



AMBLECOTE HISTORY

JUNE 2003

NEWSLETTER

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep those interested in the newly formed Amblecote History Society informed about activities, events and ideas. It will be published and circulated on an 'as and when' basis as the society develops.

SUCCESSFUL SECOND MEETING

A very successful second meeting of the Amblecote History Society was held at Holy Trinity Church Hall on Wednesday 21st of May 2003. 54 people heard Dr Eric Bowers talk on the history

of Corbett Hospital, interspersed with Dr. Bowers' personal recollections of his working life as a Consultant Pathologist with Dudley Area Health Authority and its predecessors.

COMMITTEE ISSUE

A number of people have wondered why the Amblecote History Society has not yet reached for that mainstay of English organisational life – the committee? The reason is that the organisers

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GLASSHOUSE MEETING

Wednesday 16th July 2003 7.30pm

The Glasshouse Project

Wollaston Road, Amblecote

Entrance off Wollaston Road (signposted, large car park).

Admission Free. Please bring guests – and any old photographs!

An invitation has been extended to the Society by the Glasshouse Project to visit their premises located within the former Webb Corbett Glassworks on Wollaston Road. The Project, which is an educational trust that uses craft techniques as part of its program, including glass manufacture, is keen to establish links with the local community and to explore and develop historical aspects of the Wollaston Road site.

The Glasshouse Project has already restored and converted a number of historic buildings, including the construction of a small theatre. However, there are plans for a much more comprehensive development that will nevertheless remain sympathetic to the culture and heritage of the area. **Andrew Cope, a former Webb Corbett craftsman, has been commissioned to engrave a number of panels showing the history of the area, and is keen to view illustrations and photographs of Amblecote's past. The meeting will include a guided tour of the existing buildings and facilities, and attendees are invited to bring along any Amblecote photographic memorabilia they may have for Andy to take a look at.**

The Glasshouse Project represents an exciting use of a former factory site that under other circumstances may well have ended up as yet another housing development. Instead the Glasshouse Project has not only saved a number of historical buildings but enabled the continued traditional manufacture of glass, from raw material to finished product, within Amblecote.

The Project is planning to stage a major international glass festival in August 2004.

of the first two meetings, Father Paul Tongue and Nick Baker (both somewhat jaded ex-committee men of old) feel instead that matters will be better served, at least for the moment, by bringing together individuals with a like interest, rather than attempt to drive matters with an over-formal structure.

Nick and Father Paul are very happy to continue organising speakers on a roughly quarterly basis, and to receive suggestions for these, and Nick is happy to produce this Newsletter as a means of communication. Both are also more than willing to facilitate any project idea (plaques, publications, etc), by putting like-minded people in touch. If you have any suggestions, or want an idea to be circulated, please contact either of them.

Of course the question of funding may require a more formal structure at some point. However, up until now both venues and speakers have been free and the issue has not arisen. Indeed a small charge on the door may be all that is required should an event need to cover its costs.

CONTACTS

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DON'T FORGET!

Next Meeting at the Glasshouse Project,
Wollaston Road. Wednesday 16th July 7.30pm.

**PLEASE BRING YOUR OLD PHOTO-
GRAPHS OF AMBLECOTE TO HELP**

**THE GLASSHOUSE
HISTORY PROJECT**

PUBLICATIONS

BRICKYARDS OF THE BLACK COUNTRY

A Forgotten Industry

By John Cooksy

Local author John Coosky has published a book on a vital Black Country, and Amblecote, industry. *Brickyards of the Black Country* presents a detailed history of the trade that could once be found in a host of Black Country locations including Gornal, Pensnett, Brierley Hill, Cradley, Lye and of course Amblecote. John's book includes an appreciation of how other industries were supported by this brick output, and in the case of Amblecote refractory products. Glassmaking, iron working, the railways and shipping were all reliant on firebricks made from Amblecote clay, literally millions being transported each year to the far corners of the globe. In 1840 alone some 4,000,000 bricks were produced in Amblecote utilising 46,000 tons of clay. The book is profusely illustrated with over 120 photographs, some in colour. The book is available from Stourbridge Library or from John on 01384 836122 price £9.99.

THE CIVIC HERALDRY OF THE BLACKCOUNTRY

By Peter Skidmore

This fully illustrated reference work describes the civic arms of all the old Black Country Authorities, including Amblecote Urban District Council. Although Amblecote's was 'unofficial' in that arms were never approved by the College of Arms, the author includes a drawing and description of the design of the Chairman's badge. This was presented in 1960 by Councillor Mees in memory of his father who had been Chairman of the council from 1928 to 1930. It depicts three local industries, glass making, engineering and of course brick making, and includes the motto *Commune Bonum*, "The Good of the Community". The original badge is now kept in Holy Trinity Church. The book is priced at £6.99 and is available from Stourbridge Library.