

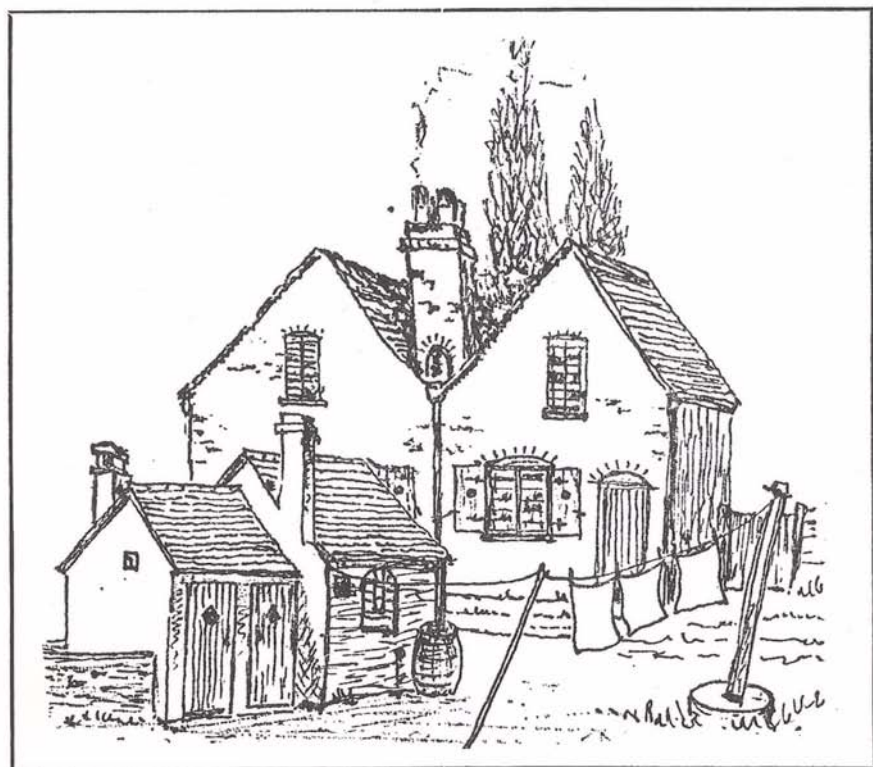
THE BLACKCOUNTRYMAN

SUMMER 1978

Vol. II

No. 3

30p



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BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY

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COMMENT . . .

THERE are times at the end of a Black Country Society committee meeting when I find myself marvelling at the amount of business conducted. The diverse opinions of members often result in heated discussion, but always under firm chairmanship, so that decisions are reached with a speed which would astound many councillors and board-room executives.

The Blackcountryman rarely needs to be mentioned in committee unless, as recently, it was necessary to raise the cover price to 30p, but I am mindful that most of the projects motivated are indirectly aimed at financing the magazine. It is worthwhile to point out yet again that right from the start this publication has been, and remains, a heavy drain on financial resources. For make no mistake, much of the income derived from other Society publications, maps, medallions and so forth, goes to meet the ever-mounting print bill.

No wonder the Society is 'in the red'! Is it worth it? We know that a great many readers believe that it is, but as our Secretary points out in his notes (this issue), the response from schools is sadly disappointing. Here we are, offering a valuable material source at a cost which is relatively insignificant, yet it is not being taken up to any notable extent.

Instead, we get letters from youngsters — as I did the other day — saying: "I have chosen The Black Country for my project. Please send information and illustrations." What a brief that is: and no s.a.e. either!

What must we do, with no money to spare for promotion, to get the magazine 'across'. Tell us, somebody!

Of course, if we were 'commercial' we could not complain in print at those who do not buy. It just isn't done. But voluntary effort surely frees us from such strictures.

Do yourself a favour; multiply the contents of this issue by 42 and contemplate the wealth of local material contained in a set of backnumbers.

Then cotch 'old o' sum taichers yo' know'n, an' see wot yo' con dew.

A PERSON might be of Tipton, Wednesbury or Cradley origin with loyalties to a particular district or community, and yet still be a Black Country man in the broadest sense. Unfortunately the beaurocrats who drew the present local government boundaries were either unaware of, or ignored, the uniqueness of the Black Country by lumping it with Birmingham and Coventry to form the West Midlands County.

The Society has always maintained that the Black Country should remain a separate entity and has, therefore, recently written to the four local councils urging them to establish a common purpose for the area. This is particularly important at the moment with the decline of certain traditional local industries, a fact which can affect so many Black Country people.

Some time ago I mentioned that the Society was considering the production of plaques to commemorate local historic events and associations, well, work has now begun on this project. It was suggested that a plaque be fixed to the Fountain Inn, Owen Street, Tipton, to mark the association of the building with the 'Tipton Slasher', the prize fighter who became Champion of England in 1850.

The Fountain was the one-time headquarters of the Slasher. Ansells Ltd, the owners of the building have agreed to the fixture of such a plaque and this will be done in the near future. This and other plaques will be made by the Foundry Training Centre, West Bromwich.

A further plaque, to mark the connection between Dudley and the Darby ironfounders, has been mooted, and all suggestions for commemorative plaques and their possible sites, will be welcomed in the hope that all areas of the Black Country can be covered.

If time allows, it is hoped that a plaque can be presented by the Society for the best boat in the Inland Waterways Rally, to be held at Titford Pool in the Black Country in August.

We once again thank Dudley Council for organising a Black Country Market in May. Although not so heavily crowded as last year, it still provided a good shop window for local organisations. Another shop window for local culture is the Black Country Museum, which opened its doors to the public for a preview season on May 20. We wish it the utmost success.

Negotiations are continuing with Dudley Council on the future of the Ruiton windmill and at the time of writing these seem to be nearing completion.

In the field of conservation the Society has continued to be very active, giving advice on listed buildings and commenting on such matters

as the Green Belt Plan which, of course, is very important to the future recreational needs of the area. We were represented at the recent annual conference of the West Midlands Amenity Societies and the committee has agreed to organise and host this conference in the Black Country next year.

Ron Moss has now taken charge of the Industrial Archaeology Group and recently it has been decided to make visits to the Withymoor Works, a gun manufactory, and a colliery. To keep members in closer touch with the work of this group it is hoped that a regular feature will be included in the magazine. Therefore, future trips to industrial sites can be included therein.

The Society has now issued the second in its series of studies in industrial archaeology, featuring the Mushroom Green chainshop. This traces the history of the chainshop and the surrounding hamlet and also illustrates the major part played by the Black Country Society in the preservation and restoration of this building. The chainshop is now open to the public on Sunday afternoons during the summer months and members of the Society and of the Friends of the Black Country Museum are always on hand as guides.

Our latest publication, recently issued, is a collection of stories and anecdotes relating to local canals, entitled, 'Towpath Tale'. It has been written by Arthur Truby, a long-standing member of the Black Country Society.

There are numerous other books in the pipeline, but they will need to wait until finances allow for publication, although grants have been applied for to publish certain works.

As our President, Dr. John Fletcher, stated in his annual report, we are concerned that school libraries should be stocked with the Black Country Society publications. Fortunately, some schools have been enlightened enough to take advantage of the availability of material published by us, but the majority seem to have ignored our work. Surely it cannot be that they are unaware, because we have circulated education authorities and schools with details of what is available.

As an encouragement in this direction, the committee has decided to give a token prize to the best student in Black Country studies or environmental studies at certain schools which in its opinion have fully utilised material available from the Society. The first school to be chosen is Alexandra High School, Tipton.

So come on all of you school teachers; if your school library does not have Black Country Society publications on its shelves, please get something done about it.

Finally, our sincere best wishes to stalwart committee member Winston Homer, who has recently been ill. We wish him a speedy recovery.

The

Titford

The Titford Canal

by

Keith J. Lloyd

THE Titford Canal is once again in the news because from August 26 to 28, 1978, the Inland Waterways Association will be holding their National Waterways Rally "Black Country '78" at Titford Pools.

Originally, Titford Pools were constructed as reservoirs to supply the Birmingham Canal Company's canal via Rotton Park reservoir, and the feeder can be very easily traced. However, in the modernisation schemes of the BCN in the early 1830s, it was decided to construct a canal from Oldbury to connect with Titford Pools to serve local industry — one of the best known being Langley Maltings.

1834 saw the inspection of the ground for a branch up the Titford valley and on 17 June 1835 a Bill was passed authorising, amongst other things, the Titford Canal. Land was then bought for the branch which was planned to be 30 ft. wide and 5 ft. deep, and when opened it was $1\frac{7}{8}$ of a mile long.

On 4 November 1837, the Tit-

ford Canal was opened to traffic, utilising part of the original feeder system from the pools themselves to the top of the six locks that lift the canal from the Old Main Line (Wolverhampton level) to the level of the Titford Pools; which at 511 ft. above sea level makes the Titford Canal the highest navigable canal in Britain.

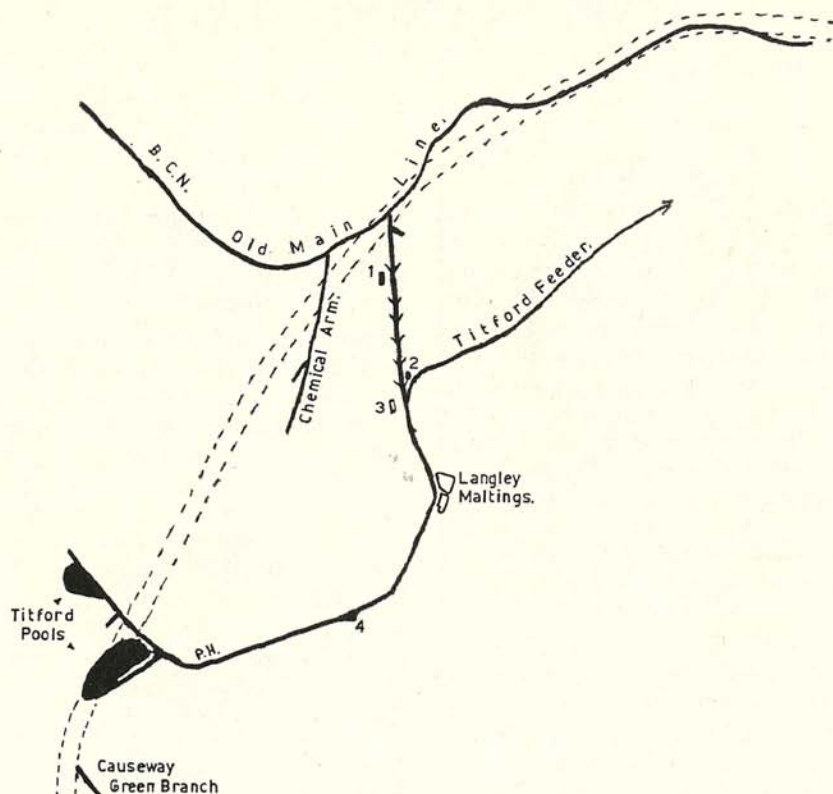
The lockage on the canal was initially met by providing a recirculating engine, and contributions were made towards mine owners' engines to drain mines into Deepfalls Pool and to drain Caponfield from a lower level than before. Then, in 1847 a new engine was provided for back pumping at the top of Oldbury Locks, and its building can still be seen today.

An $\frac{1}{2}$ mile extension to the canal came in 1858 with the opening of the Causeway Green Branch.

Until the 1960s when traffic almost died entirely on the BCN system, it played its part as a section of one of the busiest canal networks in the country.

By then however, parts of the Causeway Green Branch had already been abandoned; a section in 1954, a further section in 1959 and, all but a very short section, in 1960. There now remains navigable only a very few yards of the branch, although a drained portion and former over-bridge can still be seen from the railway embankment.

The canal itself began to decline rapidly due to neglect. However, at the beginning of the 1970s the BCN Society, with the official support of Warley County Borough Council, began the clearance, restoration and landscaping of the canal and the pools, assisted by the Waterways Recovery Group; the



work being supervised by R. V. C. Joyner, General Manager of Warley Parks and Cemeteries Department, with the blessing and help of the British Waterways Board.

So, on 30 March 1974 the canal was officially re-opened by the Mayor of Warley. This happened to be the last official action of Warley County Borough, for on 1 April 1974 it officially became part of the Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell.

Since that time Titford Canal and Pools have been the 'goal' of several canal cruises and trips, but is frequently closed to traffic to preserve water supplies for the rest of the system via Rotton Park.

But even as late as 1965 plant was maintained at Titford Pools, primarily for lifting water from the Wolverhampton level into Rotton Park Reservoir via the summit feeder.

For many years now the landlord of the New Navigation pub has been issuing certificates to boaters who have successfully cruised the canal, and 1978 looks as if it will be a very busy year for him.

It is hoped that the rally will encourage more boats to navigate the canal in future years, and thus indirectly reward those volunteers who worked so hard to re-open the canal in 1974.

HARE RAISING TALE

D. H. Richards

THE talk in the bar of the Bull's Head in Princes End had been on rabbits and rabbiting. "What's say?" said old Jim. "Thee'st cotch rabbits, but 'ast ever cotch an hare? No, ah bet thee 'asn't, not roun' 'ere anyroad up. But when ah was a little un ah've sin hares runnin' like the wind in the fields on the Bradley Hall Estate the back a the Gospel Oak pub afore the cut was made. But the hares as ah cotch onst was ay hundrid miles from 'ere, in Bristul in fact. An' ah'll tell thee 'ow it come about.

Owd mon Pearce as ah worked for when ah was a young chap had bought up an owd dis-used foundry just outside Bristul, th' on'y one as was aver the'er 'cordin' t' what ah've bin towed, wheer they ust t'mak' anchors an' anchor-chains an' such like in th'old days. The firm 'ad closed down an' moved up t'the Black Country, t' Darlistun, in fact about the year a the exhibition, an' the main roof 'ad bin 'eld up be sixty cast-iron pillars a foot thick an' eighteen foot long. The'er was a stack of other stuff a course an' owd Pearce 'ad bought it as scrap. That was 'is busniss yer see, an' he sends me an' Alf Smerdon down the'er t'boast it up an' get it ready t'be sent up be boat tew his yard in Great Bridge.

We gets t'Bristul an' finds we digs, then go's out inter the country an' sizes the job up. Be that time it was sevon a clock in th'ev'nin'. The landlady was a kindly owd soul

an' 'ad got us a good tay ready, soo when we'd had it we washed and changed we selves an' went and 'ad a drink.

Now, the pub we'd gone intew was alongside the deep-water docks an' full a sea-farin' chaps as we soon palled-up with. Just afore we come away, one of 'em asked if we wantid t'buy a new pilot-jackit as 'ed got spare, an' dives intew his kit-bag an' hoikes it out. Thick duffle cloth it was an' fire new. Ah day want it, but Smerdon's eyes nearly popped out when he sid it, an' he gid the chap what he asked for it, an' put it on. Owd Alf's orlright, but e'd never 'ad much in all 'is life thee know'st. The coot fitted him like a glove, bespoke tailorin' wor a patch on it an' he was as pleased as a dog wi' two tails.

Nex' mornin', early part a July it was, we went out aggen to th' owd foundry. The place was over-grown wi' brambles and elder-berrie bushes and such like, an' the pillars was three-parts buried. Well, we startid t'clear the brash an' feg away from three or four a the pillars an' it was a blazin' mornin'. After a bit Smerdon says t'me, "Ah'll 'ave t'tak' me new-coot of Jimmy ah'm agettin' marks on it."

B'lieve it a not, but 'e'd actually come t'work in it, an' was carryin' his dinner in his 'ondes. So he peels it off.

"Mind whe'er yow lay it Alf m'lad," ah said serious-like tew

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him, as he stood considerin' whe'er t'place it. 'Cos ah've just seen a flock a sea-gulls gewing over."

"Oh," he says, "In that case ah'll put it close t' whe'er we'm workin' cos ah dow want t'get it spiled. Yow just wait 'till our owd wench sees it, an' ower Phoebe," an' he spreads it carefully over a little clump a bushes an' we starts work aggen. Be tew a clock we'd cleared three a the pillars down t'the base plates, so we stops f'a bit a snap. We sot on the top of a bonk a rough feg' smokin' we pipes after, an' 'as ah leans on one elber lokin' up t'the end a th'wilderniss ah suddiny seed a big hare lollopin' into a little cave as had formed under an owd ingine-bed, an' a secon' a tew after ah sid another one foller 'im.

Quick as a flash ah runs over,

shoutin' f' Smerdon t'follow me which he does, thinkin' as ah'd had a sun-stroke a sommut.

"Whoss up, Jimmy," he kep' yellin'. "Woss up?"

"Run roun' the back quick," ah tells 'im. "The'es two hares under here wuth five bob a piece, that's what's up," an' ah lays a piece af iron platin' across th'openin' an' runs an' cuts a short fuse off the reel. We'd got all we blastin' tackle with us, acourse, so ah gets a little charge a powder, puts the fuse in, tamps it all careful like intew a gob a clay, an' puts it inter the openin' what ah'd left, then covered it with clods as much as ah could lay me ondes on inafew seconds.

"Now," ah shouts t' Smerdon. "Hold a sack over yow'r side a th'openin' an' ah'll blast 'em out."

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"Ah cor find one Jimmy," he bleats. Ah cilda bounced a brick off him as lief look at him. An' he started peerin' here the'er an' evry wheer 'cept the right place.

"Well hang thee coot over th' openin then," ah shouts in a temper, expectin' t'see the hares dash out his side at any minit.

"What? Me new coot?" he squeaks out. "Not bloody likely. Not f'two mouldy rabbits, ah dow."

"They ay rabbits, ah tell yer. They'm hares, y'nog yead, an' they'll fatch a dollar apiece, ah tell yer, soo hurry up an' get thee coot. Hurry up wut?" Soo ah waitid by th' openin' while he fatched it off the bushes.

"I hope theest right Jimmy and thee know'st what thee'st dewin'."

"Acourse ah know," ah tells him anxious t'light the fuse. "Hold thee coot tight over th'ole. We'en soon 'ave 'em out, an' we'll 'ave a good night's drinkin' out of them."

But he was born miserable ah think, an ah could'ny cheer him up

nowhow. "The nog yeads never seen nothin," ah says t'meself as ah runs roun't my side, "Fancy mytherin' himself saft over a ten bob coat."

Ah bent and lit the fuse an' up she went, boomsh! And Smerdon an' 'is coat an' the two hares went as well. Ah run down the bonk t' pick 'em up. They won beauties. Stoon jed an' not a mark on 'em, an' I 'eld 'em up.

"What's think a them Alfy?" I asks him, an' I hears 'im grunt sommut, an' then ah sid 'im sittin' up on the grass, rollin' his eyes round in his yead an' 'oldin' his jackit out at arms length f'me t'see.

Now, whether a not ah'd over-reached meself with the powder charge ah dow know, nor never found out, but any road up there was two holes as yow could a pushed a buckit through blowed through 'is new jackit. And cuss? Yow never heard a bloke cuss s'much in all yer life as he did when 'e'd got his strength back aggen.

SONNET

In this harsh world of ugliness and woe
My joy is looking at thee to escape.
My consolation is that I can know
'Tis good to see thy unadorned shape.
Oh how I long to hold thee, and to gaze
Upon thy pleasant features, fair to see.
The light that shines on thee cannot erase
Thy perfect form—sheer loveliness to me.
My feelings rise, they cannot keep in check.
I must reach out and touch thee with my hand,
Caress thee gently, smooth thy slender neck
And lift thee up where homage doth demand.
So I shall say when 'ere I chance to pass
"Thou beauteous vase of well cut Stourbridge glass".

TERRY WILLETTS

TRANSPORTATION FOR LIFE

J. Robert Williams

WHILST recently browsing through back numbers of "The Blackcountryman", I re-read Mr. Keith Lloyd's article on "The Stourbridge Canal" ("The Blackcountryman", Vol. 8, No. 4, pages 24-30). Mr. Lloyd mentions the abscondence of Edward Campbell Brewer, clerk of the Stourbridge Navigation Company, to the U.S.A., and his subsequent arrest. I thought the following account of Brewer's trial from "Berrow's Worcester Journal" of Thursday, 13 March, 1834, would be of interest.

"SATURDAY, MARCH 8.

"The business this morning commenced with the trial of Edward Campbell Brewer, aged 32, who was charged with having forged a certain bill of Exchange, bearing the date 15th August 1833, drawn by Wm. Jones of Birmingham, payable at two months after date, to one Richard Smith, or bearer, for thirteen pounds and five shillings, and with having forged and counterfeited an endorsement on the said bill, and feloniously uttered and disposed of the same to John Perry, at Stourbridge. At the time the bill was forged, the prisoner was employed as clerk, by the Stourbridge Navigation Company. The prisoner, who was of very respectable appearance, and had previously borne an excellent character, was deeply affected on being brought into the dock, and during the time of arraignment, which occupied some time.

"Messrs. Whately, Scott, and Godson appeared for the prosecution; Messrs. Lea and Carrington for the defence.

"Mr. Whately stated to the jury, that the various counts contained in the indictment constituted but one offence, that of having forged and uttered the bill of exchange which had been read. Until lately this was a capital offence, but now it rendered a person convicted of it, liable to transportation for life: that, however, was a heavy punishment. Under these circumstances he should be particularly careful in stating the offence of the prisoner at the bar with fairness, clearness and brevity. He then gave an outline of the evidence which would be adduced in support of the prosecution, and referring to the apprehension of the prisoner, said it was very important that it should be known, that in America every facility was now afforded for the apprehension of offenders, who fled from this country; the Magistrate to whom Mr. Ebershard applied, thought it right to give all the assistance in his power, in arresting the prisoner. This case, he said, was one of public

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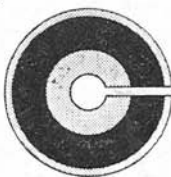
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justice, and not in any degree of vindictive feeling. The Company who instituted proceeding, were a rich and prosperous company, and had no end in view, but public justice.

"Mr. Lea, for the defendant, took an objection against the wording of the indictment, which he said, was in accordance with the form of the act now repealed, and not of the new act which took away the capital part of the offence. The Court overruled the objection.

"Mr. John Perry, ironmonger, Oldswinford, stated that the Stourbridge Canal Company owed him £11 14s. 10d. The prisoner being agent of the Company, he applied to him for the balance in July. On the 20th of August he brought a bill for £13 5s. to pay the Company's account, wishing for the small balance to go to the credit of his private account, which was £6. It was endorsed 'Richard Smith', and 'Per Pro Stourbridge Navigation Company, E. C. Brewer'. Witness endorsed the bill, and paid it away in the course of business. On the 22nd of Oct. it came back dishonoured and it was sent to Mr. Morris, at the Company's office. The bill now produced is that which the prisoner gave him.

"Mr. Thomas Morris deposed, that he had for some time been employed to audit the accounts of the Clerks to the Company; prisoner entered the Company's service in March, 1831; witness was auditing his accounts in the beginning of September, and on the 2nd of that month (Monday) prisoner wrote a note to him, in which he said he was going out of town, and should return on Tuesday—adding that he would take all blame on himself with the Committee, for his not being ready. The Committee had a meeting on the Thursday, but prisoner had not then returned, nor did witness again see him till he was in custody. Witness believed the whole of the bill produced (including the endorsement of Smith) to be in the handwriting of the prisoner. On his cross-examination by Mr. Lea, this witness said he had frequently seen the prisoner write, and though the endorsement appeared in a different hand-writing, he had no doubt that it was his; the body of the bill was written in his running-hand and the endorsement more slowly; he did not know that it was the duty of the prisoner to draw bills in the name of the Company; as far as he knew, he had no right to do so.

"Henry Ebershard, clerk to Messrs. Roberts and Son, of Stourbridge, deposed that on the 14th of September he set out in pursuit of the prisoner; on the 16th he embarked at Liverpool for America, and arrived at New York on the 27th of October. From information he received, he proceeded to Utica, about 300 miles from New York, and finding the prisoner there, caused him to be apprehended and taken before a Magistrate, who delivered him into the witness's custody, and then he embarked for England: on 27th November he reached Stourbridge, with the prisoner, and delivered him into custody. While on board the ship, witness told the prisoner that anything he said to him must be conveyed to the Committee. No enducement was held out to confess. On the day after they reached Stourbridge, witness having the bill in his hand, asked prisoner who Richard Smith was? After hesitating some time, he said, 'he is a friend of mine, and gave me the money to take it up,' adding, that as he had paid the money, they could not



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come upon him again; witness asked where he lived, for if he could prove that he had paid the money, he could not be hurt; he replied, 'Yes, he may.' Witness then unfolded the bill and asked him who Wm. Jones, the drawer, was—and without giving him time to answer, added, 'the whole of the bill is in your hand-writing'; without the least hesitation, prisoner answered, 'yes,' adding after a little pause, 'I know I should be proceeded against for the debt, and finding myself involved, I uttered this bill.' On this witness's cross-examination by Mr. Lea, he said, he did not say to the prisoner when he first met him in America, that if he gave up the property he would not be wanted to return. Prisoner was taken before Mr. Parkins, a Magistrate (this is the well-known Ex-Sherriff Parkins). Prisoner expressed a wish to return to England. While witness was in America, he suffered the prisoner to go at large. At the time he said the whole was in his hand-writing, witness held the bill in his hand. Witness had at no time told him it would be better for him to confess.

"Wm. Craig, police-officer, of Stourbridge, deposed, that shortly after Mr. Ebershard had left the prisoner, the latter, who was at the witness's house, appeared very much distressed; he asked witness if he had done wrong? Witness said, 'in what?' Prisoner said, that a short time before he left England he was in difficulties and issued a bill, the whole of which he wrote himself; it was drawn and indorsed in fictitious names; he asked if the crime was the same when the persons whose names were on a bill were not known? He wrote a note to Mr. Payne,

Clerk to Mr. Foster, of Stourbridge, and asked witness to deliver it. (Mr. Carrington objected to this note being received in evidence, on the ground that it was a privileged communication to an attorney. The Judge overruled the objection. The note was then read. The object of it was to request Mr. Payne to ask an attorney whether the law of forgery extended to bills, all the names on which were fictitious. Upon his cross-examination by Mr. Lea, the witness said, he did not hear any threat or promise to induce the prisoner to confess. The prisoner knew he was charged with embezzlement.

"Joshua Bloomer, clerk to Messrs. Bradley and Co. Ironmasters, deposed that he had often seen the prisoner write; he believed the whole of the bill to be in the prisoner's hand-writing.

"A clerk from the house of Hanbury and Co. at which the bill was made payable, proved that no person of the name of Wm. Jones, of Birmingham, or Richard Smith, had any account with them. The bill was presented on the 18th of October, and refused.

"Mr. Carrington raised an objection, on the ground, that in this instance, although the bill was found of no value, the transaction left all parties exactly in the same situation in which they were before, as the Company owed Perry the sum of £11 14s. 10½d. for which the bill was given in payment, and the Company owed it him still as the bill was found to be good for nothing. He therefore contended there was not a defrauding agreeable to the construction of the act.

"The learned Judge ruled that there was an intention to defraud, and it might have happened but for the praiseworthy accuracy of the Clerk from Messrs. Hanbury's office, the bill would have been paid by them.

"Several gentlemen came forward to give the prisoner an excellent character, and others were ready, but the learned Judge said it was unnecessary, as he instructed the Counsel for the Prosecution, that no man's character could have stood higher, prior to these unfortunate transactions.

"Just as the Judge was closing the summing up, the prisoner, who had evidently put the utmost restraint upon his feelings, fell back in a state of exhaustion and insensibility. After a short time he was so far recovered as to stand to hear the sentence—the Jury having in the meantime brought in a Verdict of Guilty.

"His Lordship was much affected while addressing the prisoner, which he did with as few words as possible, out of regard to his exhausted state. When the sentence of **transportation for life** was announced, as that which the legislature had affixed to the crime, and in mitigation of which, the Court had no power—the prisoner raised his hands and eyes to heaven, and with a convulsive voice exclaimed, 'my wife!—my children!' He has a wife and five young children.

"There were charges against the prisoner for embezzling money belonging to the Company to the amount of upwards of £1,000 but they were not gone into, the conviction of the forgery rendering further proceedings useless.

"The Judge ordered a reward of £20 to be paid to Mr. Ebershard, for the activity and intelligence he displayed."

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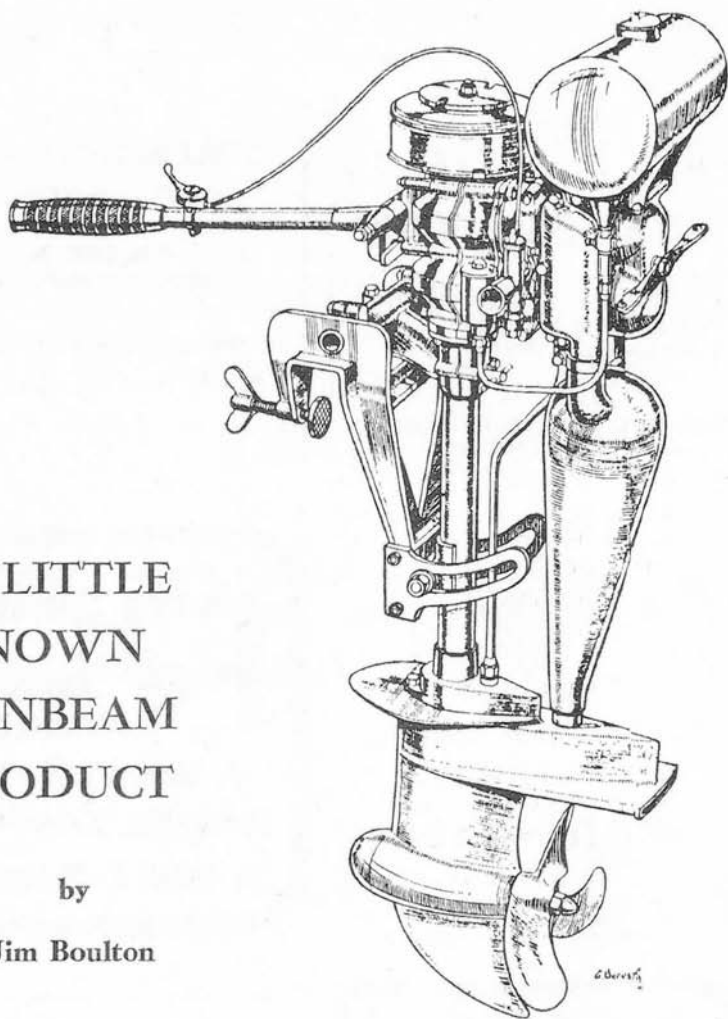
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A LITTLE KNOWN SUNBEAM PRODUCT

by

Jim Boulton



THE famous Wolverhampton firm of John Marston were renowned and still remembered for their fine Sunbeam products that embraced high grade pedal and motor cycles, cars, aero engines and in limited numbers, commercial and passenger vehicles.

Recently, Mr. Tom Pedley, an ex-employee now living in retirement in the Springfields district of Wolverhampton, reminded me of one of the lesser known Sunbeam products.

During the early 1930s Marston's introduced an outboard motor for small boats; twin and single cylinder models were offered both water cooled and, surprisingly for Sunbeam, two-strokes.

The twin had cylinder dimensions of 60 x 60 giving a capacity of 440cc. Of three port design, the engines ran on an 8 to 1 petrol/oil

mixture and the twin developed 10 bhp at 4,000 rpm. A very efficient cone shaped silencer which kept back pressure to a minimum (a bug-bear with two strokes) was fitted.

A single lever Amal carburetter was controlled by either twist grip or lever mounted on the steering tiller, Ignition was by Villiers flywheel magneto. Cooling water, which passed through the silencer was circulated by a propeller shaft pump. Incidentally, the prop was geared down 2 to 1.

The single cylinder model was very similar; its cylinder dimensions, 50 x 40 gave a capacity of 78cc and 1 bhp was developed at 3,000 rpm. Almost $1\frac{1}{2}$ bhp was available at peak revs of 4,500 rpm. This unit weighed 33 lbs. and cost £26.

Both engines had the sensible idea of a reserve supply in the fuel tank, which gave 20 minutes running time.

Sole concessionaires for Great Britain were Merlyn Motors of Bristol who had done much of the at-seat testing. All overseas sales were in the hands of Imperial Chemical Industries.

GWR Priestfield Station

Michael Hale

THE sign illustrated overleaf survived for several years after nationalisation of our railways on January 1, 1948, which was when the Great Western Railway officially ceased to exist. Not only has it gone now, but the station itself has been closed, although traces of it can still be seen. Priestfield is a district on the outskirts of Bilston, formerly lying just outside the boundary of Wolverhampton, but it became part of its larger neighbour in the local government reorganisation of 1966. When the station opened, the area would have displayed the typical Black Country blend of iron-works, collieries and housing. Even today, old industrial scars, factories and scrapyards are visible from the windows of maisonettes and high-rise flats.

Neither the station nameboard nor that on the signalbox included the word "junction", despite the fact that two busy lines met here. First to arrive was the main line of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway, the last portion of which, from Tipton to Wolverhampton, was opened to passenger traffic on July 1, 1854. According to C. R. Clinker¹, a station was opened at Priestfield. However, a contemporary description of the route² makes no mention of a station here, and neither do the railway timetables in the newspapers of that period.

The second line to enter this area was built by the Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Dudley Railway, which was taken over by the GWR before it had begun operating. There was an agreement between the OWR and GWR whereby the latter would share the last one-and-



1022 "County of Northampton" heads Bournemouth—Birkenhead train through Priestfield Station—July 21, 1956.

M. Hale

half miles of track into Wolverhampton, hence the junction at Priestfield. A joint station was constructed, which later became known as Low Level. The GWR began operating a passenger service on November 14, 1854, and so the line from Priestfield to Wolverhampton became much busier.

Mixed-gauge track was laid on this section, because the GWR trains were broad gauge and those of the OWR were narrow, or standard, gauge. The entire OWR system should have had mixed-gauge track, but for various reasons the third rail was not laid on some sections. Trains from Shrewsbury which ran through to Birmingham were also standard gauge, and this situation lasted until 1869, when the GWR abandoned its broad gauge north of Oxford. During that fifteen-year period, point-work at Priestfield junction must have been quite complicated.

So the GWR was running expresses from London and local trains from Birmingham, but again, there is no evidence that they stopped at Priestfield in the early days. There is some mention of a "ticket plat-

form", possibly where passengers for Wolverhampton had their tickets examined before they arrived at their destination. At the latter place, a temporary wooden building was in use while the permanent brick structure was being erected, and the staff might have found it difficult to cope with large numbers of people descending upon the platform at the same time. However, the ticket platform seems to have been sited nearer to the mouth of Wolverhampton tunnel.

In fact, we have to wait until July of the following year before we find a reference to Priestfield in the local press³. Under the heading "GWR Northern Division", among the list of alterations and additions to the timetable was the announcement

"The PRIESTFIELD STATION was OPENED on the 2nd JULY".

There was no similar announcement by the OWR, but the newspaper gave details of some excursion trains from Wolverhampton to Worcester and included in the list of stations at which passengers could join those trains was the name of Priestfield. So it would appear that the OWR platforms were brought into use at the same time.

There were four platform faces, as can be seen in the photograph, and the GWR down platform adjoined the OWR up platform in the junction fork. The signalbox and the actual rail junction lay just to the north-west of the platforms. On the centre platform was a hut used by a Railway Clearing House checker. His job was to record the traffic passing over each route, so that the costs could be apportioned between the two companies, and he also noted wagon ownership and usage. The station staff might have been jointly employed, or each company might have employed its own men, it is not possible to say at present. However, in 1861 the OWR took over two other companies and formed the West Midland Railway, then with effect from August 1, 1863, the WMR amalgamated with the GWR, so all staff would have been on the same payroll thereafter.

The facilities provided by the railway companies were quite basic, simple waiting shelters and a booking office. It was possible to gain access to all platforms from the nearby public roads, but in later years at least, a footbridge was provided. There was no goods yard in the station area, as the district was served from the OWR Walsall Street Goods, at Wolverhampton. The approach lines to this depot climbed away from the main line at Priestfield.

The passenger service in the 1860s was quite intensive⁴. Along the GWR main line, 22 trains in the down direction called each day, but only 13 out of the 22 up trains. Possibly Priestfield was being used as a ticket stop for trains heading into Wolverhampton. Similarly, on the West Midland line 8 out of 11 down and 4 out of 10 up trains called each day. In later years, the GWR developed West Midland line traffic, and in the thirties, over 20 trains each way called at Priestfield.

In the early fifties, before the decline of Black Country rail services, about 16 trains on the main line called in each direction. Those were all local trains, the expresses to and from London and other places did not call there. The photograph shows a Bournemouth—Birkenhead through train taking the curve off the former GWR main line at Priestfield on July 21, 1956. The engine is 4-6-0 No. 1022 'County of

Northampton', then allocated to Chester shed. On the right, the West Midland line goes straight ahead, with Bilston gasholder visible in the distance.

The pattern of local services changed in the middle fifties. Main line trains were cut only slightly to about 14 each way daily, but those along the West Midland line were drastically reduced. Certain trains in the middle of the day had intermediate stops deleted from the timetable, and called only at Dudley on their journeys between Wolverhampton and Stourbridge. This change left Priestfield to be served by about 5 trains each way daily in the rush-hour periods, compared with about 14 previously. Nevertheless, the service was still useful for employees of local factories, particularly those from the Dudley and Stourbridge direction, for whom there was no convenient bus service.

However, the local passenger service between Wolverhampton and Stourbridge was withdrawn completely with effect from July 30, 1962. The West Midland line remained open for freight traffic for a few more years, but it was closed completely in 1968. At Priestfield, lengths of rail were removed to put the track out of use, as far as Dudley. Finally, the track was lifted from the junction to the end of the Dudley Freightliner Depot sidings.

Meanwhile, traffic on the main line was reduced as part of British Rail's policy to concentrate on the electrified Stour Valley line. The expresses ceased in March 1967, leaving a local service between Wolverhampton and Birmingham, which continued to serve Priestfield. Passengers on this route decided that the trains had a limited future, and they were poorly patronised. A year later, the service was reduced from hourly to peak-period only, and the connecting trains at each end, that is north of Wolverhampton and south of Birmingham, were discontinued. The following year, all the stations were reduced to the status of unstaffed halts.

Consequently, Priestfield was served by about 5 trains daily in each direction, until they were also withdrawn with effect from March 6, 1972. Later on, certain sections of the Wolverhampton—Birmingham route were closed completely, including that through Wolverhampton tunnel. A certain amount of track lifting took place, and some of the lines to the north-west of the stations are used as sidings. Access to these sidings is from the Wolverhampton Steel Terminal, which now occupies the site of the former OWR Walsall Street Goods yard.

Perhaps rather surprisingly in 1978, the platforms at Priestfield still survive, with track running through to Wednesbury. The rails are rusty and see little, if any use. There is talk from time to time of the re-introduction of a passenger service along the Birmingham—Wolverhampton route, and, technically, this is feasible. Economically, the project would require a heavy subsidy, and so it is unlikely that passengers will ever again tread the platforms of what was once the GWR Priestfield Station.

References:

- ¹ *Railways of the West Midlands — A Chronology.*
- ² *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, July 5, 1854.
- ³ *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, July 4, 1855.
- ⁴ *GWR Timetables*, 1865 (Oxford Publishing Co.).

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*Angela Box, Sixth Form Student at Alexandra High School, Tipton,
writes on—*

THE EFFECTS OF THE 1926 GENERAL STRIKE IN THE MIDLANDS

THE General Strike was the nearest the British have ever been to civil war in this century. There was a sharp division of the classes — most of the manual workers supporting the strike, but most of middle and upper classes wanting it defeated. The miners were the most directly affected. They had to suffer terrible working conditions and wanted more money for less hours.

The effects on the people in this area can be seen thus:

As far as work was concerned, the people were affected as follows:

Newspapers continued to be printed, printing presses being manned by volunteers, management staff and apprentices.

In industry many men were idle, and others had to work in compromising situations with longer hours. For example, at what is now "Clark Chapman" steel works, owing to the closure of steel mills in this country, steel sheets had to be imported from Germany. They were smaller than English steel sheets, with the result that more work had to be put into manufacturing products; because definite numbers had to be delivered to the customer each month, longer hours had to be worked each week.

Small "family" firms did best out of the strike as they were able

to continue production, but in diminishing quantities, owing to lack of materials.

An example of unemployment caused by this strike can be seen thus:

Brierley Hill:—1,000—1,300 idle in iron and brick works;

Rowley Regis:—6,000 idle in all industries;

Dudley, Tipton & Smethwick:—2,500 idle at "Harper Sons and Bean".

Transport was also restricted. Buses and charabancs ran in some districts under police protection. However there was much pressure from the employers as far as the Midland Red Omnibus Company and the Corporation's to stop services completely. Strikers went as far as to remove tyre valves from buses, forcing the drivers to abandon their vehicles, and vans carrying men to work were almost turned over by striking bus workers. Local trains ran a skeleton service between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and transport became so restricted that the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton had to be closed for a week because the company had transport difficulties.

Some firms gave permission for their van drivers to transport non-strikers to work in Birmingham

and such places. A policeman always rode in these vans to protect them from those on strike.

People suffered in varying difficulty according to their occupations, with reduction or total loss of wages.

As the miners were on strike, people had to dig for their own coal from what they called 'Gin Pits,' about 20-30 feet deep. The coal was drawn to the surface by a windlass, usually an old mangle with a length of clothes line.

Families dug for coal on the surface at the Foxyards and at the back of Dudley Guest Hospital. People had to camp all night in such places so that others would not come at night to steal coal from their patch. Many people were killed as a result of these pits caving in on them.

Some people sold this coal to factories to feed the boiler for steam, so getting a few shillings to buy bread for their families.

Food lorries were escorted by police and soldiers, but many shops were prepared for the strike and had ample stock to meet demands, e.g. Beatties of Wolverhampton. Many customers ran up long bills at shops, being unable to pay them. Soup kitchens were a common sight for those unable to buy even bare necessities.

Mining families suffered the most, and those not qualifying for dole payments were very hard done by, for example, one family of six in Stoke-on-Trent, had only 8/- during the whole of the strike, which for the miners lasted from May until the Autumn.

Altogether money was short, so that food and fuel could not be

bought. People were in sympathy with the miners, and although the strike was almost 52 years ago, many still remember.

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THOMAS PHILLIPS, R.A.

(1770 - 1845)

Primrose Rostron

DUDLEY's most celebrated artist, Thomas Phillips was born on October 18 1770.

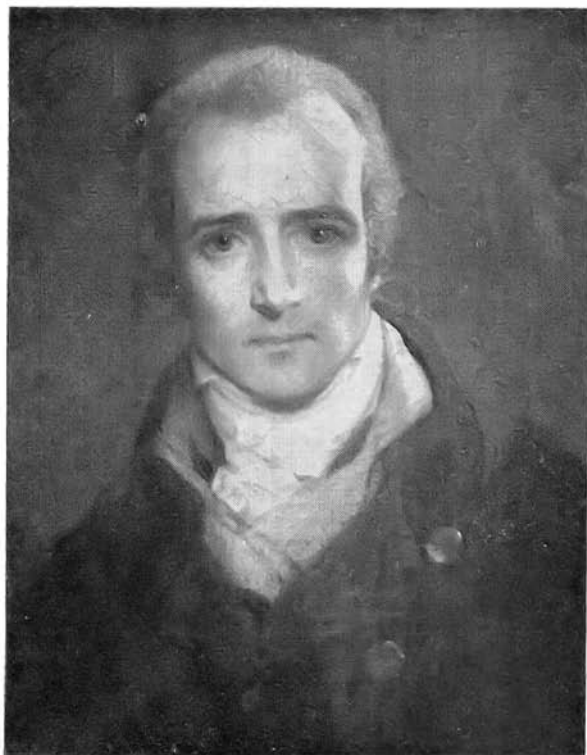
He received an excellent education, early showing great artistic promise, so he was apprenticed to Francis Eginton, a glasspainter in Birmingham.

In 1790, Phillips went to Windsor with an introduction from Benjamin West, the artist, where he was employed painting the glass windows of Saint George's Chapel.

The following year, Phillips enrolled as a student at the Royal Academy, exhibiting in 1792, his first picture, a "View of Windsor Castle from the North-East".

The next year he exhibited two historical pictures, "The Death of Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury at the Battle of Cassillion" and "Ruth and her Mother-in-Law", which showed his capacities as a painter in oils.

SELF PORTRAIT
1844



*Courtesy:
National
Portrait
Gallery*

By the mid-1790s he had turned his attention to portrait painting, despite great competition in this field.

Sir Thomas Lawrence was favoured by the Court party and John Hoppner by the Carlton House set. Beechey was also a rival.

Between 1796-1800, Phillips' sitters were relatively unknown people, but as his fame spread, his clients became grander.

During the Peace of Amiens in 1802, he painted the head of Napoleon with the connivance of the Empress Josephine, which brought the painter into the public eye. Then two years later, Phillips was elected an Associate of the Academy (A.R.A.). He moved that year to 8 George Street in Mayfair, the house having been the home of the artist, Henry Tresham, R.A. Here, Phillips settled for 41 years.

In 1808 he was elected a Royal Academician, when he presented as his diploma picture, "Venus & Adonis," one of his best creative works.

His fame was spreading into royal circles, for in 1806 he painted the Prince of Wales, later George IV, and other sitters included the Marchioness of Stafford and her family.

These years saw his portraits of William Blake, Sir John Banks, President of the Royal Society, and two pictures of Lord Byron, the one depicting the poet in Albanian costume being considered an excellent likeness. It had been ordered by the publisher, John Murray, who also had Phillips paint such literary figures as Campbell, Coleridge, George Crabbe, Sir Walter Scott and Southey.

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In 1825 Phillips was elected Professor of Painting at the Academy. A visit to Italy with artist friends followed, and in Florence Phillips met the painter, Sir David Wilkie.

Other interesting portraits included Sir John Franklyn, the explorer and Sir Humphrey Davy, a friend of James Watt, and Faraday of electricity fame.

Dudley was not forgotten by her successful son. His delightful, "A Parade of the Loyal Association in Dudley Castle Courtyard", painted in 1798, was greatly admired, as were his portraits of the Rev. J. Cartwright, the Rector of Dudley, and Dr. Wainwright.

Phillips painted the Duke of York in 1823 and his brother, the Duke of Sussex in 1840.

Later pictures included the Earl of Egremont and Dr. Arnold of Rugby, but perhaps the best portrait was the one of himself painted in 1844.

Other activities included essays on artistic subjects, printed on the Fine Arts in Rees Cyclopaedia, and a Memoir on Hogarth.

Phillips exhibited a few pictures in other styles, such as "Field Sports" in 1832 and a "A Nymph Reposing" the following year.

His circle included many of the best known figures of the day. He had a delightful hostess in the "beautiful and accomplished" Elizabeth Cross from Inverness, who he had married at St. George's Church, Hanover Square on July 4 1810. Their family of four, consisted of two sons and two daughters. The elder son served as a major in the Bengal Artillery (died 1884), and the younger son, Henry Wyndham Phillips (1819-68), became a portrait painter, sharing his father's Mayfair studio.

Along with the artists, Chantry and Turner, Thomas Phillips was one of the promoters of the Artists General Benevolent Association.

He died on 20 April 1845, admired and honoured in his generation. A Fellow of the Royal Society and F.S.A. (Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians).

COVER ILLUSTRATION:

From a private collection of drawings by D. H. (Bert) Richards, this one shows houses in Harwood Street, West Bromwich, demolished in about 1939.

Note detached wash-house and water closets, and line-post set in a disused grindstone.

The chimney on the wash-house (brewus) carried the flues to the wash boiler and baking oven. The gutter of the valley roof running through the chimney shows that the roof water was gathered at the rear into a rain water cistern.

The ventilating chimney on the lavatories is a relic of days when they were open earth closets, emptied by the nightsoil men.



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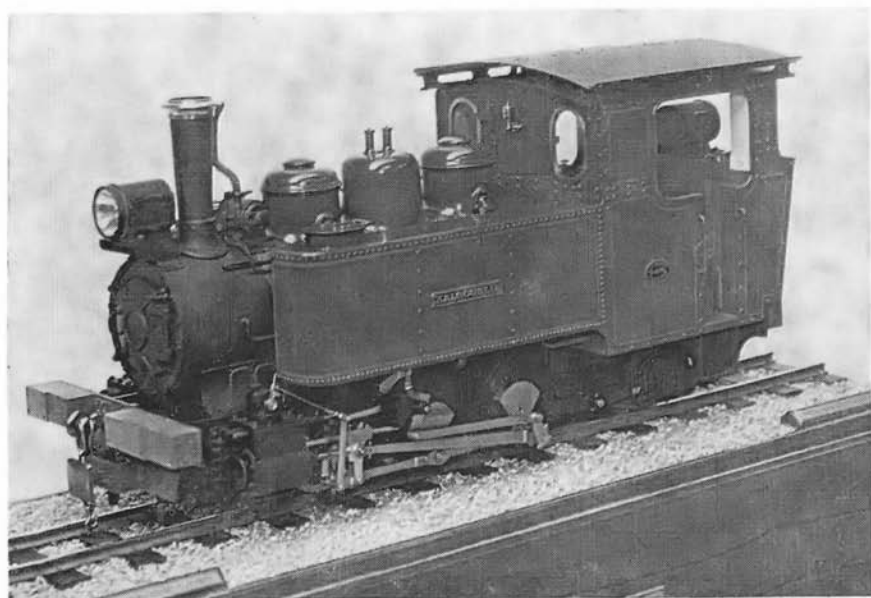
Halesowen's Champion Model Locomotive Builder

By Bryan Holden

LEN JONES was Britain's number one model locomotive builder for 1977. He won the title in London at the 'Model Engineer' exhibition, and his award-winning engine now takes pride of place in his Halesowen home.

"Kalgoorlie" is only about 15-inches long, but it took over 2000 hours to make. It is modelled on a 24-inch gauge 0-6-2 Fowler industrial tank engine, the original built for work on sugar plantation lines in Queensland, Australia.

It is meticulously accurate down to the precise placing of each and every rivet. In fact, the model was built from original drawings, Len having obtained photostats from the makers. Nothing has been overlooked—even the little headlamp on the smokebox door bracket will focus a beam of light 300 feet or so onto the next-door neighbour's chimney!



Award winning model locomotive 'Kalgoorli'

Bryan Holden

Although winning the championship trophy was Len's crowning achievement it was not his first success; previously he had taken two silvers and a bronze.

When competing against a world-class entry, what points must a would-be prize winner take into consideration?

"It's not the size or nationality of the engine", said Len. "Although judges' personal preferences do come into it a little. I'd say it's mainly accuracy of detail and excellence of finish. And, of course, the judges will fault any model for unsuitability of materials. If you made coupling rods out of brass, you'd be on a loser. You must choose the right materials, and then cut and shape and machine them to the highest possible standards."

Interviewing Len for my BBC Radio Birmingham, 'Steam-Scene' programme, I had the rare thrill of seeing his winning locomotive at close-quarters. His comments were pearls of wisdom to all modellers.

I noticed that the coupling on the front buffer beam was off-centre. Surely, not a mistake? "It's positioned so that it can work on the two-foot and the standard gauge", said Len. "The sugar lines on which this engine worked were connected to the standard gauge at the rail-head, where a third rail was laid adjacent to the narrow gauge. The offset coupling would then match the wider standard-gauge rolling stock."

I remarked on the intricate detail of cab layout, the accuracy of steam pressure gauge calibrations, the sliding firebox door, the maze of copper piping.

"The piping is made out of copper wire, polished and lacquered", said Len. "The hardest part is bending it into the correct shape. The cab fittings, I believe, contributed greatly to my success. In the early stages of construction you can't be certain which cab fittings will be visible when the model's finally assembled. So I follow the golden rule: make everything in the fullest detail."

Nowhere was Len's maxim for success better demonstrated than in the fine detail of the mechanical lubricator. Its miniature driving wheel had 40 ratchet teeth, cut by indexing in a lathe.

"Yes, they're very small," Len agreed. "The wheel itself is only .156 of an inch in diameter, in fact, and the pawls are spring-loaded to convey one tooth round at each stroke of the combination lever."

I gave the whistle chain a slight tug, saying "I don't suppose this works?" Len chuckled: "What do you want?" he asked, "Blood!" I confessed that I found his skill so profound I would have believed him capable of anything, however complex and intricate.

"Kalgoorlie" was put back inside its showcase, and Len handed me a small model mounted on a block of wood. It was an 0-6-0 saddle tank, No. 1361, a matchbox-sized replica of a Swindon-built engine. Only five of this class of dock shunting engines were built, and the last survivor, No. 1363, of 1910 vintage, can now be seen at the Didcot Steam Centre of the Great Western Society.

"I thought it looked more attractive unpainted," said Len, "And the rivets are embossed, not actual," he added with a twinkle in his eye.

"It's a delightful little model," I said, secretly coveting it.

"Well, you don't have to be big to be beautiful," Len replied, laughing. "What do you think of this?" He'd turned his attention to yet another little gem, a working model beam engine built to a 'Model Engineer' design, known as the 'Vulcan.' It had the conventional and geometrically fascinating Watt parallel motion which converts the rotary motion of the end of the beam into a straight line motion where the piston rod is attached, obviating the need for a conventional crosshead and slide bars: a device well-loved by Victorian engineers with limited large precision machining facilities.

The model had a working governor and boiler feed pump, and although used as an ornament, it was fully operational on steam or compressed air.

Len then showed me his two electric clocks which were constructed largely of brass. They were of the skeleton type operating on the consequent pole magnetic principle.

"It's where a coil of very thin wire swings on a curved permanent magnet, having like poles at each end and an unlike pole in the middle", Len explained.

"On each alternate swing, the coil assumes a north and south polarity, resulting in a powerful attraction and repulsion between the coil and the ends of the curved magnet. This imparts a vigorous driving impulse to the pendulum which is actually the motor.

"These clocks are very economical", he added. "One number 8 cell will power the mechanism for about a year."

I was then taken outside into the shed where Len had his lathe and workbench. "This is 'Tich', an 0-4-0 coal-fired contractor's loco," he said. "It's nearly finished. All that's needed is a railway to run it on. It's a 3½-inch gauge, to scale; that's ¾-inches to the foot. As you can see, it's a chunky little engine, fulfilling all the functions of a full-sized job."

Len reached under his workbench and brought out yet another model, a partially completed traction engine. "It's a one eighth full size model 'Allchin'. I've been working on it on and off for about eight years", he said.

"It's a coal-fired model, with an all brazed copper locomotive type boiler, working pressure 100 lbs. psi, hydraulically tested to 250 lbs. psi. When it's finished it should easily pull a family saloon car along—it's a four shaft machine with low, neutral, and high gear positions.

"Oh, by the way, how do you like these?" Unwrapping a piece of oily rag, Len laid out the traction engine's tool kit: oil can, shovel, bucket, pricker bar, screw-driver and so on. All perfectly fashioned to scale; the hammer shaft suitably aged, the bucket dented and stained.

"Making little bits and pieces like these give me as much pleasure as the larger items," said Len.

It was then the lifeboat caught my eye.

"That's another great love of mine; lifeboats. This one's radio-controlled and has a range up to about one mile with maximum aerial extension. It's a ¾-inch to 1 foot scale model of the modern version of the 37 foot Oakley lifeboat, known as the 'Rother' Class".

I tapped the smoothly-contoured hull. "Plastic?" Len looked

Doing a great deal with tube

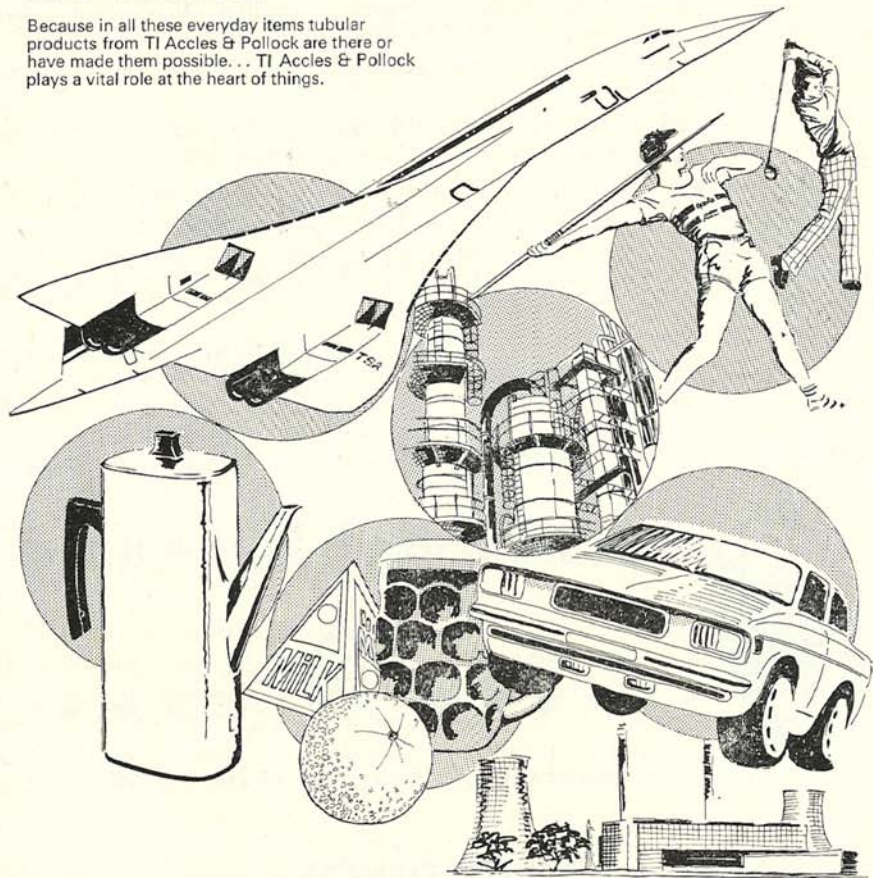
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slightly aghast. "No; double diagonal planking in marine ply. I'm not against using synthetics, but there's no substitute for wood for this job".

He went on to explain that the model was electrically driven, using two 6-volt motors and controlled by two-channel radio control at 27 Mhz—one channel controlling the steering; the second channel the speed and direction of the motors.

I noticed that the wheelhouse fittings were as detailed as those in his locomotive cabs; and all the boat's lanterns worked, each one expertly fashioned.

"This model is going to be as perfect a replica as possible", said Len. "Even to the compass-card in the binnacle!"

"You must find your hobby expensive," I said. "Not only in time, but materials, too."

Len shrugged. "Most hobbies are costly," he replied. "I mean, how much would you pay for a good set of golf clubs . . ."

What advice had Len to offer an absolute beginner? "Start on something very simple," he replied. "Don't go too expensive in choice of materials. Give yourself a chance of seeing the job through to completion. Above all, you must find it pleasurable. Enjoy doing what you're doing, just for the sake of it".

*'Steam Scene' is broadcast on
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An Excursion Through the Black Country

by

Mike Knight

START the excursion at Junction 2 on the M5 motorway, having to hand the West Midlands A-Z street guide which is invaluable.

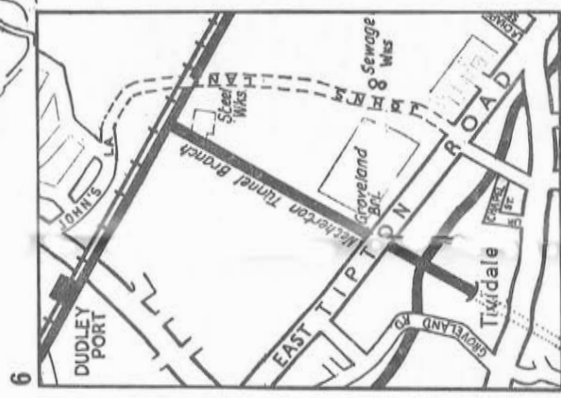
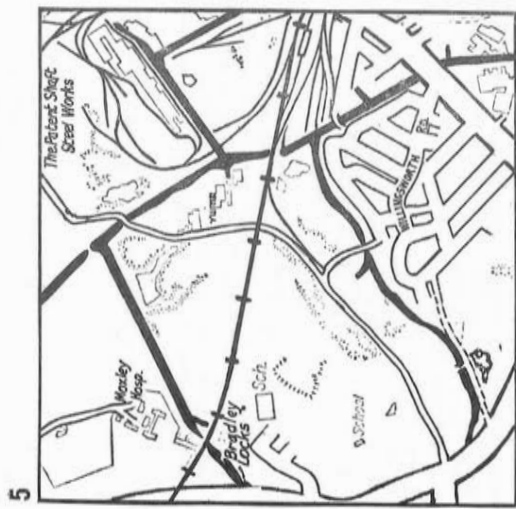
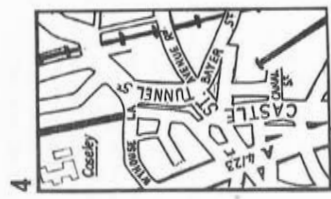
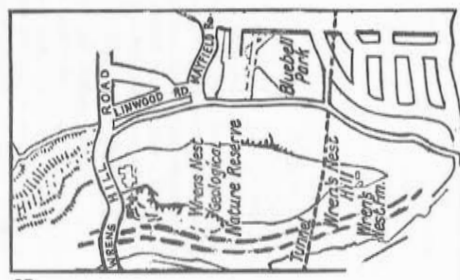
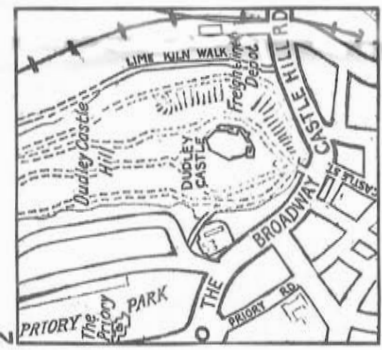
The route crosses the Wolverhampton New Road at Birchfield Lane and climbs via Throne Road up the steep edge of Turners Hill. This rises to over 800 ft. and the first walk-about may commence here if desired.

The quarried faces of Turners Hill show fine exposure of dolerite—Rowley Rag—a dark tough rock used for gravel, road-surfacing, and such like. This rusts in the open air and gives the locality its brownish appearance. From the top of the hill the southern aspect of the Black Country can be seen—at least, on a clear day*. Nearby, the still untouched rural landscape displays elements of farming activity, and old stone walls from a pre-industrial enclosure. Farther to the north the Netherton Tunnel lies beneath this ridge, and the Thick Coal was known to occur 900 ft. below the summit. Refer MAP 1.

Continuing northwards, following the hilltop road, the excursion passes through the southern suburbs of Dudley, built upon coal-bearing rocks. Rising beyond, majestically on the skyline, is the ruined Keep (burned out in 1750) of the Norman seat of local government—Dudley Castle¹. Unsuspecting visitors will not readily be aware that the hill contains a Zoo, opened to the public in 1937.

Refer MAPS 2 & 3

Passing to the west of Castle Hill, showing its fine boundary wall of limestone, take the route out past the Priory^{2*} and proceed as though to rejoin the Birmingham New Road. Stop either at Bluebell Park, or at the 'Caves' pub on Wrens Hill Road, for a walk-about the 'Wrennery'. Numerous paths lead to the fossil-rich quarries and the now overgrown fencing around the Daylight Caverns. Here, access to the deep Wenlock Limestone was gained through seven caverns which dip steeply to follow the good stone underground. Ten years ago—less even—and despite warnings of roof-falls, a party could descend quite easily to the canal arm brought underneath in 1814 to take out the limestone via the Tipton canal links. Not only was the canal deep,



the water was quite clear. Atop this section of the hill the inclined limestone beds are exposed where recent drillings were made to pump in sand to prevent further collapse of this hollow hill³. On its steep western slopes, near to the housing estate, are remnants of former farming activities and of limekilns. All mining activity ceased by 1924*.

Lead the excursion now around Mons Hill—the earlier scene of quarrying—and cross the Sedgley Road towards Roseville. Hereabouts, one passes at least twice over the former outcrop of the Thick Coal seam. With care and aforethought, manoeuvre the excursion slowly through the delightful settlement of Coseley, which just for the moment might exist anywhere but in the Black Country*. Here, the New Road from Birmingham to Wolverhampton, built in the mid-1930s to relieve motor congestion, cuts through the original settlement with little regard for the previously uninterrupted street pattern between Roseville and Coseley. No other village was so harshly bisected. The Silver Jubilee Park (1935) was amongst the earlier reclamation ventures, on land hitherto mined for the Thick Coal. Refer MAP 4.

From here, choose a convenient route to Bradleys Lane, crossing the derelict Princes End railway, and on to High Street to repair (how appropriate!) to the 'Tilted Barrel' for lunch. Recommended for its obvious association with coalmining, it claims to lean at 17 degrees from the vertical. One might find a spirit-level on the counter, and real coal in the bunker out back.

Opposite the end of Wednesbury Oak Road lies a wide track which involves a long walk, crossing landscape which could epitomise the old Black Country scene: a winding and overgrown canal; railway bridges, lines, and sidings; remnants of the former Willingsworth furnace works; pockstone walls; swags and spoil-banks; and near the end, the 1799 Walsall extension canal (at 408 ft.), along which was shipped cheap coal for the Brummagem markets*. Behind all this, and standing magnificently in keeping with the activity, is the Patent Shaft Steelworks, overlooked in the distance by the spire of Wednesbury parish church. And to add to the quality of life, this low-lying vale, once rich in collieries, contains the southern tributary of the infant River Tame—reputedly the most polluted stream in Britain. Refer MAP 5.

Leave by Gospel Oak Road, pass the cooling towers of Ocker Hill, and follow Toll End Road to Great Bridge. On market day this town becomes almost impassable; its 'great bridge' passes over a canal, of course. Proceed along Horseley Heath into Dudley Port and disembark beneath the viaduct across which runs the 1848 Stephenson line, electrified in 1967. Access to this structure will evince surprise when, on climbing the concrete steps, there lies the Telford Main Line canal at 453 ft., built to railway engineering patterns during the 1830s, and as straight as a die. Brindley's contour canal had within half a century become far too congested to cope with the demands placed on it.

A walk in the direction of Birmingham will reinforce the image of the Black Country, for not only does Victorian backstreet housing

contrast with modern high-riser, but dereliction with reclamation, traditional industry with modern*. Over to the right (to the south-west) the dorsal ridge which separates the two basins of former coalmining rises sharply, and Turner Hill can be clearly discerned. Note the smaller items on this walk: the typical iron foot-bridges of local manufacture; the double towpaths; the pigs of iron; and the Staffordshire Blue Brick. Refer MAP 6

Turn right at the Netherton Tunnel Branch, cut 1855, and note both the industrial and family longboats which often lie alongside here. On either side, reclamation of the marl-pits continues; the Groveland pit known 150 years ago for its prodigious output of blue bricks and coping stones, was founded upon widespread reserves of Etruria Marl.

Stop at the entrance to the tunnel, once gas-lit to aid the passage of boats, then turn back to the toll-keeper's house and climb the path-way behind. Linger here awhile to appreciate the engineering skills, and compare the quiet Brindley canal at 473 ft., with the later Netherton cut passing 20 ft. below*. Follow the contour canal to Tivdale along a towpath trenched, perhaps, to contain yet more cables and pipelines, passing derelict longboats, and goodly doses of effluent, noting how tow-ropes have cut deeply into the cast-iron bridge structures.

(Refer MAP 7)

Travel along Dudley Road East into Oldbury, with relics of the 1772 canal loop which once made this town a canal island*. The chapel on Bromford Road, built 1932, actually *lies in* the old Brindley cut, and the bridge wall which sloped down to the towpath can be still seen there! Oldbury's decay is worth investigation; its closures and demolition point to the greater success its neighbouring competitors have achieved in attracting shoppers. There are some fine religious buildings still standing.

From here, conclude the excursion with the short journey along a modern highway and rejoin M5 at junction 1.

* *This location has been recommended as a Canalside Conservation Area.*

¹ Article: *Blackcountryman* Vol. 2 No. 3 'Castle Dudley'.

² Article: *Blackcountryman* Vol. 1 No. 4 'Dudley Priory'.

³ Article: *Blackcountryman* Vol. 4 No. 1 'Paleontology of the Wrens Nest'.

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ELECTION RECOLLECTIONS

Tom Langley

WHEN I was young there were only two parties sharing power and half the Black Country never knew t'other from which, for a good many of the old ones had never been to school. In any case, whatever party was in power conditions never seemed to improve. Old Gammy Whitehouse, a Cottage Spring bar parlour politician of my childhood, probably explained the position when he said: "... When boys was boys and men was men, as boys are now men was bloody fools then ...". Work that one out. It makes sound sense.

There does not seem to be around today the eccentric and colourful characters of seventy years ago. I recall an old collier—The Professor! At election time he was always dressed in his Sunday best which consisted of a polished top hat, frock coat (that had once belonged to the Marquis of Anglesey), occasionally spats, and sometimes polished pit shoes. A Liberal by conviction, he was a holy terror at election meetings. Both sides had to mollify him or he would have heckled them all to death.

At one election Empire Jack (Tory M.P. for Dudley for many years) decided to argue it out with the Professor.

"I will ask myself a question ..." said Jack. Quick as a shot off a shovel the Professor shouted out "Ar, and I'll bet yoh get a silly answer as well."

Empire Jack thought he would frighten the Proff. so he called upon Jem Smith, an old bare knuckle bruiser turned Salvationist, to say a few words. Jem was quite a fluent and witty talker, but on this occasion he forgot what his subject was and he thought he was at a religious meeting. "I'm here to fight the devil," he hollered.

Out spake the Proff. "Oh, Ar. Is that what you're standing on his platform for? And if you fight 'im like yoh fought poor Benny Cabbage, God help 'im."

Empire Jack hadn't enough gumption to realise he was outmatched. "I've had enough of you", he said to the Professor. "I can always see two sides of an argument ...". "Course you can" guffawed the Proff. "Your side and the right side".

Empire Jack was in tears and howled out, "God help the Empire with people like you about."

"I ain't interested in the Empire," answered the imperturbable Proff. "I always go to the Hippodrome meself."

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After this the meeting was a pantomime indeed.

There was another character—Holy Anuk. When he saw a crowd he was compelled to deliver a sermon to it. When he got into an election meeting politics was not the subject for longer than the first minute. One agent had a bright idea. "Keep quiet tonight Anuk," he said, "and I'll get you a load of coal." Anuk promised but the temptation was too much. Halfway through the meeting he got up and let them have it. "Coal or no bloody coal," he shouted, "Hallelujah!"

Just after the women got the vote one of them put up in the Black Country. The tale is still told about her lady canvasser who went to Rodney Jack's house. His missus came to the door and the canvasser told her that she trusted her to see that her husband supported the lady candidate. "Impossible", said Rodney's missus. "I've bin married to 'im for twenty-four years and he ain't supported me yet, or his kids."

Sammy Smith was another queer unforgettable. He was agent for one of the parties. Like him I never knew which one. Sam got his words mixed up. What he said about Traffic (Tariff) Reform, the fistical (fiscal) policy and preferential imperence sounded good but nobody was any the wiser, including Sam, when he had finished. One night Sam asked my brother Jack to name the five continents. Our Jack never moved a muscle "Europe, Erup, Irup, Arup and Jollop," he said.

"That's right," said Sam. "I had just disremembered 'em. It all comes back to me now."

Later, in the Chase Institute, he addressed a meeting upon the Boer War and astounded them all with his knowledge of geography.

Mind you they were not all like Sammy. There was a big Irish fellow, Patsy Kilgariff, the King of the Chase. He was a well read, clever man, who died with the dictionary in his hand. You can take it from me he was the only man to leave Joey Chamberlain, Birmingham's god of yester-year, speechless.

This is what happened. Joey was speaking on behalf of Empire Jack and was telling the audience about the glorious Empire of their very own upon which the sun never set. Patsy, a Liberal, pointed up to the smoke pall in the Black Country sky where the sun was trying unsuccessfully to break through. "What are you going to do about this little bit of the Empire where the sun never shines?" asked Patsy. He was a good man and it is a pity he is practically forgotten. His greatest day was at the 1895 election when he marched his men—the King's Men they were called—over the Chase to Lichfield. He carried a banner with "Palmerston, Disraeli, Gladstone, Kilgariff" displayed upon it. Patsy's candidate had a landslide victory.

These characters have gone. Some of them were only figures of fun in 'Punch,' but G. K. Chesterton spoke for them when he wrote:

"Smile at us, pay us, pass us,
But do not quite forget
We are the people of England
Who never have spoken, yet."

Well, the old order has changed and their grandchildren and great grandchildren now have the opportunity and ability to speak at length. Sometimes, I feel for too long!

Final Shift

(Lament on the closure of a large factory)

Drinking our last cup of darkness
We wait for the turning wheel
To turn no more.
The stars are dying
And the blazing chimneys
Burn the crumpled moon;
Night is scooping its iron shadows
From a thousand silent streets
As dawn marches up
Lashing the town
With ropes of light.

Under a canopy of iron
Echoing human cries
Distil in hanging gloom
Like a fading requiem
Held within the rafters
Of a vast temple.
The clanging of trucks
Rings like a knell of doom
Tolling down the wild track
Of time's immeasurable race.

From the sky-tall furnace,
Fingers of heat grope and blunder
Over our flesh;
The sun glitters out,
Grasping the now still wheel
In a wedge of trembling gold,
The last heat roars and spangles down
Exploding the dusty air.
It is ending now,
The final shift,
And the furnace blinds the sun.

Jim William Jones.

THE FAMOUS LADY OF SILVERHAMPTON

Geoff. Stevens

HENRY HARTLEY FOWLER was a prominent Wolverhampton solicitor who married Ellen, the daughter of G. B. Thorneycroft, in 1857. He was born in Sunderland in 1830, the son of the Rev. Joseph Fowler, a Wesleyan Minister, and became a solicitor in 1852, practising for Messrs. Corser, Fowler and Perks of Wolverhampton. He was to become a town councillor, alderman, mayor and M.P. for Wolverhampton, first Chairman of the School Board, President of the Local Government Board, J.P., and Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire.

His wife, Ellen Thorneycroft, was the daughter of a very wealthy local industrialist who employed over 1,000 men at his Shrubbery and Swan Garden Ironworks, when 74 puddling furnaces and 12 mills produced iron plates, sheets, angles, girders, hoops and bars. He was the first Mayor of Wolverhampton in 1848-9 and a J.P. Amongst his written work was "Liberal and Tory Principles", published in 1880 by Hinde of Wolverhampton..

The daughter of the marriage was Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler. She was born at Summerfield, now Summerfield Road, in Wolverhampton, but moved to Woodthorne, which was the residence of Lord Wolverhampton when she was still very young. From the age

of seven she wrote poetry and also short stories, and it was her poetry that was to result in her first book in 1891. It was entitled 'Verses: Grave and Gay' and was published by Cassell & Co. of London.

She began to send her work to various magazines and was soon appearing in *Leisure Hour*, *Quiver*, *Cassell's Magazine*, *Wesleyan Magazine*, *Parish Magazine*, *Silver Link*, *Speaker*, *Argosy*, and the *British Workman*. She was very interested in both Methodism and local life in Wolverhampton, and this was often reflected in her writing.

In 1895, 'Verses Wise or Otherwise' was published and a book of short stories, 'Cupid's Garden' followed in 1897.

Ellen's first novel, published in 1898, was an instant success. "Concerning Isabel Carnaby" was a mixture of light comedy and high toned Methodism. She was well on her way to becoming established as a popular novelist.

She followed her success with "A Double Thread" in 1899. This book sold 50,000 copies and introduced, in the form of *Lady Silverhampton*, Ellen's name for Wolverhampton, used in her later books. The book was described as "a beautiful love story, beautifully told," by the *Daily Mail*, and *Punch* said that it suggested comparison with George Eliot. Its sales

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figure was more than double that of any other novel issued in 1899.

The popularity of her work necessitated another book by the following year, and 'The Farringdons' was published in 1900. This book is of great interest to the local Wolverhampton reader, dealing as it does with the Osierbed Iron Company of William Sparrow. Ellen had intended to call the book 'The Osierfield', but it was too thin a disguise. In this novel, Tettenhall is called Tettleigh, Wrottesley Hall is Baxendale Hall, Tong Castle is Pembruge Castle, Slipton and Studley are Tipton and Dudley, Sedgheill is Sedgley, and Silverhampton is Wolverhampton.

The magazine "Literature" praised the humanness of her characters and The Bookman called it a fine and strong story, brilliant, amusing, and above all, moving. The descriptions of the Black Country are very good and there are interesting insights into the life and times of the authoress in her Wolverhampton environment.

Ellen returned to her first love for her next book, and 'Love's Argument' was a publication of her verse for 1900. A book of short stories followed in 1901, entitled 'Sirius and Other Stories'.

New novels followed in 1902 ('Fuel of Fire') and 1903 ('Place and Power'). The latter is again set in Silverhampton and Baxendale Hall is also mentioned in this moralistic novel. Ellen's Methodist leanings tend to overwhelm the plot.

1903 was the year when she married. She was to become the Honourable Mrs. Felkin and celebrated by writing 'Kate of Kate Hall' with her husband, Alfred

Laurence Felkin, for publication in 1904.

Ellen then reverted to solo writing, with "In Subjection" in 1906 and "Miss Fallowfield's Fortune" in 1908. She considered the latter, along with 'The Farringdons', as her great success.

In 1910, 'The Wisdom of Folly' was published.

Ellen's sister, Edith Henrietta Fowler, and later the Honourable Mrs. Robert Hamilton, was also a writer. She did not achieve such fame as her sister, but was well published. Her books include "A Corner of the West", "The World and Winston", "For Richer for Poorer", "The Young Pretenders" and "The Professor's Children".

It is sad that the talented Fowler sisters are no longer famous, not even in Silverhampton. But I am told that Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler's books are being collected.

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From Necessity to Nuisance

(Black Country Token Coins)

H. Jack Haden

THE shortage of copper money in 18th century England prompted a number of businessmen to issue their own token coins, usually half-pennies and penny pieces, with which to pay their employees' wages. Such an enterprise was a convenience for working people whose earnings usually varied between 5s. and 10s. a week, but its dangers were soon evident. Not only was there the possibility of unscrupulous employees engaging in trucking, but spurious coins began to flood the country. One of the Midland industrialists to issue tokens was the famous iron-founder John Wilkinson, his 1787 halfpenny showing on its reverse the interior of one of his forges.

To prevent the abuse of token coins, in 1797 Parliament decided to declare them illegal and to satisfy the need for small change it issued a large quantity of penny and two-penny pieces which were minted at Matthew Boulton's Soho foundry near Birmingham in 1799; farthings and half-pennies were also issued. By this time the Industrial Revolution was well under way, population was increasing, and it was clear that many more coins were required, especially as much of the old copper coinage and tokens had been melted down because the value of the metal was more than the face value of the coins.

So urgent was the need for small denomination coins that in 1811 meetings were held all over the country to arrange for groups of businessmen, civic authorities, workhouses and traders to issue more tokens, and among those Black Country industrialists to bring out halfpenny and penny pieces was Samuel Fereday, of Bilston, one side of his token giving a view of his Priestfield furnace.

Another Black Country manufacturer to issue a penny token was James Griffin, maker of edge tools at the Withymoor Works, Darby End. Specimens of this token, though not rare, are scarce today. The one illustrated (photographed by Mr. W. F. Pardoe, of Wollescote) recently came into the possession of Mr. Wesley Perrins, a collector of Black Country relics. The obverse shows the interior of a forge with two tilt hammers and the legend "Withymoor Scythe Works. One Penny 1813". On the reverse are a scythe blade and hay and straw cutting knives within a double circle, and underneath a spade and shovel crossed. Surrounding these are the words "One Pound Note for 240 Tokens. Payable by Jas. Griffin and Son". The token is about 1½ inches in diameter and 240 of them would weigh 13¼ lbs.



Note the difference in these illustrations of the Withymoor Penny Token, 1813, with those issued a year later.

Courtesy: H. JACK HADEN

Trade directories of the first half of the 19th century mention James Griffin, or James Griffin and Son, as manufacturing nails and edge tools, and some details of the business are included in M. Perkin's valuable book "Dudley Tradesmen's Tokens" (1905). It is there stated that the business was founded late in the 18th century at Withymoor by James Griffin who subsequently took into partnership his son James, who continued the business with his family until Charles Evers-Swindall bought it in 1856.

James Griffin II died at Leamington on 9 February 1855, aged 74, and a memorial tablet to him was erected at St. Andrew's Church, Netherton. His son James Avery Griffin had acted as manager until his death on 27 February 1854 at the age of 44. A tablet to his memory is in Dudley Parish Church. When the family trustees sold the business, C. E. Swindall took into partnership Joseph Russell who had been apprenticed to the Griffins in 1845 and so was well acquainted with the trade. The company traded as Swindell and Co., but after the death of C. E. Swindall in 1891 Joseph Russell, a highly respected man who lived at Churchfield House, Vicar Street, Dudley, and served as a magistrate at Dudley, bought out the Swindell interest. The business became a limited company in 1900 and continued to produce edge tools, latterly under the management of Joseph's son, James Ernest Russell, until 1928 when it was forced into liquidation. This was the time of the slump in trade, but the business was bought by George Harry Green who was carrying on the firm of Eliza Tinsley at Old Hill, a nail and ironwork business which had been started about 1780 at Sedgley.

Major G. H. Green's father George Green had served an apprenticeship with James Griffin in the middle of the 19th century but in 1872 he had acquired a partnership in Tinsley's. Swindell and Co. and Eliza Tinsley are now directed by two of Major Green's four sons, George and John Green, but the scythe-making side of the Swindell business was sold to the firm of Isaac Nash, which operated an old-established scythe works at Belbroughton.

Charles Evers-Swindell (1819-1891), the senior partner of the Withymoor business, was one of the three sons of Samuel Evers (1792-1849) and Letitia Taylor (1780-1855), and like his brother James (1817-1910) he married a daughter of a Derbyshire landowner named Swindell, of Borrowash. As a young man Samuel Evers has been a clerk to Thomas Hill of Dennis Hall, Amblecote, a wealthy industrialist with interests in banking at Stourbridge, glassmaking at Amblecote, and the iron industry. Samuel gave his name to Samuel Evers and Sons, of Cradley, colliery proprietors and brick makers.

An illuminating account of this family, warts and all, has been given by one of Frank Evers' grandsons, Elliot Evers of Malvern (who for many years was a director of E. J. and J. Pearson Ltd., refractories manufacturers, of Brierley Hill), in his privately published book "Butterflies in Camphor." Frank Evers lived at Whitehall, Oldswinford (the site is now occupied by the Mary Stevens Maternity Home); the estate was bought by the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway Co. which had needed part of it for its railway development near

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Stourbridge Junction Station and subsequently the house and surrounding land was sold to Frank Evers for £4,500 or thereabouts.

On the other hand, James Evers-Swindell, who in 1855 had bought the Hickman family's estate with Oldswinford Castle, sold it to the GWR, who intended to convert the castle into a railway hotel. James Evers-Swindell was invariably lucky in his business dealings and when he sold the castle he came to an arrangement with the railway company that he should be allowed to continue to reside there for the remainder of his life. He was 93 when he died on 23 November 1910 and by that time the Railway Co. had realised that there was no need for an hotel at Oldswinford, so they sold the old house, which has now been converted into flats.

On the death of his father, James had helped to carry on the iron-works, S. Evers and Sons at Cradley, but he expanded his interests and became an important colliery proprietor involved with the Hockley Hall Colliery, Homer Hill Colliery, Cannock Lodge Colliery and the Newent Colliery in Gloucestershire. He was also associated with the brick making side of S. Evers and Sons, served as a director of the Dudley and West Bromwich Bank, Stourbridge Canal Navigation Co. and Stourbridge Waterworks Co.

He was made a J.P. for Staffordshire in 1850 and for Worcestershire in 1853. He was also a Deputy Lieutenant for Staffordshire, a founder member of Dudley Board of Health, a trustee of the Guest Hospital, Dudley, and a turnpike commissioner. But when he stood as a Liberal for Dudley Board of Guardians he was rejected by the electors.

Married in 1841, he had a son James S. Evers-Swindell (1843-1922) who went to live at Leamington, and was one of the subscribers to the new company S. Evers and Sons Ltd., formed in 1913 to carry on the brickworks and colliery at Cradley, and a daughter who married a Mr. Barton of Kidderminster.

Charles Evers-Swindell also succeeded in business and when he died on 9 June 1891 aged 72 he left personalty of £210,251 14s. 7d. with a £300 bequest for maintaining and lighting a lamp at Pedmore cross-roads. He also left instructions to his executors to carry on Swindell and Co. in conjunction with his partner Joseph Russell. He lived at The Quarry, Pedmore (the 13½ acre estate was sold early in 1978 for over £500,000 by Mrs. Tom Threlfall, daughter-in-law of Richard Evelyn Threlfall, for fifty years managing director of Plowden and Thompson Ltd., the Dial Glassworks, Audnam).

Two of his daughters married wealthy local businessmen, Joseph Bramah Cochrane, of Pedmore Hall, a member of the family of iron-masters at Woodside, and Edward Webb, the Wordsley seed merchant who lived at Summerhill, Kingswinford, and later at Studley Court (which became Stourbridge's Council House). In addition to being senior partner in Swindell and Co. he was also a partner in the Cradley Iron-works. He too was a Liberal in politics, contributed generously to the building of Stourbridge Town Hall which was erected to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, and was a benefactor to Stourbridge School of Art which had originated as an offshoot of Stourbridge

Mechanics Institute. Like his brothers, James and Frank, he was a magistrate for two counties. He lies buried at Pedmore.

In his book Perkin mentions that a token coin bearing the date 1814 was issued by the Griffins with a slightly altered view of the forge—a stooping workman is standing closer to the tilt hammer and on the reverse the “B” in the word BY in the legend is placed under the figure 4 instead of under the 2 in the 1813 issue.

Such tokens were, however, becoming increasingly unpopular with business people generally and in October 1815 the most important traders in Stourbridge held a meeting for the purpose of petitioning parliament to abolish the circulation of local copper tokens. An announcement was published in the “Stourbridge and Dudley Messenger” giving details of this meeting, convened by the local magistrates to adopt measures to stop the circulation of copper tokens and medals as money “from motives of profit by unprincipled people”. The copper tokens, the resolution added, “are become a nuisance and inconvenience to retail traders in general”.

The meeting decided that, as a lot of tokens were “in the hands of the lower classes”, traders would receive them “for a short time” but not reissue them—and among the tokens to be so treated were those of Griffin and Sons; Forest, a nail and trace manufacturer at Lye Forge; Wood, spade, shovel and chain manufacturer, of Lye; Fereday of Priestfield Ironworks, and the Birmingham and Halesowen workhouses. All tokens with the exception of those of Birmingham and Sheffield workhouses, were declared illegal by the 1817 Parliament, the two exceptions remaining valid until 1820 and 1823 respectively.

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THOMAS JACKSON OF WALSALL

C. J. L. Elwell

"IT was now about ten o'clock. We got footing on the outer bank of the great ditch which surrounded the town. This was a moment of deep excitement. My company was to mount the rampart first, and we were soon busy in placing ladders . . . The ditch was about twelve feet deep down to the ice, and about twenty wide, and walled up each side. It is usual in desperate cases like this to send the juniors first into danger. The officer leading the first section was a junior. I was the junior sergeant. He was an ensign (a young man) and was much frightened. I was not so well pleased myself at having such a job at that time of night. The French began to fire upon us in the ditch and also on the top. I had lost my young officer in the dark, and concluded he was killed, so was obliged to lead the men up to the rampart myself. Luckily as there were two other points of attack going on at the same moment (perhaps more alarming), the French were suddenly drawn away from this point, and my company got up with little further hurt".

The writer, Thomas Jackson of Walsall, is describing the start of the disastrous attempt by the British on the night of 8/9 March 1814 to take by storm the great fortress of Bergen op Zoom on the Dutch coast. Colonel Mackinnon in his history of the Coldstream Guards, written in 1837, has this to say about the episode:

"Lord Proby (the Colonel of Jackson's battalion) particularly remarked the excellent conduct of the officers who commanded the advanced party and that which carried the ladders, Captain Rodney, Ensign Gooch and Ensign Pardoe".

Both statements are doubtless equally accurate but the official view is illuminated and given another dimension by the sergeant's testimony. Thomas Jackson was one of many contemporary non-commissioned officers and private soldiers who enable us for the first time to see a great war through the eyes of the other ranks. The Napoleonic wars in the pages of Wellington's Dispatches and even from the recollections of junior officers like Harry Smith are one thing, as described by Rifleman Harris, Sergeant Lawrence, Edward Costello, James Morris, Thomas Jackson and others, they are quite another.

Jackson was born at Walsall in 1786 the second of the five sons of Thomas Jackson also a native of Walsall. Jackson senior was a manufacturer of japanned and polished shoe and other iron and steel buckles which, according to his son, was a "very profitable trade in its day of prosperity". However it depended to a great extent on exports to the continent and when the war with France interrupted them Jackson



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senior's business was ruined. His sons were thrown out of work and Thomas, in order to relieve the pressure on the family finances, enlisted at the age of 17 in the Staffordshire Militia, *The King's Own*, as it was soon to become. He seems to have thought that his engagement was for a month. It was to be eleven years before he returned to civilian life.

For most of his service with the militia he was stationed at Windsor where his regiment was on guard. In 1804 they accompanied the King to Weymouth and the following year they provided an escort for the prisoners taken at Trafalgar. Jackson, who was a member of the escort, recalled the hardship suffered by the Frenchmen on the march and the humanity of Lord Lewisham who was in command of the Staffordshire detachment. He bought shoes for the prisoners and kept spare pairs in his pockets in case of need. In 1806, Jackson was promoted sergeant at the age of 20 and in the same year he became a freemason. Four more years passed in the peaceful routine at Windsor but in 1810 an event occurred which was to transform his life. The adjutant died and was replaced by one of the sergeants who was promoted from the ranks. This man had taken against his former fellow sergeant and Jackson, fearing that he would ruin his career, decided to transfer to another regiment and together with 20 men from his own company he joined the 2nd Coldstream Guards.

MARRIAGE

He soon won the confidence of his superiors, was given increasingly responsible tasks and finally made a recruiting sergeant. He was performing this, to him, distasteful duty—because he thought it contained an element of deception—when he married the daughter of a veterinary surgeon. The match was not approved by her parents who considered the Coldstream sergeant was below their daughter's station. Soon after his marriage his battalion was ordered abroad to form part of Sir Thomas Graham's expeditionary force to Holland.

The winter of 1813/1814 when Jackson was campaigning in Holland was exceptionally severe. Byron's fingers were "benumbed" and Beckford from the millionaire comfort of Fonthill complained of the "cruel weather". The Thames in January 1814 was frozen. Jackson and his men experienced extremes of cold, hunger and discomfort before the night of the attack on Bergen op Zoom. Jackson's description of the affair has an epic quality which places it within measurable distance of Stendhal's Waterloo or Tolstoy's battle scenes.

From him as from them the reader gets the impression of utter confusion, of men milling around not knowing what to do or where to go. The British losses were enormous. According to Mackinnon, half of the attacking force of 4,000 were killed or taken prisoner. The Coldstream casualties included Jackson's company commander Charles Shawe, who was severely wounded, one man killed and 30 prisoners of whom Jackson was one.

He was shot in the leg and, before the wound could be treated putrefaction had set in. He longed to have the limb amputated. The

operation was at last performed by a British surgeon while the patient sat on the edge of a table, his only anaesthetic being a pint of strong red wine. He was conscious throughout. The saw was blunt from much use. The agonies that this Walsall man endured then and for the next seventeen months while clumsy, callous and sometimes downright sadistic surgeons tinkered with his wound, before it finally healed, do not bear even as they compel, contemplation

DISCHARGE

The day after the amputation Jackson and the other British prisoners were exchanged and he eventually returned to England in July 1814. There followed months of torture in hospital until August 1815 when he received his discharge. Thanks largely to the intervention of another native of Walsall, Quartermaster Worrall, he received £10 back pay. Captain Shawe gave him £5 for a false leg and the Royal Humane Society presented him with £15. The Army awarded him a pension of 1/- a day which Jackson thought was "a mighty poor recompense for having spent twelve years of the prime of my manhood in the service of my country; lost the benefit of my trade during that period; and worst of all crippled for life by the loss of a limb." The Army also fitted him with a free wooden leg which was renewable every three years. Thus financed and equipped Jackson was left to shift for himself in civilian life.

His account of the next 32 years of struggle and adversity in his native town is particularly valuable and interesting, affording as it does a rare picture of a poor Blackcountryman's life in Regency and early Victorian England. The memoirs, diaries and correspondence of poets and parsons, men of affairs and ladies of fashion are two a penny. They and numerous novels portray comprehensively what used to be called "the upper and middling ranks of society". The life of the great mass of the people is infinitely less well documented. If we see it at all, we see it seldom through popular eyes.

Having bought a house with his exiguous capital and having discovered that housekeeping on 1/- a day was not easy, Jackson, with the help of one of his brothers returned to the plating trade at which he earned 20/- a week. This soon came to an end owing to a periodical "panic" as a result of which large numbers of workers lost their livelihood and were kept from starvation by breaking stones on the highway for 1/- a day from the poor rates. Jackson was lucky to find a job as a clerk to the leading Walsall coal merchant at 18/- a week and on this his small family which now consisted of a son and a daughter were able to subsist reasonably well. In 1824 his wife died and two years later his daughter went to live with her mother's brother, a "Mr. Hall, an eminent engraver of Bury Street, Bloomsbury".

In 1828 Jackson was dismissed from his job by the new owner of the coal business and with unconquerable enterprise he started a school. He writes entertainingly of the different sorts of mothers he encountered. One would say when she brought her boy the first day "Please sur, yo munna gie this boy the stick; hey's a nice lad; hey'll do onythink yo

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tell 'n him". Jackson would find him an incorrigible ruffian and send him home.

Another "ma" would bring her offspring and say "Sur, this lad is such a tygar, as I dunna kno' what to do with him. Yo mun gie him the cayen well, and never mind that he cries". Jackson would find that he was as good as gold.

On Christmas Day 1828 Jackson married again and to augment his income from the school he had already set up as a debt collector. The school soon fell into a decline owing to the establishment in the neighbourhood of a National School. This was probably the school built at Bloxwich in 1828.

The following year Jackson suffered a further financial blow when he had to find £15 to apprentice his son at the age of 14 to a gig horse collar maker. In 1832, the year when politically minded citizens were working themselves into a frenzy over the Reform Bill, Jackson's fortunes touched rock bottom. The cholera epidemic which broke out at Bilston soon reached Walsall, it is said via the canal. So many people died that the arrangements for burial collapsed. On 4 August both Jackson and his wife caught the disease and he had just enough strength to give her the treatment recommended by the local practioner. This was to strip off her clothes, souse her with cold water and put her to bed. The doctor was sure that this saved her life. Whatever we may think

of this somewhat eccentric remedy, he and his colleagues visited the Jacksons several times a day throughout their illness and thereby did honour to their profession. Mrs. Jackson recovered completely after six weeks but her husband was not well again for six months.

The cholera epidemic, if it failed to kill the master, finally killed his school and in the spring of 1833, with restored health and renewed hope, Jackson resumed once again his old trade of plating. Helped by his wife, he worked every day from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., had no holiday and was content and happy. At the end of the year he had saved £20 which he put in the savings bank. In 1836, though trade was bad, food was cheap and $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of bread cost 6d. while mutton was $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. a pound.

By 1840 Jackson had saved £170 and with this capital he built himself a house, a workshop, outhouses and a yard outside Walsall. There he continued his trade but, finding the situation inconvenient, he let the property for £10 a year and returned to Walsall. However his health at last began to give way as a result of his incessant application to an unhealthy trade and in 1845 he returned to his house outside Walsall where in 1846 he wrote the Narrative of his Life. Finally, he sold his property and went to live near his children in Birmingham and at that point his autobiography ends.

The chief impression it leaves upon the reader is of the author's dogged will to survive and the fortitude with which he bore successive misfortunes, handicapped as he was not only by physical disability but by the ridicule it excited amongst the Walsall roughs. There is about him too a spirit of independence which recalls his fellow sergeant and contemporary William Cobbett whom in some other respects he resembled.

Both were children of self-employed men who attached importance to education, both rose quickly in the Army by dint of application and sobriety, both were formidable workers, both had the urge to teach, both were highly literate and both were influenced by Tom Paine to become radical and anti-clerical.

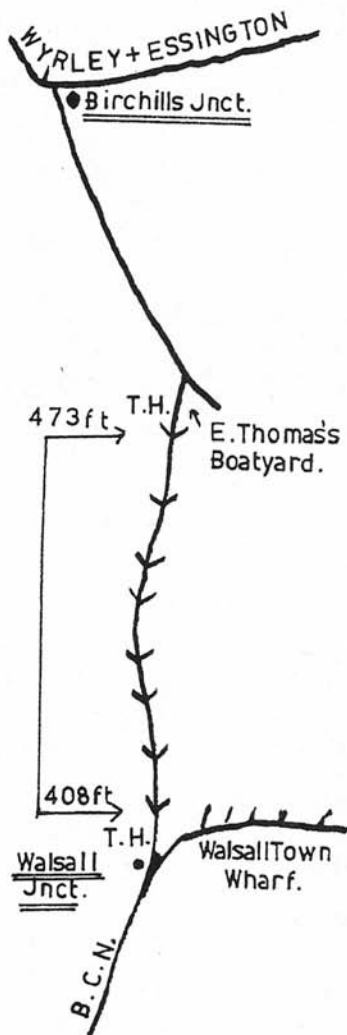
There however the parallel ends. Whereas Cobbett remained a parson hater to the end of his days, Jackson became a practising member of the Church of England in which he had been raised. Cobbett's rebelliousness mellowed, it is true, with age, but Jackson turned full circle and attacked "the pernicious disaffection inciting to revolution", which led to the Reform Bill of 1832. He even accepted a patron, "Captain John Forster of the Queen's Own Royal Yeomanry of Staffordshire, a gentleman whose name will ever live in the author's grateful remembrance" and to whom he dedicated his book. Cobbett no doubt would have spurned such patronage. With two legs he could better afford to.

Walsall Locks

By Keith Lloyd

IT was first suggested in 1825 that there should be a link between the Birmingham and the Wyrley & Essington Canal Companies, but this idea came to nothing.

Then, in 1829, an application was made by landowners, coalmasters, mineholders, ironmasters and others in the town and neighbourhood of



K. J. LLOYD.
June 1948.



View from Wolverhampton Street, Walsall, showing lock no. 6. This is unusual, in that it has mitre bottom gates as opposed to single gates on the other seven.



Walsall Top Lock, showing the former toll office and also the boatmen's church, now in use as a factory.

Walsall, for the link to be constructed. But although there was much discussion the link still did not come to fruition, although it led to a suggestion of a possible union between the Wyrley & Essington Company and the Birmingham Company.

In 1835 the Birmingham company was still unwilling to include a junction canal in their proposals, but in 1837 a deputation from Walsall town council met the Birmingham company, who afterwards were willing to support such a plan provided the Wyrley & Essington were prepared to supply the necessary lockage water. Still no definite decision to build the junction was made and the saga dragged on.

May 1838 saw a meeting in Walsall between the Wyrley & Essington company and some "gentlemen friendly with the junction", and this led to a suggestion that the BCN should construct it, the Wyrley & Essington should supply the water, and if both refused then a separate company would be set up to undertake construction of the link.

This idea led the Wyrley & Essington to approach the Birmingham company on the general issue of amalgamation, but the BCN were not prepared to submit to any such plan.

The Wyrley & Essington therefore gave notice of a Bill to construct the junction themselves, and because the Birmingham company felt that their attitudes would not stand up to parliamentary scrutiny, an agreement to amalgamate with the Wyrley & Essington was signed on 9 February 1849. The necessary Act was passed during April 1840.

Within twelve months the long-awaited link was completed: a flight of eight locks falling 65 ft. from Birchills Junction to Walsall Junction—a total distance of just $\frac{7}{8}$ -mile.

It had taken just sixteen years!

BOOK REVIEWS

The Glassmakers: Pilkington 1826-1976, by T. C. Barker. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1977. Price £10.

THE late D. R. Guttery, of Amblecote, had good reason for entitling his book on Stourbridge glass "From Broad Glass to Cut Crystal", for when the glass industry was established in that area in the 17th century the main product was window glass made by the Lorraine gentilhommes verriers on the broad-glass principle which involved blowing a cylinder of glass and, while it was in a molten state, slitting it lengthways, opening it up and laying it flat to cool.

Flat glass was also made by the crown method introduced by glass-makers from Normandy; this involved spinning an opened-up bulb of molten glass until it formed a large circular disc, the thick "bull's eye" in the centre being where the revolved pontil had been attached.

The making of crown glass survived longer than broad glass for as the large plate of glass had not been in contact with a surface while still soft it had a better polish. However, in the 19th century crown glass itself was superseded for the process was laborious and costly, the size

of the panes that could be cut was very limited, whereas the demand was for large and stronger sheets of glass for windows, etc.

In the Black Country the major producers of flat glass were Chance Bros. of Smethwick, but in the second half of last century there was a producer in the Stourbridge area, incidentally within a hundred yards or so from the last "Stourbridge" bottle-works. When Thomas Webb, a maker of decorated glassware, moved from the Platts Glassworks at Amblecote to his new Dennis Glassworks in the 1860s the Platts Works were taken over by the Stourbridge Sheet and Crown Glass Co.

At the time competition in the flat glass industry was fierce especially from the Belgians, and Samuel Bowen, who operated the Platts Works for a short time, failed—not for the first time in this line of business.

The works was then taken over by the Hartleys, substantial glass manufacturers at Sunderland, who with Chance Bros. and Pilkington Bros. were dominating the British flat glass industry. In order to survive these three companies had to co-operate, especially in the matter of fixing prices, and eventually they came under the control of Pilkingtons, now an international group based at St. Helens, employing over 32,000 people in Britain and overseas.

The story of the development of the flat glass industry and Pilkington Bros. was told by Professor Barker in his "Pilkington Brothers and the Glass Industry" (1966), now out of print. Much of this account is repeated, expanded, and taken up to the present day, though Pilkington's outstanding contribution to glass making, float glass, is dealt with only briefly. The revolutionary float glass process, perfected after years of costly experimentation, eliminates grinding and polishing for a continuous sheet of molten glass is drawn over a bath of molten tin.

Prof. Barker's valuable book is a brilliant contribution to the economic history of Britain, for glassmaking is a vital industry. It deals clearly with the founding of the business by a retired doctor who went into the wine and spirits business, then began distilling spirits and using the profits to finance a glassmaking company at St. Helens.

Then the author explains the development of the business under Pilkington rule—members of the family have retained control although the inventor of float glass, Sir Alastair Pilkington, is not, so far as can be traced, a member of the family. The first cone-shaped glasshouse at St. Helens, 120 ft. tall and costing £8,500 to build, went into production on 14 October 1827.

The account deals with technical advances in glassmaking, the means employed to combat competition, the amalgamations, the mass producing of plate glass, glass for the expanding motor-car industry, architectural glass, optical glass, fibre glass, the expansion of the company's export business, the financing of growth, research and development, labour relations, and the principal people concerned with directing and managing what has become an important industrial empire. Not surprisingly the volume runs to almost 600 pages. Prof. Barker has done a remarkable job in presenting so well such a mass of information. There are some good illustrations.

H.J.H.

A History of Staffordshire Bells. Trevor S. Jennings, 2nd Impression 1970, 119 pages. Published by the author and obtainable from J. Hannon & Co. (Books), 36 Great Clarendon Street, Oxford. £2.50.

ALTHOUGH the manufacture and the ringing of bells are subjects for specialists, their use is of general interest. As Mr. Jennings shows in his history, it was not confined to weddings and jubilees. Bells were also rung as time signals and to announce that mediaeval security measure, the curfew. It is surprising to read that ringing the curfew did not come to an end in Staffordshire until as late as 1937 in the parish of Kinver. The provision and maintenance of bells was formerly both a lay and an ecclesiastical responsibility. Indeed bells were sometimes put to highly un-ecclesiastical purposes. Thus one of the Walsall church bells was sold to finance the repair of a bridge and highway which was "very noisome to the King's people passing that way".

Most of the bells in Black Country churches were made at foundries well outside the area, at Worcester, Gloucester, Leicester, Nottingham, Wellington in Shropshire, Chacombe in Northamptonshire and in London. There was however one Black Country bell foundry, the only one in Staffordshire, that of Thomas Hancox of Walsall. Hancox settled in 1600 in Park Street and the earliest bell attributed to his foundry, which was called Pott House, is dated 1620, the year after he was Mayor of Walsall. He was in due course succeeded by his son, another Thomas, but by 1642 the business seems to have come to an end.

Mr. Jennings's book is full of

facts and figures many of which are of more than campanological interest. The heaviest bells in Staffordshire are the tenor bells at St. Peter's, Wolverhampton (33 cwt.), Lichfield Cathedral (31 cwt.) and St. Matthew's, Walsall (26 cwt.). The largest peals in the Black Country are at St. Peter's, Wolverhampton (12), Christ Church, West Bromwich (12), St. Matthew's, Walsall (12), St. Bartholomew's, Wednesbury (10), St. Giles', Willenhall (10), St. Paul's, Wood Green (8), St. Leonard's, Bilston (8), Christ Church, Coseley (8), All Saints, West Bromwich (8), St. Martin's, Tipton (8) and Darlaston Parish Church (8).

The 19th century was the great age of bell founding. Peals were needed for many new churches particularly in industrial areas like the Black Country and many peals in old churches were re-cast. Queen Victoria's two Jubilees of 1887 and 1897 gave a powerful impetus to the urge to ring. Landowners and manufacturers vied with one another in providing the means. One such benefactor was Mrs. Griffiths, the widow of a Wednesbury manufacturer. She left a legacy for the peal hung at St. Paul's, Wood Green, in 1887. Mr. Jennings says that the inscription on the 7th in her memory is "perhaps the worst of all Staffordshire bell inscriptions".

In 1926 Wednesbury Forge provided a complete band of change ringers for St. Paul's. Today the veteran ringing master, Mr. Edgar Marlow is hard put to find pupils and repairs to the peal are overdue. The urge to ring at Wood Green is at present dormant. It is to be hoped that when it is re-awakened the means to satisfy it will still be forthcoming.

C.J.L.E

*"Salute to Snow Hill" by Derek Harrison, published by Barbyn Press.
£3.00.*

AMONG the flood of railway titles appearing on booksellers' shelves is one of local interest, featuring a railway station which, although not located within its bounds, had close associations with the Black Country. Snow Hill Station, Birmingham, which British Rail closed in 1972, will remain in the memories of many people—commuters, businessmen, shoppers, holidaymakers, war-time troops and evacuees, as well as the spotters who spent many hours on its platforms.

Derek Harrison, a life-long admirer, has produced a 120-page tribute with diagrams and photographs covering the station's entire period from Victorian beginnings to demolition. He describes how the original wooden building was replaced by a more permanent structure in 1871, using steelwork supplied by the Patent Shaft and Axletree Company of Wednesbury. The Great Western Railway rebuilt the station again in 1906-12. This time, Messrs. E. C. and J. Keay Limited of Darlaston, supplied and erected nearly 6,000 tons of iron and steel.



Services were then disrupted by World War I, which was followed by a period of high unemployment and industrial unrest, but the thirties produced what many considered to be the golden age of railways. World War II brought that to an end and nationalisation followed, ending GWR ownership of the station. Steam locomotives vanished, then came the run-down and eventual closure of Snow Hill.

The author does not claim to have written a detailed history—indeed, the historically-minded reader will find several factual errors—but the book gives an excellent impression of the many facets of the daily life of a large railway station.

M.H.



*Platoon Commander J. F. Knowles,
Wednesbury V.T.C.*

Mr. C. L. Heys of Streetly and I am very grateful to him for allowing me to photograph the cap badge and to reproduce a picture of the cap actually being worn by platoon commander John Foster Knowles. The cap badge has a fighting cock over a Stafford Knot and the braid on Knowles' cuffs is also arranged in a Stafford Knot.

A councillor John Knowles, J.P., was Mayor of Wednesbury in 1894-96 and 1900-01. I am not sure if this is the same person as that shown in the photograph. Perhaps readers can throw some light on this?

Incidentally, on page 49 of the Winter 1978 issue of 'The Black-

countryman', footnote 10 should state that the 2nd Vol. Bn. S. Staffs. Regt. became the 5th (T.F.) Bn. S. Staffs. Regt. in 1908. Also the "GR" letters on the red armband mentioned on page 45, were black and not dark blue.

Robert Williams.

Churchill Drive,
Amblecote, Stourbridge.

★ ★ ★

Sir,

I wonder if the horse-drawn brake mentioned by John Gower in his "Boyhood at Ettingshall" (vol. 11 No. 2) could be the same one that was used around 1925 by my stepfather, for taking his friends for what was known as a jollification?

We lived at the time in Gordon Street, Wolverhampton, and my stepfather kept a few horses in the stables behind the house. On a fine summer evening he used to borrow the brake from a Mr. Sam Hill; one of the horses would be backed into the shafts, and amid great guffaws of laughter the ladies were handed up into the seats.

The favourite destination was the Ball at Coven, and with stone bottles filled with draught beer from the local (being the Steelhouse Tavern, or "Parky's", as it was better known), we would start away.

One of the passengers always fascinated me. She wore lovely hats, I remember, with either lots of nodding flowers or bobbing cherries on them. After a few songs when the company had warmed up, out would come her little book of powdered pages, and after tearing one out she would rub it vigorously over her face.

CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

Following a recent house clearance in Bedford, I came across some old family photographs, together with a book written about the Black Country. The book is called 'Osney Foss' written by Frederic Willetts, formerly Vicar of West Bromwich, and published in 1908; it revolves around the fortunes of the Fairborn family. The author claims to write his story from personal knowledge of people and events.

Places recorded are known as Blackhampton, Sinker Hole, Fair Croft, Crookstraw Pit, Farren Works, Bustleholme—and various others. Towards the end of the story is related the saga of death and destruction resulting from the explosion of a boiler at a local ironworks. Between the pages is an undated postcard photograph of the 'Ring of Bells', with an inscription below: 'Where beer is sold by the pounce. West Bromwich'.

Amongst the albums, though with no proof of connection, are photographs from 1924 of the terraced house at 10 School Street, Sedgley; and there are people snapped at a visit to Dudley Zoo. The only name which appears common to the Bedford and Black Country people is Rushton; the owner of 'Osney Foss'. Can any reader enlarge upon this information?

Mike Knight.

4 Waltham Close,
Bedford.

Sir,

My husband's great-grandfather, William Bowater, was born at Tipton, and his son William Bowater was Lord Mayor of Birmingham five times. I have been trying to discover any connections with these Bowaters in the Black Country, so far without success. If anyone can help, I would be most grateful.

Mrs. Bowater.

Candlemas,
Leintwardine,
Herefordshire.

★ ★ ★

Sir,

Following the publication of my item on the Wolverhampton Volunteers of 1914-19 ('The Black-countryman', Vol. 11, No. 1, Winter 1978, pages 43 to 49), Mr. T. Reece of Willenhall kindly brought to my attention a cap of the Wednesbury Volunteer Training Corps.

The cap is in the possession of



*Cap Badge,
Wednesbury V.T.C.*

The return journey was the noisiest, and the still warm air was broken with cries of "altogether now", or "give us another song, Bill". Then ribald laughter resounded through the quiet lanes as we passed along.

Happy times!

(Mrs.) G. Glover.

Cumberland Cottages,
Cumberland Yard,
Tunbridge Wells.

★ ★ ★

Sir,

On and off during the last 15 years I have led a variety of day excursions selecting highlights of the region for visitors to wonder at, to revile, or to be amused by. During this time I've travelled in from Birmingham, Leicester, Coventry and Bedford. On each occasion, although something has irrevocably changed — particularly in the urban areas — I've always managed to find alternatives to excite fresh curiosity. Gone, for example, are such features as the 'Druids Head' at Hurst Hill; the 'Talbot' at Oldbury and the Daylight Caverns at the Wrennery. On balance we witness the canal improvements beneath M6; the re-opening of the Dudley Tunnel; and the conservation of old Darlaston.

Perhaps now it is timely to commence publication of some of these excursions in the hope that others might do likewise, and thus lead the Black Country to be acknowledged as an Area of Outstanding Unnatural Interest! With this issue I include one of a short series of organised excursions which visitors from other regions have enjoyed.

Mike Knight.

4 Waltham Close,
Bedford.

(See Centre Pages)

Sir,

In response to the appeal of your correspondent, W. A. Seaby, (Blackcountryman, vol. 11, No. 1), I offer a few notes on some windmills that formerly existed in this area. I hope that they will stimulate some of our readers to supply the magazine with further details from their personal memories of those mills which continued to exist into this century.

Mill with approximate position—

1. West Bromwich Hall Hill (005943). c.1600—c.1820. Maps—A, B.

Some references:—W. B. Manorial Rent Roll, 1626. Survey of Manor Lands, 1720.

2. Tantany Mill, West Bromwich (003917). c.1830 to recent. Corner of Mill St and Tantany Lane. Map—D.
3. Dunkirk Mill, West Bromwich (980915). c.1600—c.1770. Map—Nil.

References:—Hypomnema, Simon Rider; MS diary in the William Salt Library. Plan of Intended Navigation from Birmingham to Aldersley, 1767.

4. Wednesbury Church Hill Mills. There were two mills, one near the church on the present reservoir site (986954), and the other at the top of Windmill Street (988953). Maps—A, B, C, E.

References:—Natural History of Staffordshire, Plot. 1686. History of Wednesbury, 1962.

Wednesbury, Ancient and Modern, Hackwood. 1902. Aris's Birmingham Gazette; 1770—1800.

5. King's Hill Mill, Wednesbury (981965).
Maps and References:—As Wednesbury Mills.
6. Walsall Windmill (015975). At times there were two mills here at Little London. 16th century to recent. Maps—A, B, C, E.
References:—History of Walsall, Willmore, 1881.
Borough and Foreign of Walsall, Homeshaw, 1960.
7. Bilston Windmill (952967). Near Mount Pleasant, 15th century to recent. Maps:—C, E.
References:—Trade Directories.
8. Coseley Mill. There were two mills near to Hurst Hill, about half a mile apart (933937 and 937933). Maps:—C, E.
9. Windmill End (953879).
10. Tipton Green (969879). Maps:—A, C, E.
11. Smethwick (028879). West side of Windmill Lane. Maps:—C, E.

Maps

- A. Yates' County of Stafford, 1775.
- B. Dawson's 2" map. 1816.
- C. O.S. 1", 1st edition. 1834.
- D. Wood's Map of West Bromwich. 1837.
- E. Tithe Index Map, 2". 1865.

Suggested Bibliography

- J. F. Ede; History of Wednesbury.
- F. W. Hackwood; Wednesbury, Ancient and Modern.
- E. J. Homeshaw; Borough and Foreign of Walsall.
- R. Plot; Natural History of Staffordshire.
- F. W. Willmore; History of Walsall.

Though my book, 'The Tame Mills of Staffordshire', 1976, is

primarily concerned with the water mills, there are slight references to some of the windmills.

D. Dilworth.

Pennyhill Lane,
West Bromwich.

★ ★ ★

Sir,

The Bilston Museum is holding an exhibition—"Bilston At War", July 29—September 2, which readers may find of interest.

Should anyone have relics of the Second World War, such as Home Guard uniforms, photographs, bomb fragments, war notices, etc., that they would be prepared to lend for the above exhibition, we would be glad if they could contact us.

We would also be interested to know of the whereabouts of any surviving Anderson Shelters.

S. Richardson.

Peter Neele,
Keeper of Bilston Museum
and Art Gallery.
Tel.: Bilston 42097.

★ ★ ★

Sir,

The International Pen Friends' club is regarded as one of the world's greatest pen friend organisations. It is concerned with the promotion of international friendship and it also tries to bring practical aid to underprivileged children. It is a regular contributor to U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations Children's Fund) and at present it is attempting to create an **extra division** to provide contacts for blind people via cassettes, tapes and braille.

The club has spread into 136 countries and can now cater for all age groups. It has 48,000 members and a pen friend service can be provided in English, French, German and Spanish languages.

For information regarding membership, contact, 17 Temple Rhyding Drive, Baildon, W. Yorks., BD17 5PX.

★ ★ ★

Sir,

The Black Country has never been prominent with comedians, but I wonder how many remember Ernie Garner, of Black Country fame. It was at the Albert Hall, Crabbery Street, Stafford, where I first saw him, which I believe was in 1920, and this was one of his jokes:

It was a fire; everybody sed it was a fire. We was dashing along at 20 miles an 'our, an' I saw a bloke runin' at the side of the engine and he said, "yo con kape yer chess nuts and yer bleeding fish an' chips."

C. H. Emery.

Chase Terrace.

★ ★ ★

Sir,

I am the owner of a grandfather clock which has been in my family for three generations and I am trying to trace the history of the maker.

The clock is black hard-carved Irish Bog Oak and the name engraved on the face is H. CLARKSON, HAMPTON.

Searches I have made with the Antiquarian and Honological Society and Bailles book of 35,000 clock makers reveal this man was Hewitt Clarkson, Wolverhampton 1762-1780 (Clocks and watches from London). Being led to believe that Hampton was the original name for Wolverhampton, I wrote to the reference library and Miss E. A. Humphreys, the Ref. Librarian, told me that in directories for

1780-81 entries are as follows:
Clarkson—clock and watchmaker,
High Green.

At this point I appear to have come to a full stop.

I desire to know anything possible about this clock maker and whether he also made the clock cases, and anything about his life or death which is of interest.

Can any reader help?

Stanley R. Whitehouse.

24 Parklands,
Wotton-Under-Edge,
Gloucestershire.

REQUESTS

WE have received a request for a Bagge-ridge Medallion from Mr. F. W. Davis, Tudor Croft, 36 Holcombe Drive, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 6DN, who worked for some years at the colliery just before it closed. Would any reader who would like to sell a medallion to Mr. Davis please contact him at his address?

★ ★ ★

WE have received a request from Mr. Donald Pearce, 16 Hamilton Road, Bothwell, Glasgow G71 8NA, for information relating to the Masonic career of James Watt. Mr. Pearce believes that Watt was initiated into Freemasonry when he came to the Midlands in 1763, but has no further information. Would any reader who can help please write to Mr. Pearce?

Sir,

I was pleased to read in the spring 1978 edition of 'The Black-countryman' an article on family history or genealogy (not geneology as printed in the article). May I offer some additional details to those given by Mr. Willetts.

Requests for copies of birth, marriage or death certificates, which currently cost £2.50 each, should be made to the Superintendent Registrar of the District in which the event was registered provided it was not before July 1837. The address of the Superintendent Registrar can be obtained from the relevant telephone directory. Copies of certificates are obtainable also from St. Catherine's House in London but the cost is £4.50 if a personal application is made, or £6.00 by post. It is possible to call and examine the indexes (but not the entries in the registers) at St. Catherine's House, which list in chronological and then alphabetical

order of surname and Christian name each birth, marriage or death registered.

The census returns commencing 1841 are based on information given by the householder to the enumerator. The 1841 census gives the names of all persons in each household, their ages rounded down to the nearest five for adults but actual ages for children under 15, occupation and whether or not they were born in the same county. From 1851 actual ages are given, the marital status, relationship to the head of the household and county and parish of birth.

Parish registers record baptisms (not births), marriages and funerals (not deaths), although sometimes as a bonus the researcher will also find that the date of birth or death has been added. All these records, especially census returns, are subject to the occasional error and it is not surprising that genealogy has been described as a cross



Does any reader have information on the event depicted in this photograph taken in Wolverhampton in 1912?
It was sent to us by R. Garrington, 131 Castlecroft Road, Wolverhampton.

between a good detective story and a jigsaw puzzle.

Whilst it is necessary for most of the research to be carried out on an individual basis, and this adds to the interest and satisfaction, the beginner often finds difficulty in establishing what information is available to the amateur researcher and where records are deposited. Help with these problems is one of the advantages obtained from joining a local society and for anyone whose ancestors came from the West Midlands enquiries about membership of the Birmingham

and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry should be made to the Honorary Secretary, Mr. F. C. Markwell, 48 Howard Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 7PQ.

Tracing details of your family history can be achieved at your own pace, taken up and put down again as circumstances require, although with such a fascinating hobby once you start it is difficult to stop, and there is plenty of material to study in the Black Country.

John W. Bannister.

Rowley Regis.



Sir,

Mr. C. L. Heys of Streetly has allowed me to photograph three pin back badges in his possession, which I thought might be of interest to readers.

All three badges were sold on flag days to aid the war effort. The first badge was preferred during Tipton's "Wings for Victory" campaign of June 5—12, 1943.

We see from the second badge, sold in "Wednesbury Wings for Victory Week, June 26 to July 3, 1943", that £250,000 were required to finance 50 Spitfires.

The last badge, from the first world war, was sold in aid of the Land Army and urged the public "To Lend a Hand, Volunteer on the Land".

Robert Williams.

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