by children in the region.

We appeal to all our readers to assist us in making the collection as comprehensive as possible. All items printed in 'The Blackcountry-man' will be acknowledged. Wherever possible, the approximate date and origin of the rhyme or game should be given.

Once there was an Abbey

Vivian R. Lupton

THE arguments as to whether Lightwoods House, in Lightwoods Park is to be demolished will no doubt be followed with growing interest by those who believe in the preservation of buildings of architectural or historic interest. At the present time Birmingham City Council, which is responsible for the upkeep of the building, wishes to demolish it, while Warley County Borough Council on whose land it stands wishes it preserved.

The present battle recalls the demolition a decade or so ago of Warley Abbey sited in Warley Woods—adjoining Lightwoods Park. Admittedly the “Abbey” was in a sorry state of repair, deterioration had set in before the last war, nevertheless its demise under the demolition gang’s arm and mechanical shovel is a matter for regret. Its architecture may not have been superb, it may have been a “hotch potch” of styles, but in its setting it was attractive to the eye. Had first aid treatment been carried out in the late thirties there is little doubt the building would have still been standing and would have been of use as a cultural or other centre.

It did, however, in its latter years prove its usefulness. It was the home of the Park Superintendent. It housed the golf club and during the war served for a time as a W.V.S. depot, A.R.P. centre and Home Guard Headquarters.

There was evidence that the “Abbey site” if not the building itself, must have had a long history not unconnected with Halesowen.

The ancient Abbey of Halesowen, founded by King John, possessed many granges, some were let to tenants and others worked by the monks themselves. One of these granges was situated at Warley and probably belonged to the latter class, as may be judged from the old names which cling to positions and localities, such as the “Chapel Field,” so known in 1490 as containing a chapel dedicated to St. Michael and the “Temple” situated in the woods and believed to have been built on the site of an old chapel-of-ease.

Warley “Abbey” has had many names in the course of the

centuries, it was known as "Wernlegh" in 1292, "Werneley" and "Wernley" in the 15th century, while old maps style the house "Warley Hall" and "Warley Abbey."

Mr. Salt Brassington in his "Historic Worcestershire" gives many interesting particulars of the history of Warley Abbey, making it clear that in the 13th century the Barons of Dudley were Lords of the Manor. The manor was held under a knight's fee by the de-Fokerham family until 1321, when it passed into the hands of Joan, the sister of the last of the Someries, Barons of Dudley, and wife of Sir John-de-Botetort who lived at Weoley Castle, Northfield, and who in 1358 bestowed the Manor on the Abbot and Convent of Halesowen. The Abbey was dissolved in 1538 and therefore the monks owned Warley, or part of it for over 200 years.

At one time there was to be seen in the old burial ground at Halesowen, a monument to one "Thomas Warley" who died in 1510, and according to his coat-of-arms was a gentleman of position. This is interesting inasmuch as it creates a link with the next mention of the estate in a deed dated 1678 between Thomas Warley of Warley Hall, in the parish of Halesowen, gent., son and heir of Gilbert Warley, deceased, William Booth of Witton, and Humfrey Jennens of Erdington. Reference is later made in an indenture dated 1656 made by Gilbert Warr, placing the Manor and premises in the counties of Salop, Staff. and Warr., in trust for his children, one of whom was Hester, wife of Thomas Hadley of Ridge Acre.

Later the famous banking family of Galton became possessors of Warley Abbey, and for 160 years or so the old connections with the Roman Catholic Church was renewed.

During the latter portion of this period, it was occupied by Sir Hugh Gilzean-Reid, first Member of Parliament for Aston Manor. While Sir Gilzean-Reid was in occupation Harry Furniss, the "Punch" artist was sitting in the lounge when he saw the "Grey Lady"—Birmingham's most authentic ghost—and he drew a sketch of her. The identity of the lady has never been satisfactorily settled, but it is supposed that she was the daughter of the man who owned the "Abbey" in the early years of the 17th century.

Alas, the building is no more, but perhaps its loss may serve as a reminder to those responsible for the future of our old buildings.

Author's note: *For several years I lived in one of the wings of Warley Abbey. It is true that the rooms were far too large by modern standard, difficult to heat and to maintain. Nevertheless while it may have been unsuitable as a dwelling it could have been adopted for some community use. As for the ghost of the grey lady, this I am sure is more legend than truth.*

The following constitutes the final part of the Presidential Address given to members of the Staffordshire Iron and Steel Institute by the late W. M. Larke, in July, 1966, on the occasion of its Centenary.

South Staffs. Works Managers

W. M. Larke, C.B.E.



THE broadening of the scope of the activities and interests of members of the Institute, and the tardy recognition of the part steel was to play in the development of Staffordshire industry, was accompanied by a new Constitution for "The reading and discussion of scientific and other papers on subjects connected with the trade." At the same time it was specifically stated in Rule V that, "Owners, managers and assistant managers of iron and steelworks, mechanical and mining engineers, analytical chemists, draughtsmen, foremen and officials shall be eligible to become members." So at last, after

a period of 17 years of trial and tribulation, but also a period of achievement, thanks to the faith and perseverance of a few enlightened and determined men, owners, managers, engineers and supervisors were brought together to discuss their work, to learn what other people were doing elsewhere, and to learn about new techniques such as "electrical science."

It is perhaps the educational side—a need stressed right at the beginning—that brought about the transformation and persuaded the owners that the objectives of the Association were after all some-

thing which they should support. There is no doubt in my mind that much credit must be given to Mr. (later Sir Alfred) Hickman and Percy Gilchrist for this change in attitude.

In 1887 arrangements were made with Mason's College, Birmingham, for evening class studies in chemistry and metallurgy. Mason's College was the forerunner of Birmingham University.

The forming years to the turn of the century were characterised by the presentation of papers of a high order, ranging from the terrifying problems of boiler explosions, which were frequent and lethal, and which led to the institution of a boiler attendant's certificate, to a study of the recently enacted Factories Acts in which a comparison was made with the then state of law of the law concerning women and young persons in various European countries, and seven different States in the U.S.A. The meeting and discussion were lively, the paper being given by the local Factory Inspector, who must have found the frank questions and apparently abysmal ignorance of the law on the part of his audience, to say the least of it, illuminating.

Perhaps too, we can at least understand the then President—Smith Casson—when proposing a vote of thanks to the speaker, taking up the question of the minimum age of employing children. He said, "Now when it was 12 and 16 we did not feel it oppressive, but at present, since they have raised the age from 12 to 14, and from 16 to 18 it is very inconvenient . . . the lads are not so amenable as those brought in earlier . . . they have not the same stamina. If they start at 12 they are able to get their

bellies better filled than those lads who come in at a later age." He ended up by saying that "it was preposterous only to employ people over 18 at full time," and pointed out that "Austria had reduced the age levels back to the old ones." Smith Casson ended, "If we are to have enough skilled labour in this district we shall have to do the same." The shortage of skilled labour crops up again and again as it still does.

In addition, of course, many papers of local, national and international origin were delivered on strictly technical subjects by people of outstanding ability. Names such as Percy Gilchrist, already mentioned, Frederick Seimens, Benjamin Talbot, J. C. Stead of Middlesbrough and F. W. Harbord to mention just a few.

Old practices died hard, and Staffordshire blast-furnace practice was well behind the rest of the country in 1884, when E. A. Cowper gave a paper on "Hot Blast and Economy in the Blast-furnace."

As he said in his opening remarks, "Had I not been pressed by my good friend, your President, I should not have ventured to have come amongst a number of gentlemen who manage blast-furnaces to talk about them." This diffidence may have been innate politeness or shyness, but later on in his paper he said, "If I describe details that are known to many of you owing to the large number that are at work throughout the world, I must beg your patience as there are, as yet, so few stoves at work in Staffordshire, viz. Stafford Coal and Iron Companies, works at Great Fenton, those at Messrs. Cochranes works, Woodside, the stoves at Mr.

Alfred Hickman's works at Wolverhampton."

It appears from the President's (Smith Casson) address in 1885 that his predecessor in office, John Hudson, had been very forthright in his Presidential Address about the unsatisfactory position of Staffordshire blast-furnace practice, and went on, "I am quite satisfied that if Staffordshire is to hold her own in the manufacture of pig iron, some further important steps will have to be taken to improve her blast-furnace practice . . . and that other ironmasters may see their way to follow the example he (Hickman) has set." (Cheers).

This same Presidential Address covered a new topic for the Institution, freight rates on the railways. He had a bold scheme which had been outlined in a paper before the

Social Science Congress the year before, to form a syndicate to improve the Grand Junction Canal—"One of the only canals that was not held in pawn as it were, by the railway companies"—so that steamers of a fair size might travel from Birmingham to London. The banks were to be raised by 3 feet but with no widening so as to allow 120 ton loads. The cost was estimated at £6,000 per mile, and the estimated rate per ton would be a maximum of 7s. 3d. compared with the existing 15s. 0d. that the railways refused to reduce. He went on to say that all efforts had failed so far, even the Corporation of Birmingham having turned his idea down. Then came a remarkable statement, bearing in mind the troubled labour relations that were one of the main causes of the formation of the Association. He

BAGGERIDGE COLLIERY COMMEMORATIVE MEDALLION



25/-

(£1 to Black Country Society
members)

Actual size, in bronze,
1½ in. dia.

Supplied in attractive case,
together with a short history
of the colliery

Orders to :

THE PRESIDENT, THE BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY
98 BESCOT ROAD, WALSALL. Tel.: Walsall 27989

concluded with these words: "I hear a good deal about reducing labour (to reduce costs and make themselves more competitive): but before we reduce labour from what it is we ought to take the proper steps; and I think if the working men of this district were made to understand the matter they would insist upon it that the preparatory steps were made." (Applause).

Alfred Hickman, by this time an M.P., read a paper on "Railway Rates" to the Institute, and what is recorded as having been "a largely attended meeting," and which included several M.P.s of the district, the Mayor of Dudley and with the Mayor of Walsall apologising for his absence. The consensus of opinion was indicated in the printed proceedings, which in the words of the 20th Annual Reports says, "This has done something to quicken public opinion to a sense of the seriousness of the subject to the district." Surely a sensible excursion into politics by the Institute and industry. The self interest was clear to everybody, but is there anything wrong with that? It was a long time before uniform rates would apply, and there was no Monopolies Commission in those days!

Two points may be made that are of interest, firstly the recognition of the desirability of taking the workmen with them—an early form of joint consultation—and secondly that although the scheme as proposed came to nothing at the time, the "Great Grand Junction," as Charles Hadfield in his recently published fascinating "History of the Canals of the British Isles" calls it, fought back over the years, although its through cost per ton mile fell to .101 pence. As recently

as 1935, nine years after the formation of the Grand Union Canal, of which the Grand Junction was a major part. Continental steel was actually imported through the Regents Dock to Birmingham.

The Institute continued to flourish and devoted its time more and more to technical matters, and succeeded in attracting eminent people from outside to address it in addition to those working in the locality. Many names familiar to us today appear in the records. One or two examples must suffice. In 1892 E. H. Saniter gave a paper entitled, "An Economic Process for the Removal of Sulphur from Iron and Steel." After yet another change of name and constitution to its present form of the Staffordshire Iron and Steel Institute, we find papers such as that on "Increasing Accuracy in Chemical Analysis Without Reducing Speed," by C. H. and N. D. Ridsdale, followed shortly by one on "Industrial Pyrometry" by S. Lamb, and immediately after the First World War, Dr. Hatfield gave a paper on "The Mechanical Properties of Steel."

The inter-war years have been recorded in considerable detail elsewhere. As far as the Institute was concerned it was a period devoted entirely to the discussion of technical subjects, with many excellent and original papers. Naturally, there are a considerable number of people with us still who remember these times vividly. I cannot do justice to them all, and therefore I am confining myself to one or two papers only. For example, the Presidential Address given on September 20th, 1934, at the James Watt Memorial Institute, by Mr. H. E. Cookson on "Pulverised Fuel Fir-

ing for Metallurgical Purposes." This paper in the modern jargon became a "best seller," and was Cookson's second Presidential Address.

This was followed only a week later by Dr. Hatfield addressing a joint meeting of the Institute and associated societies on, "Research as Related to the Iron and Steel Industry," the beginnings of what we now know as British Iron and Steel Research Association (BISRA).

In this discussion Dr. Hudson remarked, "There were inferences that British manufacture did not like research. Perhaps twenty years ago there was friction between the pure scientists and the manufacturer, but now there was the most intimate contact between the man who had had a university training and the man who had had his training in the works." That was said over thirty years ago, some inferences die hard.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

So far I have been speaking historically. What then of the future? In spite of the speed and ease of transport of these days, there is still a great need for local discussion, and the interchange of views and experience. Most of us still have jobs to do that demand a lot of us in time and energy. Change is taking place everywhere and new techniques are being increasingly applied, but human nature remains as it ever was. Discussion and disputation amongst one's colleagues and confreres is easier for most of us, and, with the increasing need to understand the growing complexities of our sophisticated society and our part in its development, I firmly believe there is a vital task to be

done that only local institutions such as ours can do. The counter attractions of television and the many other forms of relaxation are undoubtedly a challenge, and these we must accept. "If it be true" said Disraeli a hundred years ago, "that an aristocracy distinguished merely by wealth must perish from society, so I hold it equally true that a people who recognise no higher aim than physical enjoyment must become selfish and enervated."

Some feel, not entirely without cause, that we are in this very situation yet again. There is a great deal of evidence from the people and especially from the younger people that attend our local meetings, that if the subject concerns them they are more than ready to turn up even under considerable difficulties, and play their full part. By enterprise and initiative, by understanding an example, with the continuing support of the many companies that have in the past contributed to the well-being of our Institute, and who have participated fully in making these Centenary Celebrations possible, the Institute will go on making its contribution, adapting itself to the needs of the times as circumstances change. We go forward into our second century full of hope.

"STEW PONEY COUNTRYSIDE"

By Francis E. Campbell

38 pages 7/6

SPECIAL OFFER to Black Country
Society members, 6/- plus 6d. postage

To : Box FEC/P
HEATHCOTE, WHITE HILL
KINVER

A WRITER IN AN
1844 JOURNAL
GAVE THIS GRAPHIC
ACCOUNT OF

Yell's and Beyond

HALESOWEN (or Yell's, as it is called by the natives) is in view of the loveliest valley in the world, albeit they are many. As far as the charmed eye can reach are soft, swelling, green hills, quiet shady lanes, little valleys with the bright sparkling waters of a canal glancing now and then in a blink of sunshine, village spires peeping up from groves of trees, while here and there the curling smoke arises from farmhouses so remote, and so secluded that wandering only a hundred yards from the turnpike road, we can scarcely fancy ourselves in busy England. The startled hare and rabbit dart across our path, the wood-pigeon coos in the tall trees, while, in the back-ground, giving an exquisite finish to the scene, arise the blue tinted hills of the Lickey, Clent and Malvern.

Here Shenstone wrote—here he lived—for here are his far-famed Leasowes, a perfect garden of beauty—with every diversity of landscape stretched out to the admiring eye. In this soft and

lovely climate people live to a good old age; and (for there is a reverse to this picture) too, many, alas—live until life is a burden. For here, in the midst of God's bounty and loveliness, stalks the curse of poverty—the whole population of this beauteous region being, without distinction of sex, nailers, a name at once descriptive of all poverty and wretchedness. Everywhere cottages and mud hovels meet the eye in the most picturesque situations, built up of such incongruous materials, and in such dilapidation, as would rejoice the heart of a painter—but to plain prose, appear neither more nor less than utter distress and poverty.

To each of these cottages or hovels is attached a shed for the forge; and here may be seen the maid, the matron, the young, the old, the strong, the weak, working from early dawn to long after "dewy eve,"—perhaps not able to sell their day's work at any price; perhaps, next day, wandering with a bagful to our town, begging at

every shop door that we would buy them, or in the majority of cases receiving from fourpence halfpenny to sixpence for their long day's work.

This state of existence, for it cannot be called living, precludes instruction. Children are taught at Sunday schools imperfectly to read and write, but there their education ceases, for from the time that they have strength to hold a hammer, their doom is fixed. Many a slight and graceful girl have I seen wielding a hammer, who would have much better become the benches of a day-school, both from her tender age and delicate form, clad in a coarse woollen petticoat, a rough handkerchief covering her bosom as protection from the sparks of red-hot iron, and sufficiently disclosing her stays and shift-sleeves. The only display of feminine vanity attempted is in the arrangement of her hair: no time to spare for curling and braiding. She is the gainer in appearance from her smooth unadorned tresses, and the poor nailer girl may be forgiven the bit of coquetry with which she keeps the door half shut to hide her poor attire, while she peeps out on hearing the sound of approaching wheels. Alas! poor girl, well she knows, despite her graceful and flexible form, before she is thirty years old she will be bent to the shape of the anvil at which she now works, singing with all the light-heartedness of youth.

MISERABLE OBJECT

She cannot extricate herself—for all the girls round her are nailers, or work in coal-pits. She cannot be a servant for her hovel never required household work and she knows nothing of it; while her

talents as a cook have never been tested farther than potatoes and bacon. She has no alternative; she exists, and works on, as all the district do, until she becomes a crippled, starved and miserable object, living in the midst of beauty with the slightest appreciation of it, in the midst of plenty without partaking of it, and with no other notion of the power of God than that He is the inflictor of her present hard fate which, if she bears without murmuring, she may, by possibility, obtain some future reward.

SALINE SPRINGS

And with all their boast of superior intellect, the men are the same ignorant, hard-working, helpless starved objects as the women. From the constant habit of stooping over their work, they are not above half as tall at fifty as they were at twenty. In the close neighbourhood of some of the finest saline springs in the country, they are dirty and neglectful of their persons. It may be urged in extenuation of this that, the baths being rented of Lord Dudley, a charge is made for admission by the tenant which, of course, they are totally unable to pay. But, if a disposition were shown by the inhabitants to avail themselves of the boon, his lordship's liberality is too well known to doubt that every facility would be afforded even to the very poorest. This they vegetate on, with no instruction, no amusement, no relaxation, no luxury but tobacco, which is used by both sexes and all ages.

Sauntering along one of the lanes, I stopped at a well-known smithy and asked the girl if she had

ever heard of Shenstone.

"The ould conjuror, he has made songs and verses, and put up seats under the trees for folks to sit and look at the fields."

"I suppose you mean the same. Do you ever walk through his Leasowes on a Sunday?"

"Not I. I bin so tired, and my arms aching so with my week's work, that I mostly lies abed Sundays till towards night. Sometimes I goes to a meeting."

She picked up a short black pipe. I remarked that I was sorry to see so young a girl smoke.

"Perhaps you'd smoke too, if you hadn't nothing else."

God knows perhaps I should.

"But I thought women's luxury was tea?"

"Yes, when they can get it; hereabouts we drinks peppermint tea; real tea is dear, you know, and we earns no money scarce. I sometimes think I'd better hang myself than live to grow old."

"But I heard you were about to be married?"

"Well, and it's time. He's a rough sort of blade and I dare say I shall have to work as hard then as now, but I shall perhaps get more to eat; for I don't mind telling you—and I'm sure it's no sin, like thieving anything else—but he often catches hares and them things that swarm about here, and so he gets a little more than always nailing. Do you think it wicked?"

"I can't say I think it wicked; but he might be found out, you know."

"Ah, so he might—well we mun take our luck. We can't go on in this way."

A whole sermon on the sin of poaching would not make me believe it was a sin, if, like this poor girl, I never tasted animal food from one year's end to another.

How easy for wise men to make laws. How easy for virtuous men to declaim upon the necessity of obeying those laws; but how frail a barrier are they, when hungry desperation stands arrayed against them!

SOUTH STAFFS.

The character of the scenery entirely changes on approaching the confines of South Staffordshire; and, with it, also, change the occupation, habits, and manners of the people. Lanes, instead of being pleasant and shady, become mere ravines, as if in some convulsion of the earth the solid rock had been rent asunder. The land becomes broken into little abrupt round hollows, clearly indicating the nature of the subterranean operations going on all around. Fields, though all hill and hollow, are exceedingly fruitful—the heat of the soil producing the best and most luxuriant crops; and though now advancing into a manufacturing district, all sounds and signs of bustle are shut out in the calm peacefulness of the scene, until mounting a short hill or turning a sharp corner, unexpectedly appears one of those hives of human industry and skill for which the whole county is celebrated.

No longer do "hedge-rows green" divide the fields and fence in the garden plots. Cinders piled one upon the other supply the place; not cinders such as we see in parlour grates—but huge masses of calcine from which iron ore has

been extracted. Instead of mud-built or thatched cottages, the sheds and outhouses are built up of this material, and are often roofed with plates of iron; and when the chinks are well filled up, are certainly more comfortable, and are not unsightly to the eye. Here and there are small brick buildings something like beehives, to warn the heedless from approaching, for they indicate the mouth of an exhausted mine, and the earth is always treacherous even after many years.

Similar structures of a larger size are placed near the opening of every coal-pit for the accommodation of the miners; tram roads intersect the ground in every direction; and in many places, steam issues from fissures and holes in the banks, so hot as to make it painful to hold the hand in it for a moment. Such is the difference in general appearance within four miles, and in the inhabitants is as great a change. Instead of rude cottage windows, the houses are decorated with staring colours; window shutters are painted in the strongest contrasts of blue and brickdust; iron scroll-work painted green serves for curtain, while a range of garden pots of the brightest red are generally placed on a shelf half way up to the window.

DIALECT

Instead of the mild, low accent in which the nailers of the valley speak, the tone is loud and harsh, and the dialect scarcely understood except by long acquaintance with the county. I remember, when a child, being electrified by a smart slap on the shoulder, accompanied with "Ou'se na ate, wanch?" which being interpreted meant an hospit-

able inquiry, why I did not eat more.

"Maither," bawls a damsel from a house door to her mother in the fields opposite, "whae's ma feyther's porridge cup?"

"O'er anunst the steairs," shouts the matron in reply.

The use of nicknames is universal, and the droll applicability of many of them speaks much for the natural humour possessed by the natives, while their honesty is proverbial; so high is the tone of moral feeling (except in one small corner of this region, the limits of which are so clearly defined, that even marriages out of it are rare) that no attempt at palliation or extenuation of it is ever made.

How sorrowful to reflect that such a people should neither receive a fair reward for their labour, nor more instruction than they can gather while children at the Sunday Schools!

Heavy indeed is the satire presented by South Staffordshire to that false philanthropy which sends teachers and aids of all kinds to distant lands—forgetting to look at home.

DOG ANTIQUES WANTED

Everything concerning BULLDOG,
BULL-TERRIER and BLOOD SPORTS.
Bear Jugs, Pot Lids, Oil Paintings,
Prints, Pottery, Models, Books.

JOHN GORDON
72 Clydeway, Rise Park
Romford, Essex
Tel. 45537

AND NOW . . .

Two Gentlemen of Yell's

WILLIAM SHENSTONE (1714-63)

ASK anyone why "The Shenstone" at Halesowen was so called and he will tell you with a knowing air that Shenstone was a poet, thus exhausting his knowledge of the subject. In fact, Shenstone represents the Black Country's stake in the classical revival of the eighteenth century, and as such deserves greater recognition.

The name of Sheen Stone (or Shining Stone) is first recorded in the Parish Register of Hales Owen in 1575, and from then until the eighteenth century the family resided in respectable obscurity.

Shenstone's maternal ancestors were the Penns of Harborough. In 1713 Thomas Shenstone married Ann Penn, the eldest of three daughters of William Penn. The primary result of this union, William Shenstone the Poet, was born on 18th November, 1714, at the Leasowes in the Parish of Hales Owen.

William Shenstone commenced his education at a Dame's School run by Sarah Lloyd, later to be immortalised in his work "The Schoolmistress." He next attended the grammar school at Hales Owen, which he left in order to continue his education with Mr. Crumpton of Solihull, in Warwickshire, where he excelled in Latin and Greek classics.

The poet inherited an annual income of £300 which was a comfortable sum for a country gentleman

in those days. As his mother, father, grandfather and only brother had all died early in his life, he was cared for by his grandmother until her death in 1732, when the Rev. Mr. Dolman of Brome, in Staffordshire, took over the management of his affairs.

In the same year Shenstone went to Oxford and studied at Pembroke College. He took no degree, but continued there for ten years. At Pembroke he was considered a character by dint of wearing his own hair coarse and undressed, powdered wigs being the fashion of the day. In other respects he was accounted somewhat of a beau.

A small collection of his poems was published anonymously in 1737.

Although "The Schoolmistress" was commenced at an earlier date, one of his most important works "The Judgment of Hercules" was published first in 1740. The "Judgment" was addressed to Mr. Lyttleton (later Lord Lyttleton), whose political interests Shenstone ardently supported. 1742 saw the



WILLIAM SHENSTONE

(Artist: E. ALCOCK)

*Reproduced by permission of
the National Portrait Gallery*

publication of his second work of fame "The Schoolmistress."

For a while the poet lived at Harborough Hall but after the death of his uncle, Mr. Dolman, in 1745, he lived more at the Leasowes where he boarded with his tenants, who were in fact distant relatives. From this time onwards he managed his own finances, a task which proved onerous to him.

became a showplace and attracted a considerable number of visitors. Many of these callers were people of great merit and quality, whose company Shenstone would not have otherwise enjoyed.

Between 1740 and 1746 Cheltenham, Bath and London were his favourite places of recreation. After this time he seldom strayed far from his beloved Leasowes.

THE PROGRESS OF ADVICE

A Common Case
Suade, nam certum est
by

WILLIAM SHENSTONE

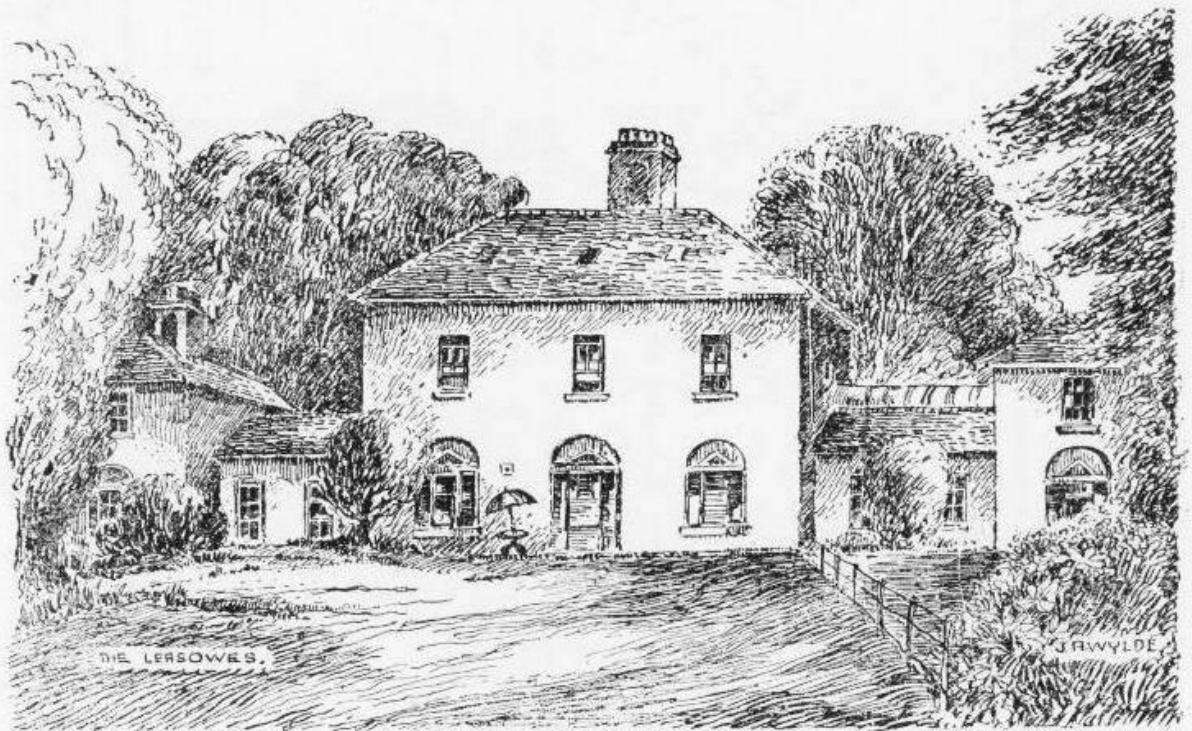
Says Richard to Thomas (and seem'd half afraid)
"I'm thinking to marry thy mistress's maid;
Now, because Mrs. Lucy to thee is well known,
I will do't if thou bidst me, or let it alone.
"Nay, don't make a jest on't; 'tis no jest to me;
For faith I'm in earnest, so prithee, be free.
I have no fault to find with the girl since I knew her.
But I'd have thy advice ere I tie myself to her."
Said Thomas to Richard, "To speak my opinion,
There is not such a bitch in King George's dominion;
And I firmly believe, if thou knew'st her as I do,
Thou wouldst choose out a whipping-post first to be
tied to.
"She's peevish, she's thievish, she's ugly, she's old,
And a liar, and a fool, and a slut, and a scold."
Next day Richard hasten'd to church and was wed,
And ere night had inform'd her what Thomas had
said.

Poetry is but one claim to fame of William Shenstone, the other is landscape gardening. He decided that being a boarder at the Leasowes restricted his freedom of action, so he took the whole estate into his own hands and commenced to remodel the grounds according to the dictates of taste and fashion.

The Leasowes, newly wooded, watered, avenued and ornamented,

During the winter months the stimulating visitations ceased and the poet became subject to nervous and hypochondriacal complaints. At such times he was averse to any pursuit of mind or body. He needed company, and as Gray said of him he "lived in retirement against his will."

The elaborate landscaping of the Leasowes was, needless to say, far



THE LEASOWES, HALESOWEN

beyond the gardener's £300 per annum and his creditors certainly kept a not disinterested eye upon his progress. However, considering that no eighteenth century gentleman was without his attendant creditors, the matter was of little importance.

Shenstone, who had the wit to remain a lifelong bachelor, had many qualities of mind. Indeed he is quoted as saying "I never will be a revengeful enemy, but I cannot, it is not my nature, to be half a friend." He enjoyed a continued epistolary correspondence with Mr. Graves, Mr. Jago, Mr. Whistler and Lady Luxborough, sister to Lord Bolingbroke. An amiable character, when not indolent he was capable of generous and disinterested actions including the patronage and encouragement of merit. There is no evidence of any great imperfection of demeanour or vice in his life, and he appears to have made no enemies.

Physically, he was above middle stature and inclined to stoutness,

his face undistinguished, but pleasing when engaged in conversation. In his later years he was negligent of dress.

Certain noble friends, knowing of his slender resources, were arranging a pension for his benefit, and the patent rights were about to be made when, visiting Lord Stamford at Enville, he caught cold, a condition which being neglected progressed to Putrid Fever. He died at the Leasowes on 11th February, 1763.

Although a sceptic for a time, Shenstone was in later days much impressed with religion and was buried besides his brother in the churchyard of Hales Owen.

A final word about his now overlooked poetic works. Shenstone, a minor poet, followed Wm. Kent (1684 to 1748). His mode of writing was natural and for his time, unadorned as is shown by the poem on page 51, which also displays a humorous facet of his genius.

James H. Ruston.

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG (1884-1954)

VERY few novelists have given the Black Country more than a passing thought. Henry Adams, Disraeli and Dickens, for instance, make a few passing, uncomplimentary references in a few of their books and for a long time literary England ended at Stratford-on-Avon and started up again in the Potteries. The area in between, including our own Black Country, was looked upon as an intellectual No-Man's-Land, as culturally sterile as the many slag heaps which used to be one of the main features of a region more concerned with coal and iron than with books. Strangers

were not encouraged, so this impression persisted until fairly recent times and no one has immortalized the Black Country as Hardy has immortalized Dorset or Bennett the Potteries, but at least one eminent writer—although born just outside the area — has written several novels set in the Black Country, and has brought to life in the pages of these books the hard working, hard living characters who made their little community a by-word for toughness, endurance and sturdy independence.

The writer referred to is, of course, Francis Brett Young, who

was born at Halesowen on June 29th, 1884. His father was a doctor, and he himself was destined for the same profession entering Birmingham University Medical School in 1901, and eventually qualifying. But like so many doctors—A. J. Cronin and Axel Munthe immediately spring to mind—he turned to writing, and after some small volumes of poetry he began writing novels. His *Midland Novels*, as he called them, were prompted by the building of the huge Birmingham Water Supply pipeline which brought water from Wales to satisfy the needs of this rapidly expanding city. He walked along much of the length of this pipeline and obviously loved Wales and the border counties so much that they find their way into nearly all his books. In “*Dr. Bradley Remembers*” for instance, the principal character (from whom the novel takes its name) moves from Radnorshire to Sedgely (Sedgley) by way of North Bromwich (Birmingham) and in “*The Black Diamond*” Abner Fellows, after a quarrel with his father, leaves his collier’s job to work in the more rural settings of Herefordshire and the Clun Forest.

Brett Young may not be a great novelist, as Jane Austen, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were great novelists, but he is a remarkably satisfying story-teller and his stories are about places we know and the type of people we know. He was, in a way, a sort of one man Black Country Society, preserving in the pages of his books accurate, well-drawn pictures of the vigour and the squalor, the tragedy and the humour of towns and villages dominated by pits and ironworks, foundries and canals—an impressive, authentic background for con-

vincing, sometimes vivid character sketches of people who lived hard, played hard and died hard. There is no mawkish sentimentality in his books, no attempt to glamourise or gloss over the appalling conditions in which people lived. His books are blunt, honest, factual and genuine.

If the names of the places he describes seem a little unfamiliar at first, it soon becomes obvious that Halesby is Halesowen; Dulston, Dudley; Wednesford, Wednesbury; the Clent Hills, Uffdown and Pen Beacon—but it would be unfair to go on because part of the pleasure in reading Brett Young’s books is in recognising the places he describes so well with fictitious names which nevertheless, have historical or other foundations.

His descriptions of these towns and villages, especially as they were at the turn of the century, are particularly interesting and informative. In “*The Black Diamond*” for instance there is an excellent description of Dudley and its famous (or infamous?) Bank Holiday Wake held in the Castle courtyard long before the Zoo was even thought of; in “*Dr. Bradley Remembers*” a vivid, realistic picture of the old Black Country as seen from the carriage windows of a train “crawling like a creature befogged.” But there was no fog: the dusky haze was no miracle of Egyptian darkness but the normal atmosphere of the Black Country . . . a domain divided between

THE LAURELS, HALESOWEN.
Birthplace of Francis Brett Young.





pitchy blackness and fire; in "My Brother Jonathan" the newly qualified Dr. Dakers sees "Wednesday" for the first time as "a land scarred like a battlefield, cumbered by metallic debris—huge rusty circular boilers, discarded fly-wheels, stacks of trolley rails . . . and monstrous dumps of indiscriminate scrap iron—and scattered with boulders of slag and drifts of cinders as though some volcanic

catastrophe had whelmed and blighted it."

But it must not be thought that his books are mere museum pieces—they are good novels by any standards, well worth reading by anyone, but of particular interest to those who have any connection with or interest in the Black Country.

W. Homer.

*I dreamt I was dead and to Heaven did go.
"Where did you come from?" they wanted to know;
I said "I'm from Bilston,"
St. Peter did stare;
Says he, "Walk right in, you're the first one from there."*

The Ingot, 1919.

VISIT



**CHAPMAN'S
OF
OLD HILL**

Telephone : CRADLEY 66497

VENICE OF THE MIDLANDS

THE Black Country has often been called 'the Venice of the Midlands' because of the numerous canals which run through it to form a complicated network of blue ribbons on maps, but which are of varying hues, often black, when seen in reality. To many people they may be considered 'stinking ditches,' which is what Thomas Telford, the brilliant civil engineer is once said to have called them. It is hoped that this article will give readers a little more knowledge of the canals, and how they branched out from one main line connecting Birmingham with Wolverhampton, to many canals of varying lengths ranging from $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

The first important canal in this area was the Staffordshire and Worcestershire which ran from Great Haywood, near Stafford, to Stourport where it joined the Severn. At Great Haywood it joined the Grand Trunk Canal which linked the rivers Trent and Mersey; this meant that three of the principal rivers of England were joined together. The 'Staffs and Worcester' as it became known, was constructed by James Brindley who believed that it was easier to follow contours rather than go in a straight line and construct locks. The canal twisted its way south from Stafford via Penkridge and Gailey to Aldersley, two miles north of Wolverhampton which was its nearest point to the Black Country. From here it went via Wombourne, Swindon, Kinver and Kidderminster to Stourport where it joined the Severn. It was later to have two important junctions with Black Country canals.

By 1766 Birmingham industrialists saw how cheaply goods were being carried by canal and considered that it would be prudent to have both their raw material purchases and their finished goods transported to and from their factories where possible in this way. Early in 1767, a meeting was held in Birmingham to discuss ideas for the construction and routes of possible canals. The result was that James Brindley was asked to carry out a survey to ascertain the best route for a canal from Birmingham to Wolverhampton, there to join the Staffs. and Worcs. canal.

Brindley did not have much trouble with varying heights, as most of the route was on a plateau, but there was a hill at Coseley which Brindley, in his typical manner, went round. A proposed final route which he submitted ran fairly straight from Birmingham via Smethwick and Oldbury to Tipton Green, but when it reached the ridge at Coseley it meandered round the hill through Princes End and Bradley to the other side of the ridge. It then turned sharp right at a point on the Coseley side of where Stewarts and Lloyds factory now stands, to Ettingshall, and via Wolverhampton to Aldersley, where it would join the 'Staffs. and Worcs.' Included in the survey were branches to Wednesbury and Ocker Hill, where many small collieries were to be found.

In 1768 an Act of Parliament was obtained authorising the canal to be constructed along Brindley's proposed line, together with the building of the two branches. Authorised capital was £50,000 and a further £20,000 was available if required. Brindley was appointed engineer at a

salary of £200 p.a. and a Chief Clerk was also engaged who was to be paid £100 p.a. On 6th November, 1769, the canal had been constructed from the collieries at Wednesbury to Birmingham which meant that the canal was ten miles long when it was opened. With the opening of the canal the price of coal fell from its pre-canal price of 18s. to approximately 10s. per ton, probably less. Six months later the canal was opened as far as Tipton, and a further six months saw it opened as far as Ettingshall. The last two miles from Wolverhampton to Aldersley had to go down a hill involving the construction of over 20 locks, but by September, 1772, the canal had been opened from Ettingshall to Aldersley. This meant that Birmingham and the Black Country were linked by water to the rivers Severn, Trent and Mersey.

The two most important canals to be constructed after the Birmingham-Wolverhampton canal was opened were the Stourbridge and Dudley canals. These were the ideas of the industrialists in the Stourbridge and Dudley areas. The purposes of the canals were to transport coal from the collieries in Dudley to factories at Stourbridge and also to towns on the Severn via the Staffs. and Worcs. canal. Lord Dudley was a prominent figure in these schemes and became the most important promoter. An Act of Parliament in 1776 authorised construction.

The authorised line for the Stourbridge canal ran from its junction with the Dudley Canal at Black Delph via Pensnett to Wordsley, then on through Stourbridge to Stourton where it was to join the Staffs. and Worcs.' The canal took three years to construct and it was opened in 1779.

At the time of the construction of the Stourbridge canal, Lord Dudley had built a private canal from the Birmingham Canal at Tipton via a tunnel to Tipton Colliery. This was opened in 1778, being shortly afterwards extended to a basin at Castle Mill. During the 1780's the Dudley Tunnel was constructed, and by 1793 the canal built by Lord Dudley ran from the Birmingham Canal to Castle Mill, then joined the Dudley Canal to run via Holly Hall to Black Delph, where it met the Stourbridge Canal.

At this time it was thought that it would be useful to link Birmingham with Walsall by means of the Birmingham and Wolverhampton canal. A canal was therefore constructed leaving the main line at Riders Green, West Bromwich, passing through Tipton and ending at Moxley, near Darlaston. The extension from Moxley going through Darlaston to Walsall was built in the late 1790's and was opened in 1799.

After these canals had been opened many small branches were constructed, but no great changes were made in the first quarter of the nineteenth century as the income from charges satisfied the canal companies. A railway from Birmingham to Wolverhampton was then promoted, and this perturbed the Birmingham Canal Company who feared loss of traffic. They engaged Thomas Telford to provide a report and recommendations on the Birmingham-Wolverhampton canal; he recommended an improved line at Smethwick by cutting through the hill instead of using the three locks constructed by Brindley at this point. He then proposed that the canal be kept at this level by an embankment running via Oldbury and

Dudley Port to Tipton where the three 'Factory' locks were to be constructed. It then reached the Coseley ridge, and Telford decided to cut through this as far as possible then tunnel through the remainder. By 1838 the new improved line was opened throughout, the distance from Birmingham to Wolverhampton having been cut by seven miles.

Many ironmasters owning factories near the canal were keen to have a railway to connect with the London-Birmingham railway. They were supported by persons who wanted a line to Shrewsbury. The London and Birmingham Railway Co. came to an agreement with the Birmingham Canal Navigation Co. in 1845 to build a railway from Wolverhampton to Birmingham, with a branch to Dudley and a further branch from Smethwick to Stourport. In 1846 the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway were giving thought to offering very cheap rates for journeys of less than this distance. This, of course, greatly reduced the long distance canal traffic, and canal basins at Tipton and Wolverhampton were constructed during 1855 for the transfer of short distance canal haulage to the long distance rail wagons.

As the years passed more and more goods were transferred from the canals to the railways and the volume of canal traffic showed a ceaseless decline. The later coming of the lorry took a considerable amount of the remaining trade, including the short haul coal traffic. Nowadays there is very little commercial traffic on Black Country canals, but pleasure traffic is increasing—especially on the main Birmingham-Wolverhampton canal, and the Stourbridge canal which was recently restored.

F. Pepworth.

BLACK COUNTRY SUICIDE

Ah wen' a walk wun mornin'—it wus airly in the day;
An' I 'appened on the railway track as I wus on me way.
There I saw a feller who wus lying' on 'is back;
An' I could guess wot 'e wus up to, fer 'is yed wus on the track.
Ah walked up to the feller an' said, "Nar mate, this woe do.
Life ay as bad as all that ferra strappin' chap like you."
An' then 'e looked up at me—'is faerce all drawn an' white.
'E said—"Me dear wife wen' an' lef' me fer anuther bloke las' night."
Ah said: "Mate, yo' wan'ter count yo're luck, an' yo' really orta pause
An' think jes' fer a minnit o' that trouble yo' will cause.
To feller's travellin' on the traen, yo've a duty yo' cor sherk,
'Cus apart from all the upset—yo'll mek 'em laert fer werk.
"Then 'ave yo' dun considered 'ow much of a mess yo'll mek
Wi' yer yed off by yer body—severed at the neck?
But if yo' am decided t' goo on ter Kingdom Come,
Dun yer think yer could spare the watch an' chaern wot's stretched
across yer tum?"

Ivor John Davies.

IN bygone days one of the most important events in the Black Countryman's calendar was the Wakes festivities. Each town held its own Wakes, perhaps the most notable being the one at Tipton.

In origin, the Wakes were religious festivals whereby people would walk from their homes at night carrying lighted candles, making their way to the Church where expressions of devotion were arranged. For a week following this, the inhabitants would give themselves over to gaiety and merriment. The festival was usually in honour of the Saint to whom the church had been dedicated, and in the case of Tipton, this was St. Martin. However, as St. Martin's Day fell upon November 11th, this was an unsuit-

ugliness, and Tipton's population soared from 4,280 in 1801 to over 15,000 in the 1830's. As the face of Tipton changed, so did the character of its people. They were working long hours in the pits and ironworks, lived in unhealthy and unsanitary conditions, and had a life span of something like 23 years. The attitude of the majority of the inhabitants at this time was work hard, play hard, and this they did.

Small wonder that the character of the Wakes altered along with its environment. What had once been a religious festival became virtually a pagan orgy. Sports like bull-baiting, cock-fighting, dog fighting, amused the people. The

TIPTON

able time of the year for outdoor activity, so the date was changed to on or about July 4th, this being the date on which the Saint's relics were moved to Tours in A.D. 473.

In the very early days when the area was still rural in character, people would make Wakes weeks an occasion for dancing around the maypole and indulging in such games appropriate to that time. Through the years the Wakes developed into an annual market, this being at one time held in the Churchyard of St. Martins, mainly due to the fact that it had religious origins, and also because the close proximity of the church acted as a deterrent to any underhand business.

With the dawn of the 19th Century, the Industrial Revolution had already made its mark on the area. The former rural landscape gradually gave way to a new urban

WAKE

fact that bull-baiting was declared illegal by an 1835 Act of Parliament did not deter its followers at Tipton Wakes. In fact, it was reported as still popular some years afterwards.

Bull-baiting was a sport in which a bull was tethered to a stake and the owner of a dog would pay a sum of money to the owner of the bull. Then the brutal scene of dog baiting bull would begin. Records of those days tell of dogs being thrown several feet into the air, in some cases being ripped open by the bull's horns, entrails exposed.

Despite the gruesome scene the onlooking mob would yell with delight.

Cock-fighting, too, had many devotees and was equally blood-

thirsty. The owners of these fighting birds handled them with the utmost care. In fact these tough colliers and puddlers showed more respect to their animals than they often did to their wives!

Heavy drinking was another favourite pastime of these men; drinking booths being set up at the Wakes, drunkenness rife. In general the Wakes week was a period of immorality, as is reflected in a billposter dated 1869, which advertised that a 'Great Bacchanalian Demonstration' was to be held at Tipton Wakes, held under the auspices of H.R.H. King Alcohol, who had engaged the services of His Satanic Majesty, The Devil, to preside over the affair in order to render it effective.

This behaviour angered local Methodists who often held vigils of prayer at the Wakes in order to pray for the souls of those who had become polluted.

Naturally, the fame of Tipton Wakes spread far and wide, attracting people from many miles around. An example of this is given by Lawley, the 19th Century Bilston historian, when referring to the cholera epidemic of 1832 which swept the Black Country, claiming in Tipton alone, 1,452 victims and producing 404 deaths.

He states: "In face of this warning the people held their Wake and indulged more freely in their wicked pursuits."

Not even the threat of death could deprive these people of their enjoyment.

It was during the early 19th Century that Dudley Port Races formed part of the Wakes festivities. This event was held on the Monday and Tuesday following

Wakes Sunday, on a site which is now partly covered by the Denbigh Housing Estate. A billposter of 1834, giving information of the races, shows that certain handsome prizes were offered. These included a silver cup, silver tankard, and saddle and bridle.

Towards the end of the 19th Century the Wakes began to change and the once wild affair began to develop into a fun-fair. However, one tradition continued until recent years—the annual Wakes Sunday dinner of duck and green peas!

Tipton Wakes survived as a fun-fair until 1959 when shortage of building ground led to the Wakes ground in Birch Street being acquired for the erection of an Ambulance Station.

With the loss of the Wakes permanent annual site, it was felt locally that a link with the past had been finally severed, and part of Tipton's heritage lost. **J. B.**

STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER PUPPIES

from the world-famous "Bandits" Kennels, suppliers of Crufts and other big show winners. Exports to all parts of the United Kingdom and overseas. All stock guaranteed sound, healthy and in perfect condition.

JOHN F. GORDON

"Bandits" Kennels
72 Clydeway, Rise Park
Romford, Essex
Tel. : Romford 45537

Author of: The Staffordshire Bull Terrier Owner's Encyclopaedia, The Spaniel Owner's Encyclopaedia, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Miniature Schnauzers, The Dandie Dinmont Terrier Handbook, The Staffordshire Bull Terrier Handbook, The Bull Terrier Handbook, The Bulldog Handbook.

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

The Black Country Ironworker 1866

THERE has been a good deal written about the social condition of the ironworkers of South Staffordshire, but most of the accounts are exaggerated one way or the other. The nature of the employment induces a generally rude external appearance, and the strain upon the physical energies leads them as a rule to live expensively, and to drink excessive quantities of stimulants. They are singularly improvident as a class, and though they obtain good wages, they have a remarkable genius for spending all they earn, while they devote but little attention to their home comforts. They are vivacious pleasure seekers, and hence Saint Monday is observed as a general district holiday. Their general bearing is calculated to create an unfavourable impression, as their language and manners are unpleasantly uncouth.

On the other hand there are many redeeming features in their character. They are extremely hospitable and kind to each other, and if any one is unfortunate, they willingly assist him out of his difficulties—not by loans, but by gifts outright. They appear more interested in giving their children some education than do the miners of the district, who are singularly apathetic in this respect. They are also a generally well-conducted body of men, as was apparent in a late dispute.

Unlike the miners, they did not resort to any unseemly demonstrations or violent speeches, but met quietly together, and talked matters over, and throughout the struggle not a single case of unruly conduct was reported. The employers were never molested in any way, and so admirably did a considerable number of the men comport themselves in connection with the complicated aspect of affairs at that time, especially the higher class of ironworkers, that it seems probable the district will not again be troubled with an unfortunate struggle like the one mentioned for many years to come.

The men mostly belong to sick and benefit societies; but they are generally but sorry affairs, and are too often found to fail when the members most require assistance. The manufacturers have devoted much attention to providing for the religious and educational wants of their men. Several ironworks have extensive schools and churches attached to them. In a few cases missionaries are employed to visit the men and their families.

The whole district is well supplied with schools and places of worship, and for the encouragement of the former, the ironmasters have a prize

scheme, and award annually between two and three hundred pounds to the most deserving pupils in each. Though frequently disappointed in the results which appear to arise from philanthropic efforts of various kinds, the numerous agencies by which attempts are being made to elevate the social and moral condition of the people are well supported, and compare not unfavourably with other manufacturing districts.

In all these respects great advances have been made during the last fifteen years, and, though much remains yet to be accomplished, there is reason to hope that each year will be marked by a further elevation of the social condition of the people who are engaged in the staple manufacture of South Staffordshire.

*From: J. JONES, Report on the Iron Trade of South Staffordshire.
S. TIMMINS, The Resources, Products and Industrial
History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District,
London, 1866.*

LIKE MUSIC . . .

I hadn't seen Fred for twelve months. He didn't know I'd joined the Black Country Society until I mentioned it to him.

"I think the traditions, if that's the word, of the Black Country should be preserved," he said and then, without prompting, told me a little story, a cameo in itself, which qualified, for him, his belief.

"During the early part of the last war I was stationed in Ireland waiting for a draft to Italy. I'd been billeted with men from all parts of the country, and while they were pleasant company there always seemed something missing between myself and them. The 'something' was a lack of common background—there wasn't a Black Country bloke amongst the lot.

"Eventually, the draft orders came through and, with others, I was on the quayside preparing to help load our vehicles when I heard a voice—a voice like music in my ears amongst all the quayside noise. I left my mates and the vehicles, determined to trace the owner of this 'voice.' I walked along the quay and turned at the end of a warehouse block where I saw a short, middle-aged corporal giving orders to a squad of men. Their shoulder flashes read 'The South Staffordshire Regiment.' I just stood and listened as he gave his instructions in best Black Country. I shall never forget it. As I say, it was like music—right from our back door."

Then Fred was silent for a minute, re-living that incident and perhaps, at the same time, later ones which had been stored away in the computer of his mind for over twenty years.

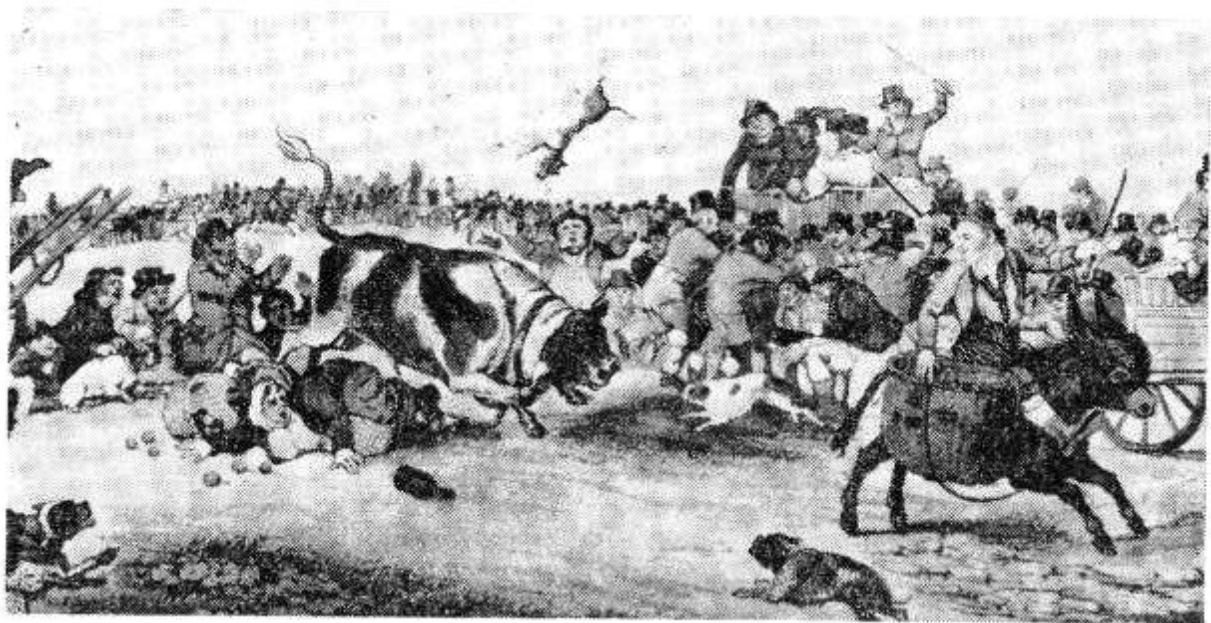
Geoff. Bubb

BOOK REVIEW

JOHN F. GORDON, *The Staffordshire Bull Terrier Owner's Encyclopaedia* (Pelham Books), 252 pp. 35/-

MR. GORDON is already well known in the Black Country for his earlier smaller handbooks on the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. His reputation as an expert on all aspects of the history, present position and future prospects of the breed is in itself sufficient to ensure that this more detailed encyclopedia will be well received by all concerned with the breeding, rearing and ownership of this magnificent dog.

of the traditional baiting sports that were for so long associated with the Black Country, and that have left their mark in the names of streets, pubs and open spaces of the region. Already at this early date the Bull Terrier had gained his reputation for courage and tenacity. One Wednesbury dog was then able to grip the nose of the bull and when it broke loose to hang on until it reached Coseley! Such interesting stories as these enliven Mr. Gor-



'Bull broke loose.' Believed to be at Barnet Fair, C.1821.

(Photo: Historic Dog Features)

We must emphasise, however, that the volume here reviewed is not simply a manual for breeders. It contains a mass of information that will be of great interest especially to readers of the "Black-countryman." There are, for instance, compact and useful accounts

don's volume and throw some light on the life of the people of the Black Country at this time. He also includes a full account of dog fighting and notes the articles of agreement that were drawn up to organise such events. It would be difficult to find in modern volumes

a more concise and accurate account of this sport which was once so common in the Black Country and with which the Staffordshire Bull Terrier will always be associated.

The encyclopedia also contains a full list and explanation of technical terms used in connection with the dog, its ailments and its breeding. Much practical advice is given to owners. There is, for example, some useful information concerning the treatment of dogs which have been involved in fights with other animals—a danger to which the Bull Terrier is especially prone. The author even offers some suggestions for dealing with eventualities that must be extremely rare; there is, for instance, a note of how to treat a dog bitten by the poisonous adder! Such advice is always sensible and never attempts to persuade the owner that his first aid treatment is any substitute for proper veterinary attention.

Mr. Gordon also provides much information to assist those who wish to show their Bull Terrier. He gives considerable space to a discussion of the preparation of the dog, his behaviour at the show and the documentation that must be attended to by the prospective

breeder. To many people of the Black Country, the attempt to make the region's traditional fighting dog into a champion of the show ring brings with it many dangers. Mr. Gordon is aware of these fears. Although he shows by careful line drawings in the text the qualities of the dog's appearance that should attract the breeder, he emphasises emphatically that care must be taken to interpret this standard sensibly. He is especially concerned to warn against efforts to produce a 'miniature' Bull Terrier and a uniform breed without the variety of height, colouring and shape that has distinguished the Bull Terrier in the past. Fortunately many people of the Black Country still attach more importance to those qualities of temperament that are characteristic of the dog than to any ideal standard of shape or size.

This volume is attractively produced, well illustrated, and easy to use. As a practical guide to the development and breeding of the Black Country's own dog, it could hardly be bettered.

This volume may be obtained from your bookseller or from the Black Country Society, 49 Victoria Road, Tipton, Staffs.

FRONT COVER PICTURE:

Photograph of a model of a progenitor of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. Probably late eighteenth century and in Britannia metal. Model owned by H. Folkes, Esq. (Photo: Historic Dog Features.)

**NEXT ISSUE OF THE BLACKCOUNTRYMAN
ON SALE IN JULY**

Sir,

Now that so much of the past is being lost for ever (including the postal address of Blackheath), it is good to know that you and those of like mind are working to keep alive the traditions of the old Black Country. Incidentally, I wonder if Blackheath was the only town in the Black Country to have the word 'Black' in its name? As you may know, last year the post office gave us the postal address of Halesowen, Worcestershire, and the other part of Blackheath, formerly in Staffordshire, is now Rowley Regis, Warley, Worcestershire.

Our visit to the recent exhibition in Dudley brought back childhood memories of my maternal grandfather in his nail shop, and really thrilled us. We ourselves love old

the New Plant Colliery, Halesowen. One Monday morning he went to work in the engine-room which worked the cage, and he never came home until Friday night of that week. The one who should have "taken him off" never turned up. My grandfather relieved him on odd occasions while he snatched an hour's sleep at his post, and my mother had to take his meals to him. "Them wus the days." This is typical of the old hard working Black Country man.

I remember when I started work first, at 14, in Birmingham, hearing that employees were preferred from the Black Country, as they worked harder.

I loved taking part in sketches, when I was a teenager, when I "let myself go" using the Black Coun-

CORRESPONDENCE

things, and have quite a few of them in our own home.

I purchased a copy of the "Blackcountryman" while in Dudley to visit the stamp exhibition, and would like to become, with my husband, a member. We have no car, and so could not attend monthly meetings unless fairly close to us, but at any rate we should still be kept in touch with things, and receive the magazine. (This we would particularly like to continue.)

May I say that the copy I have has 16 pages **in duplicate**. Maybe this is typical of Black Country generosity!

My father worked, as did his father also, when I was a girl, at

try dialect. Since then I had three years singing lessons, which maybe helped to "refine" my speech a bit, but when we are having fun, it is nice even these days to let oneself go!

Mrs. G. R. Harris.

Sir,

Congratulations on the new-born 'Blackcountryman.'

Regarding the Baggeridge Pit article; I was always told it was Jack Wainwright of Princes End who sank it. (Buried on the north side of Coseley Church.)

I expect the canal connecting the Wallows with the Dudley canal was made at the same time as the rail-

way to Ashwood Basin.

Re the Walsall article. Is it an historical fact that Walsall was omitted from Domesday Book because it was of no importance, while all the neighbouring towns were included?

In future issues, a short history of the Staffordshire Knot would be interesting.

R. A. Guest.

Turks Hill Road,
Sedgley.

Sir,

I think you might be interested in the attached letter, sent to me by a brother many years ago. We were born two miles from Dudley and well remember the broad dialect, with its warmth and good-heartedness behind it.

Mrs. M. P. Gray.

Moss Grove,
Kingswinford, Staffs.

The letter . . .

Dear M . . . Yo' little werrit!
I got enough children to buy presents for about you! Been a puzzlin' me yed whattergetyeran' could oney think-a silk stockin's an' then n'eer-a-one knowed yer size. So we'm a sendin' yer a postal order for 10/6d. 'cos we think that's about the price of a good pair.

Hopin' as how they'll bring yer good luck an' a drop a summat warm to keep the code out.

With best wishes for a Happy Xmas an' Hoo 'ear.

With no luv (cor spare none!),
Stan an' Ray.

Sir,

I am 79 and a retired bricklayer. I worked a lot round Wolverhampton and District. There is a joke

about Bilston in the 'thirties when work was scarce. A Yank came to Bilston and a chap standing at the end of the street by the market said: "Where dun yo' come from?"

The Yank said: "The state of Ohio . . . what place is this?"

"Bilston," said the local chap.

The Yank said: "Well, friend . . . what state is that in?"

"A bloody awful state," said the local. "All out of work."

Bill Shuker.

Ashton Street,
Shifnal, Staffs.

The writer of this letter was general manager of Baggeridge Colliery from 1926 to 1937, and is now in his 90th year.
Sir,

Baggeridge Shafts

The water encountered in the sinking of the shafts was not held back by iron segments as mentioned in the article on the Baggeridge Colliery in 'The Blackcountryman.'

Instead of iron segments a special method of brick lining was put in which the sinkers called 'coffering'. This method consisted of building the outer and the inner courses in the ordinary way with the trowel, these courses were kept in advance of the middle courses. Into the angular space was poured liquid cement and the inner courses were embedded into position.

Had iron segments been installed I should most certainly have seen them.

I have another very good reason for remembering this, as my brother, who was apprenticed to one of the Earl of Dudley's colliery managers, obtained permission to see the sinkers at work. He took particulars and was able to answer

a question on the subject set for his colliery manager's certificate of competency, or for his qualification as a mines inspector, to the satisfaction of the examiner who asked him if he had any information on 'coffering.'

Incidentally, there was a third shaft at Baggeridge sunk to the water-bearing rocks. The South Staffordshire Water Works Company installed a steam driven generator and an electric pump at the bottom of this shaft, the water being pumped to the Sedgley reservoir, the colliery taking their water for steam raising and other purposes. The water company in addition paid a rate for the metred supply.

When I went to Baggeridge the water company were not taking any water, as a newly appointed agent had asked for an increase in the rate. Instead of agreeing to this the company gave notice to terminate the agreement. I endeavoured to get the company to take the water again on their own terms, as electric power was being wasted in running the pump with an artificial head imposed—but they had made other arrangements.

It seemed to me a great pity to allow such excellent water to run to waste with only the fish in the Himley Park lakes to appreciate it!

H. D. Poole.

Cotton Lane, Moseley,
Birmingham, 13.

Sir,

Reference your reviewer's notes on "Folk Lore and Songs of the Black Country and West Midlands" Volume III, in Volume I, Number I of "The Blackcountryman."

1. In paragraph three the re-

viewer states "The editors do not claim originality for much of their work and lean heavily on the more important local and national authorities in their field."

What is meant by originality? The material is traditional and in the main it has been recorded from obscure sources. Local and national authorities simply do not exist in the field of Black Country folk lore and song. (Local historians, yes, but not local folk-lorists.) Of the local people interested in Black Country lore and songs the editors are the only researchers who have an extensive knowledge of this field AND the field of English folk lore and song. Without a background knowledge of English lore and song, it is impossible to place the lore and song of a particular region in the right perspective. Articles and sundry items have been contributed by local people, but this is no foundation for suggesting that they are authorities in the field of folk lore.

2. Reviewer states, "Experts will note that many of the opinions expressed in this book, especially relating to industrial history, are superficial, controversial and out of date; there are some obvious inaccuracies—the name of Boulton of the famous firm of Boulton and Watt, is twice mis-spelled on page 68."

A strange statement in view of the fact that there is little industrial history of any consequence in this volume. (Two brief articles to be precise.) Where included, it is intended to illustrate the background to a song and is essentially factual. What are these superficial, controversial and out of date opinions? There are so few opinions expressed that the choice is extremely narrow. The incorrect spelling of

Boulton is really a trifling error and an even more trifling criticism.

3. The last statement reads: "The editors, however, make no claim to be recognised authorities on these subjects. Their work is a version for popular consumption, not for the definitive study of the folk lore of the region that demands proper time and academic ability."

As previously stated there are no authorities on Black Country lore and songs and until research into the area is complete there can be no 'authorities.' The editors can, perhaps, claim the greater knowledge at the present stage. The field of study involved concerns the lore and songs of the Black Country in relation to the lore and songs of England and this is certainly nobody else's field. It is surely impossible to decide whether or not a study is definitive until it is complete. When the research work has been sufficiently extensive a definitive appraisal of the collected material will be published. In this appraisal the editors' opinions and findings will be clearly stated.

The material published to date is certainly not for 'popular consumption' and the aim of publishing in separate volumes is two-fold:

- (a) To make the material available to those interested; and
- (b) To provoke further contributions of relevant material.

It is fair to say that your reviewer pictures the study as sketchy, inconclusive and inadequate with a pretty, commercial packaging. The impression given is that one or two books have been read and lo and behold, a study made! This is arrogant rubbish! The publications are the result of careful and extensive research, selection and editing.

Let's have the examples of opinions expressed and local and national experts leaned on. Academic ability is also required to review work of this nature and to present opinions without stating the evidence they are based on is not to display academic ability.

Perhaps you would allow these comments to be printed, in order that the 'other side of the coin' also reaches the same readership.

Jon Raven,

Our Reviewer writes:

To take Mr. Raven's first point: "What is originality?" Surely in this field originality consists in simply being the first to collect and edit traditional material. In this respect much of the material in this volume is not original since it has appeared elsewhere in print previously. It is perverse of Mr. Raven to say that there are no local or national authorities in this field. The editors rely themselves very heavily, for example, on F. W. Hackwood's Staffordshire Customs and Folklore. Much of the material of the section dealing with Traditional Punishments is directly derived from Hackwood's chapter of a similar name. The editors, incidentally, have misquoted Hackwood on page 88, making one of their sentences nonsensical. Writers such as Hackwood and Clark have their limitations, sometimes very serious, but they must be regarded as valuable authorities by anyone wishing to examine the folklore of the Black Country. My 'reference' to national authorities was simply intended to point out how much of the material in this volume had been previously pub-

lished in 'national' publications by specialists in the various branches of English folklore. The editors list a total of sixty-seven songs printed in this volume. Of these nine are noted as being derived from material collected by the editors, and, in fact, two of these nine have been printed elsewhere, by the editors themselves previously. I think my comment that 'the editors do not claim originality for much of their work' is, if anything, an understatement!

Mr. Raven's second point is more serious. Here are some examples of inaccuracies on pages 66 and 67. 'He (Wilkinson) built the first blast furnace for smelting ore with common coal.' This is not true. 'He employed the tilt

perty could not pass to his heirs. These are just a few examples on which I based my comments.

My answer to Mr. Raven's third point is, I hope, already clear. It is impossible to claim that this volume is a work of academic scholarship in view of the many inaccuracies and incompletely developed conceptions. No serious scholar would claim that the incorrect spelling of a household name like Boulton (on page 66, incidentally, not 68 as Mr. Raven indicates—again a misquote of my review) is 'a trifling error'. I repeat: the 'definitive study of the folklore of this region . . . demands proper time and academic ability'. It also requires an adherence to the minutæ of scholarship which is unfor-

The boy stood on the tramway line,
The driver rang his bell.
The car went down to Willenhall,
The boy went down to —.

The Ingot, 1919.

hammer invented by Watt.' Watt did not invent the tilt hammer. On page 81 we find stated: 'The practice of burning . . . at the stake . . . seems to have disappeared . . . by the end of the seventeenth century.' In fact, the last burning of a witch was at Huntingdon in 1716. The discussion of 'peine forte et dure' on page 90 completely misses the point as to why this penalty was tolerated by a prisoner who could avoid it simply by making a plea or replying to the charge against him. The reason, of course, was because if he did not plead and was then crushed to death his property was not forfeit to the crown. If he had made a plea and been found guilty, his pro-

property was not apparent in this volume.

My review of this important volume paid tribute to the work of the editors, and these detailed criticisms must not be allowed to obscure the great value of this book and the initiative of the Wolverhampton Folk Song Club in publishing it. But if the editors themselves claim a high standard of scholarship in their work, they must be judged by that standard.

Sir,

I am writing a history of the aircraft manufactured by the English Electric Company and its associated companies. The English Electric Company was formed in 1919 by the amalgamation of four com-

panies, amongst which was the Coventry Ordnance Works, a firm founded, in the early 1900's, specifically for the manufacture of munitions. The Coventry Ordnance Works expanded rapidly before and during the First World War, producing light artillery, howitzers and large calibre naval guns for fitting to the super-dreadnoughts being built at that time.

In 1912, the Coventry Ordnance Works set up a new branch to its activities by forming an aviation department. The department had for its chief designer Howard Theophilus Wright, and for its assistant designer, W. O. Manning. Howard Wright was born at Dudley in 1867 and was educated at Manor House School, London(?). He served a mechanical engineering apprenticeship at his father's works of Joseph Wright and Company, Tipton, which firm carried out orders to Admiralty contracts and other steelwork. The steelwork, which included the manufacture of pit head gears, pit cages and boilers, was carried out in a section of the works known as the Boiler Yard.

In 1899, the Boiler Yard was sold to Hiram Maxim, possibly because he thought it suited his interests in light-weight, flash-steam boilers which he planned to use for the propulsion of the aircraft he was building at the time. Hiram Maxim was also noted for the machine gun he had invented. However, the purchase brought Howard Wright to the attention of Maxim, who, upon recognising Howard's talents, offered him a position as his assistant. Shortly afterwards, Howard Wright joined Maxim in London and there helped Maxim with various aerodynamic experiments.

Howard stayed with Maxim a number of years before joining the firm of Warwick Wright Ltd., which had been set up by his brother at Battersea in 1907 for the distribution of motor cars. The workshops at Battersea proved useful also to Howard Wright and he set up in business as an aircraft constructor, using the knowledge he had gained by working with Maxim.

Howard Wright soon gained a reputation for good craftsmanship and design and his aircraft received still further prominence in the hands of T. O. M. Sopwith, who used the aircraft to gain one world record and several British records. However, late in 1911 the aircraft business was acquired by the Coventry Ordnance Works. Howard did not stay long with the Ordnance Works, leaving in the same year that he joined to take charge of the aircraft department of J. Samuel White and Company, of Cowes, Isle of Wight, where he remained at least until 1919. At Coventry W. O. Manning succeeded Howard Wright as chief designer.

I shall be very pleased to hear from descendants of the Wright family, or anyone who has any knowledge of the above events. I am particularly interested in recollections and photographs of Howard Wright and his aircraft, with which I may add "local colour" to my history. All correspondence will be acknowledged and any records loaned to me will be carefully copied and returned promptly together with any expenses incurred in postage.

Stephen Ransom.

*9 St. George's Square,
St. Annes-on-Sea.*

ADVERTISING RATES

	<i>per insertion</i>
Inside front cover	£12-10-0
Inside back cover	£12-10-0
Facing contents page	£12-10-0
Whole Page	
Facing Matter	£10-0-0
Half Page	
Facing Matter	£6-0-0
Quarter Page	
Facing Matter	£3-10-0
Display Panel (1" x 1½")	£1-10-0
10% Reduction on four consecutive insertions	

ADVERTISERS INDEX

	Page
Campbell, Francis ...	44
Chapman ...	56
Cook, E. (I. & S.) Ltd.	i.b.c.
Copper Enamels, (Bilston) Ltd. ...	i.b.c.
Dartline Cruisers ...	11
Gordon, John ...	48 & 61
Medallion ...	42
Numis-Philat ...	i.f.c.
Windmill Antiques ...	35
Wylde, J. A. ...	26

KNOW YOUR BLACK COUNTRY—ANSWERS

- The Pear Tree Inn, Gornal.
 - The Old Swan Inn, Netherton.
 - The Old Leathern Bottel, Wednesbury.
 - The Greyhound Inn, Bilston.
- The Druid's Head, Hurst Hill. Joseph Flavell.
- The Old Cross Guns Inn, Cradley Heath.
 - The Gospel Oak Tavern, Ocker Hill.
- Willenhall. So that the lockmakers could put their "humps" in the wall and so sit up straight to drink their beer.
- Wednesbury. The Dartmouth Inn (now demolished); The George Inn.

-
- Copies of photographs reproduced by George Bowater and Alan Price, and published in *The Blackcountryman*, are available to readers at a special price of 2/- plus 6d. postage.
 - Back numbers of *The Blackcountryman* are obtainable from the Black Country Society and from the Editor. Readers are reminded that binders for preserving these and future issues will later be available.

COPPER ENAMELS (Bilston) Ltd.



MEADOW LANE
DEEPFIELDS
NR. BILSTON, STAFFS.
'Phone : Sedgley 3058

Craftsmen in Artistic Bilston Enamels

PRODUCED IN THE TRADITION OF THE OLD BILSTON
ENAMEL CRAFT OF SOME 200 YEARS AGO

E. COOK (IRON & STEEL) LTD.

(ESTABLISHED 50 YEARS)

IRON AND STEEL MERCHANTS AND
STEEL STOCKHOLDERS

**Bilston Road
Wolverhampton**

Telephone : Wolverhampton 26344-5

CONTRACTORS FOR WORKS CLEARANCE OF ALL
CLASSES OF SCRAP

STOCKISTS OF B.D. ROUND AND HEXAGON STEEL
BARS, STEEL OFFCUTS FOR WASHER, NUT AND
PRESSING TRADES, ALSO S.H. STRUCTURAL STEELS.