

Chairman's Comments

As I begin to put pen to paper it is mid-summer, 25th June, and indeed time to scribble my notes for our Summer Edition of The Bridgtonian. If I could think of it there must be a “joke” in there somewhere, for I honestly can't recall a worse start to the season. With so much celebration to entertain us, such as The Queen's Jubilee Celebrations on 26th May and Bridgtown School Centenary in June, surely somebody's prayers must have been answered.

Well a sort of miracle did occur because, between the showers, we had a brilliant Jubilee Day. It was great to see Dora Leighton, nee Richards, now 96 years young, crowning the May Queen, with amusements galore around the village. Events culminated in a mini-exhibition and provision of “splendid eats” at Bethel Church.

Then came the Centenary Week for the school, with the weather forecast predicting unusual Bridgtown weather, dull grey skies and showers – but someone somewhere must have prayed overtime! The odd shower paled into insignificance as the whole community enjoyed a superb week. The school pupils excelled in providing a magnificent mosaic which is now on a prominent and permanent view for all passers-by to admire. Each pupil received a Centenary Medal and a dedicated History of the School Booklet, written by our own David Williams, whom we recall had previously spent 27 years there as Headteacher and, amazingly, 44 years in all added time as pupil and teacher. Our society joined with teachers and pupils to escort visitors and ex-pupils around the much-changed school. Many of us met old classmates, some after a 60 years break. It truly was a special time.

You may think that the coming months will be an anti-climax. Nonsense! For instance, the school theme continues in July in the form of an ex-Bridgtown pupil and teacher, Ron Darby, who excels with brilliant photography and films of Cannock Chase. See you on 18th July!

Tony Pearson
25th June 2012

From the Local Paper: 60 Years Ago

(Cannock Advertiser: 6th January 1952)

FIRST BIRTHDAY PARTY **BRIDGTOWN WELFARE CLUB**

The first birthday party of Bridgtown Welfare Club took place on Tuesday and proved a big success, being one of the most enjoyable ever held in the village. There were about 100 present to a substantial meal served by ladies under the direction of Mrs. W. Wiggin. A big birthday cake had been made by Mrs. Field.

Each member received a money gift, varying from 2s. to 10s. according to the number of attendances made during the year.

The meal was followed by a concert and the artistes included Mrs. Gapp, Mr. and Mrs. O. Wood, Mr. J. Griffiths, Neil Harris, Jimmy Holmes, Ralph Emery, Lily Street and Hazel.

Mr. H. Cliff presided and a comprehensive vote of thanks was proposed by the Rev. J. Carre.

The committee found all the foodstuffs, cigarettes and money for gifts.

Do you remember Val Harding?

At our May meeting we were pleased to welcome Valerie Van Ramesdonk all the way from South Africa. Those who knew her will remember her as Val Harding. She is pictured as part of the school netball team (1948) on page 48 of Bygone Bridgtown.

If anyone wants to get in touch with Val, just supply your email address or phone number or address and we will be pleased to pass it on to her.

TRADE MARK.		ESTABLISHED 1763.	
W.GILPIN. WEDGES MILLS.		Churchbridge Works and Wedges Mills, Cannock, Staffordshire.	
TELEGRAMS - "GILPIN, CANNOCK."		Date 14th July 1922.	
TELEPHONE - No. 7 CANNOCK.		Messrs J. G. Banfield & Sons, Ltd.,	
PASSENGER STATION - WYRLEY & CHEBLYN HAY.		Tenbury.	
GOODS STATION - WYRLEY & CHURCHBRIDGE, L. & N.W.R.			
BOUGHT OF			
WILLIAM GILPIN SEN ^R . & Co., Ltd.			
HAMPERS—HALF PRICE ALLOWED FOR THOSE KEPT. FULL PRICE ALLOWED FOR ALL RETURNED.			
FREE OF CHARGE WITHIN ONE MONTH FROM DATE OF INVOICE.			
HAMPERS AND RETURNED GOODS CANNOT BE CREDITED UNTIL ACTUALLY RECEIVED.			
Order No. 20/5/22.	21/-	23/-	25/5 doz.
1 1/2 doz. Heeks (Tenbury) ea.	10.	11.	12 ⁿ
			5. 4. 3
		Plus 75%	3 18. 2.
			9. 2. 5.
1 doz. Scotch Bits ea.	5/16.	7/16 ⁿ	1. 16. 6.
2 doz. " " "	18/-		13. 6.
			2. 9. 6.
		10%	4. 11.
Per L. & N. W. Ry.			2. 4. 7.
		Cash	2. 6.
			11. 9. 6.
		Allowance for Carriage	7. 6.
			11. 2. 0.

SETTLEMENT TERMS
Cash Monthly less 2 1/2% disc.
Otherwise strictly NET.
N.B. No extended credit.

This old invoice from 1922 illustrates many points worthy of a mention. There are many things to say. Here are just a few:-

- It clearly states that the business of William Gilpin Senior was established in 1763, nearly 100 years before Bridgtown was even thought about.
- The original business had been in Wedges Mills before including the Churchbridge Works familiar to many of us.
- Note the telephone number! That really is amazing. It is No. 7, Cannock!
- Note that the items were sent by the London & North West Railway, so conveniently was the business placed to the Birmingham to Rugeley railway line.
- Fractions, decimals and percentages were so important in business, with no computers and calculators to help!

More School Memories

Tony Bibb remembers.....

I was at Bridgtown School from 1953 to 1956 and particularly remember:

- *Teachers v. Pupils at Netball. Teachers Ken Powell, Laurie Woolliscroft, Joan Goode and Harry Cardew were dressed in drag for this annual event. One Year Ken Powell hung a sack over the hoop the pupils were attacking!*
- *Pottery classes in the Pottery Shed with Harry Cardew, where there was a manual treadle wheel.*
- *Running the line for the school football team. For away games I also had total responsibility for everyone's bus fare to Huntington, Chadsmoor, etc. and it was my job to make sure everyone got there on time.*
- *Swimming classes were at Bloxwich baths and we travelled by coach every week. I remember one classmate locking himself in the changing cubicle because he was frightened of the water. I had to fetch Laurie Woolliscroft to get him out.*

Jean Dace remembers.....

When I was at school I was really good at sport but no good at anything else. I could run really fast and was well-known on Sports Days for winning all my races. All the boys used to cheer me on but my speed was not the reason the boys cheered for me. I was an “early developer” and the boys used to enjoy watching me.

It’s still a joke today as male ex-classmates will say with a grin “We used to cheer you along!” Even the headmaster used to say “You will have no problem getting through the winning tape first!”

I always liked a laugh so I never minded those remarks and, anyway, I did win the Victrix Ludorum in 1958 and was truly “Sportswoman of the Year”!

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Life in the good old days
Was better than you think,
Even though we always washed
Our undies in the sink.

We piled the coal upon the fire,
To keep us warm each day,
And to heat up all the water
For our baths after our play.

Entertainment was all different,
As our sheltered lives we led:
A sing song round the piano,
Before we went to bed.

Toys were few and far between,
Except those Grandad made;
A wooden desk to keep my books
And a cot he painted jade.

We walked the mile long lane to school,
And of course we walked it back.
In classes of forty or fifty
We were kept right on track.

Porridge was eaten to keep us warm
For that long trek each day;
School meals had lumpy gravy
We had to eat to keep hunger at bay.

But parties we had at Christmas,
And celebrations for birthdays too,
No shopping at Sainsbury's for quiches,
Just home made cakes and jellies would do.

Now I'm so much older
I look back nostalgically
At the life we led when younger,
Do I see it realistically?

SJJ.

7

This has got to be one of the best

An elderly man was stopped by the police at around 2 a.m. and was asked where he was going at that time of night.

The man replied simply "I'm on my way to a lecture about alcohol abuse and the effects it has on the human body." "Also there will be one about smoking and staying out late."

Unbelievably the officer then asked "Really? And who would be giving that lecture at this time of night?"

The man shrugged his shoulders and replied "That would be my wife."

.....

A caricature of Hayden Boot at Bridgtown Boys' School



Does anyone know who A.L.B. is?

How Our Society Started

Most of you know that Bridgtown & District Local History Society started with meetings early in 2009. But how did that come about? One of the reasons was an article written by our chairman Tony Pearson. It was sent to Professor Carl Chinn and part of it was published in the Express & Star in September 2007. The first part of that article is reproduced below and on the next page.

“The Hole in the Hedge” by Tony Pearson

Memories and Reflections of a Bridgtown Boy

Born in July 1934, the youngest of four children, my first conscious and lasting memory was waking in a cot full of what appeared to be breadcrumbs – stale breadcrumbs! They were hard, very hard! Maybe I was about three years old.

My next clear reflections were about 1939/40 with two vivid events. Firstly, being severely frightened by the sight of, and even more so by the noise of, Bren gun Carriers streaming past my home in military convoy. Thereafter, on a threat of being “given to the gipsies”, I was forbidden to cross the road alone. We lived on Watling Street, one of the country’s arterial and logistic lifelines.

The second event is linked. I was now a five year old boy and my confidence was building up. Can you imagine that, when Rosa’s ice cream van arrived opposite my home on its normal Sunday run, I would not take my 1937 Coronation Mug to be filled to the brim? I managed to cross the road and achieve my tummy-rumbling objective and excitedly started my glorious home run. God was truly with me that day! An armoured car was travelling down to Shrewsbury and an alert serviceman thunderously applied his brakes. I was hit but, other than bruising, I lived to tell the tale.

Around this time I recollect Sunday mornings and afternoons, especially the afternoons when my older brother John would preside over me and Mom and Dad would retire to bed. I always wondered why! Also, as it happened, we lived next door to a family of dedicated Salvationists and that meant that on Sunday mornings and evenings there was often a brass band of about fifteen instrumentalists giving us ten minutes or so of good old hymn tunes.

I started full time school in September 1939. I had been baptised at St. Paul's Church and it was natural to go to the church school. I am told my tenure only lasted three months or so. My older sisters and brother attended other schools and so I was under the charge of a neighbour's daughter, Janet Bates.

10

Janet was all of thirteen years of age and trustworthy. Infant School finished at 3.30pm but Janet was a "big girl" and didn't finish until 4pm. I suffered frustration and indignity at not being allowed to make my own way home. One particular day I was especially hungry and I knew my friends would already be playing "Wolves v Villa". Apparently I made something of a fuss, eventually warranting the Headmistress to approach me. She insisted that I must wait until Janet was available. Seemingly I strongly asserted my case with the added odd expletive. That was it! To my parents' disgust and embarrassment I was expelled! Thereafter I attended Bridgtown Council School with nothing further to report, other than the occasional ruler to the fingers, no doubt well deserved.

Our family was two boys and two girls, and we mixed freely and happily within the village. The war was ever present, with food rationing and perpetual blackouts at night. I still managed to attend Cubs and Church Choir Practice two nights each week. Silently I was building a genuine love of music and, of course, from the choir stalls one had a privileged view of the best local girls!

1941 was a special year for me as I moved into the "big school", Bridgtown Boys'. However, it didn't seem quite right that the school had six classrooms to accommodate boys from 7 years to 14 years, the school leaving age at that time. When I arrived with all my local friends Class 1 was full of "vaccees" who all spoke somewhat differently. Soon it didn't seem to matter as we all seemed to muck in and became firm friends. Something that did surprise me was that, although it was a Boys' School, most of the teachers were female.

Our house, number 67, must have been special. We had three bedrooms with Mom and Dad in the front bedroom, my two sisters in the other double bedroom and my brother and I in a single bed in the box room. Suddenly we acquired a lodger, apparently on some government scheme to work locally towards the War Effort. I cannot remember how we juggled it but somehow we managed without too much bother.

I was now becoming more independent, especially in the warm summer days and light nights. I said our house was special and therefore I will let you into a secret! We lived adjacent to Bridgtown Recreation Ground, the “rec” to all the local children. It was a wonderful place with swings, a slide, a ranty – climbing bars, etc. Also there was plenty of space to create a football pitch, with jackets for goalposts. The secret was that brother John and I created a hidden entry into the “rec” at the bottom of our garden! This was a camouflaged hole in the hedge. Only PEARSONS were allowed through and woe betide any other person who dared to use this privileged facility!

So now we know why the article is called “The Hole in the Hedge”. There will be more of Tony’s story in our next edition. Ed.

Bridgtown Schools Centenary Celebrations

During the week from Monday 18th June to Friday 22nd June, special celebrations were held to mark the centenary of the school, which had started life as Bridgtown Council School, opening on 24th June 1912. This proved to be a very successful and memorable week, especially the Wednesday when many former residents, pupils and members of staff called in for the celebrations.

If you are passing the school in the near future stop and look at the special mosaic of the school’s crest which is on the outside wall by the main entrance. All the children were involved in creating this to mark the occasion.

Everyone who attended that week was presented with a free copy of the special centenary booklet written for the occasion. This was possible because of the generosity of three local sponsors. Copies of this booklet can still be obtained but will now cost £1.50 each.

History Society members will recall that the original plan was to write a full 72 page book for the occasion. In the end this was not possible as the costs involved were prohibitive. Nevertheless the 24 page booklet proved to be very popular and was well received.

Many thanks to all members and friends who contributed memories and stories for inclusion in the book. Unfortunately it wasn’t possible to include all of those in the smaller booklet. However your efforts will not be wasted. All of those contributions will be used in this magazine in the near future, if they were not published in the booklet itself. The first two of those, from Tony Bibb and from Jean Dace, appear on page 6 of this edition. Others will appear in future editions of The Bridgtonian. Look out for them.

A second booklet called “St. Paul’s School” has also been written. This booklet tells the story of the village’s other school which existed from 1874 until 1960. This is a smaller booklet and can be purchased for £0.75.

If you were unable to attend the special centenary celebrations, the school will be represented at our own special event on Sunday 14th October at Bridgtown

Social Club. Also I am sure the school will be amenable to anyone who would like to look around. The school telephone number is 01543 510201.

The History Society and Bridgtown Primary School join to thank everybody for their interest and support for this special week.

IDLE THOUGHTS

Exercise that doesn't need physical activity:-

Beating around the bush.	Jumping to conclusions.	Passing the buck.
Throwing your weight around.	Making mountains out of molehills.	
Adding fuel to the fire.	Wading through your paper work.	
Bending over backwards.	Putting your foot in your mouth.	

More from the Local Paper: 60 Years Ago

(Cannock Advertiser: 6th January 1952)

FIRM GIVES PARTY FOR CHILDREN

There was a new development in the social history of Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds (Midlands) Ltd., Cannock factory on Saturday, when all the employees' children were given an Xmas tea party. The idea arose from a suggestion put to the company by the employees' works' committee. The directors approved the idea and agreed to finance the venture. The works' committee, which consisted of Mr.W.Martin (chairman), Mrs.I.Gray, Mrs.E.Dean, Mrs.E.Westwood, Miss C.Wilcox and Mr.J.Farrington, undertook to organise the venture. Their efforts resulted in not only giving the children a tea at Birmingham, but also a visit to the Birmingham Circus. On arrival every child was given a packet of sweets, an apple and an orange. After tea every child received a toy. The parcels, which were labelled with the names, were distributed by Mr.J.Bakewell (mill section overlooker), who said he was delighted and honoured to do it. Over 40 children were present and arrangements were also made for parents who accompanied them. The party travelled in three coaches. The committee were congratulated and thanked. It was through their efforts that the children travelled free, were admitted to the circus free, and were provided with toys.

The Cannock Agricultural Co. Ltd.

*In our last edition we wrote about **The Monkey Muck** and we included an article about **The Cannock Soapery Company** which had preceded it in Walkmill Lane.*

But there is more..... there is another aspect to this company which we have not mentioned. Read on....

SHIRE HORSES

Some of you may remember the blacksmith at Cannock Agricultural going about his business. The shoeing of farm horses went on there well into the 1950s. What many people don't know is that this company was famous all over the world for their Shire Horse Breeding.

In the 1870s the managing director of the company was Mr. Henry R. Hart. Mr Hart purchased Longford Stud Farm which stood at the back of Longford House on the site that is now used for car auctions. A row of cottages was built there for the workers and there was also an exercise ring.

The company had Clydesdales for their own use. Two teams of three drew drays, taking fertiliser to the farms and markets. Threshing machines in those days were not mechanically propelled so three horses would pull the steam engine and three horses would pull the threshing box. The venture was very successful and the company became very well-known in the farming world.

One horse, "King Charming" sired many prize-winning horses and won a Champion Silver Medal in 1889. He was then sold for one thousand guineas, a record figure. The company's horses were now going all over the world.

Sadly, in 1905 there was tragedy. Seventeen of their prize-winning horses were being shipped from Liverpool to the United States when a severe storm was encountered on the way. Some horses died and others, with broken legs, had to be put down. After 25 years of successful horse breeding this was heartbreaking for Henry Hart. A year later he died, a great loss to the company and also to his many friends in horse-breeding circles.

Many thanks to Katherine Page for her research into the above story. Ed.

Brenda Talbot (nee Cleeton) remembers....

THE CUPBOARD BY THE FIREPLACE

Everyone will remember the black lead grates that had to be polished with Zebo every Friday. At the side of the fire was a big cupboard that was split into two parts. The bottom of this was where the shoes were kept. In our house they were often taken out so that my brother and I could play inside.

The top cupboard was another matter. My Mom kept her “chemist’s shop” in there! If the Chemist’s in North Street couldn’t supply anything my Mom would have been able to. Here is a list of some of the stock that I remember:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Fenning’s Fever Cure | Fenning’s Little Healers |
| • Senna Pods | California Syrup of Figs |
| • Cod Liver Oil | Andrew’s Liver Salts |
| • Halibut Liver Oil Drops | Fynnon Salts |
| • Scott’s Emulsion | Epsom Salts |
| • Glauber Salts | Virol |
| • Raspberry Vinegar & Olive Oil | Juno Juniper Pills |
| • Liquifruta | Vick |
| • Ipecacuanha Wine | Mackenzie’s Smelling Bottle |
| • Indian Brandy | Aspirin |
| • Kaolin Poultice | Indian Crete |
| • Sulphur Powder | Zambuk |

Senna Pods: Who remembers the cup with a saucer on top on the hearth on a Friday night, ready to be swallowed on a Saturday morning?

Once, when I was about twelve an aunt called to see us, asking for my Mom who had popped out to do the daily shop. I asked what was wrong, to which the reply was that she was constipated and needed something from the cupboard. I told her that I could deal with that and gave her Epsom and Glauber Salts in warm water. When my Mom came home she asked me how much I had mixed. I replied that I had given her a teaspoonful of each. Then my Mom informed me that the dose should have been “enough to cover the top of a sixpence”! WHOOPS! Needless to say, I had cured the problem!

**A bus station is where a bus stops.
A train station is where a train stops.
On my desk, I have a work station....
What more can I say?.....**

Where Did You Buy Your Meat?

As a little boy I often accompanied my Mom into Bill Lockley's shop in Church Street, Bridgtown. I didn't realise then that the butcher's shop at the bottom of Station Street, Cheslyn Hay also belonged to the same family. Here is someone's meat bill from 1937 to prove the point. (Editor)

PHONE: CANNOCK 216

M. Wright Dec 20 1937

Noted for Home-made Black Puddings. Terms—Cash.

W. J. LOCKLEY

FAMILY BUTCHER. Fresh Daily.

Church Street, **Bridgtown** and Station Street, **Cheslyn Hay**

ELECTRICAL FRIGIDAIRE installed on premises.

lbs.	ozs.	(Net weight as sent out.)	at	£	s.	d.
2	13	Pork			3	9
		Thin 1/2 Puff 9			1	11
					4	10

Received by *W. J. Lockley* £

Do You Remember Alice Sides?

Alice Sides had Bridgtown connections. Recently we sent her greetings and congratulations on her one hundredth birthday. She now lives on the Isle of Wight. Here is her reply:

Dear Tony,

What a lovely surprise I had on the morning of June 13th. I couldn't think where the news of my birthday could have come from, and I still can't. Please pass on my love and kind thoughts to Peggy. I was very fond of her mother and family.

I didn't ever live in Bridgtown, but I worked there in Stanton's Confectionery Shop. I spent a lot of my time in Park Street Methodist Church where Ben's Mom & Dad, Bertha and Percy Sides, were Methodist members and it was also there that I met my husband, Ben Sides. So Bridgtown holds a lot of happy memories for me.

I would like to thank you and your team for making a little old lady very happy and I shall treasure the books that you have so kindly sent me. I shall get a lot of pleasure out of them in my quiet hours.

Sincere regards, Alice Sides

The Scout Field

In our last edition Tony Pearson wrote about the scout field. Here Bob Leighton adds some memories of his own:

I became a Cub in the 1930s under the guidance of "Skip", whose name now escapes me. He lived on the Watling Street. I also remember Mr Marriott, Snr and his son Jim being there.

My great memory is of attending Beaudesert camp when Princess Marina opened it. It was "panic stations" when I slipped off unnoticed on a great adventure into the woods. Mr Marriott set all the scouts searching for me, thinking that I was lost. Later I returned, wondering what all the fuss was about. Jim gave me the biggest thickest crust of bread and jam that I had ever seen. It was worth getting lost!

Later, joining the Scouts was something else! I still remember being in "Swift Troop" and one of our troop becoming a King's Scout. He also lived "on the Watling" somewhere. I didn't remain a scout for long though as I joined the Cadets at the Drill Hall. I was still accepted as a Bridgtonian, even though I had been born the wrong side of Jellyman's Brook!

"The Bridgtonian"

Our magazine is called "The Bridgtonian" after the school magazine for Bridgtown Boys' School in the 1930s and 1940s. In previous editions we have reproduced a wide variety of articles from those magazines. This time we

reproduce on these two pages a number of items from the Summer Term 1935 Edition. The first item is an account of the "Jubilee Day" celebrations for King George V as it is a topical subject this year.

\$

JUBILEE DAY IN OUR VILLAGE

BY ARTHUR BURROWS

It was a glorious morning on 6 May, and everybody was early astir. Decorations were numerous in all the streets of Bridgtown, and people were still adorning the fronts of their houses mainly with red, white and blue. All supplies of flags had been exhausted, and nearly everybody displayed a flag of some description.

The morning commenced with a Drumhead Service on the playground of Bridgtown Boys' School. It was conducted by the Rev. P. D. Clay and Adjutant Gough of the Cannock Salvation Army. Bridgtown Boys' Brigade and the Salvation Army Band were in attendance. The boys and girls sang two national songs and Mr. Clay gave a short but appropriate address. After the service a number of trees were planted to commemorate the occasion.

In the afternoon there was a carnival procession which paraded the streets, led by the Salvation Army Band. The judging of the fancy dresses took place on the Recreation Ground where the prizes were awarded. Following this came the different races and sports, some of which caused more fun, especially the tyre race. During the afternoon balloons were sent off, and the Salvation Army Band played selections. Just after 4 o' clock the children left for tea. In their schools they found an excellent meal prepared for them by their teachers. At the same time the old folks of the village were being served with tea in Park Street Methodist Schoolroom. After tea the children again made their way to the Recreation Ground for the continuation of the sports.

At 6 o' clock the football match between Bridgtown Traders' Boys and Bridgtown Boys' School commenced. The result was a draw, 2 – 2. When the match finished there was still some amusement to come. Races were arranged for the ladies and gentlemen, and much fun was caused.

Towards 9 o' clock many people began to make their way towards Great Wyrley, the scene of a huge bonfire. It had been constructed by the scouts. The wood, coal and tar blazed fiercely, sending out myriads of sparks.

It was a day ever to be remembered.

FUN WITH FIGURES

Multiply 11,111,111 by 11,111,111.

The working brings this answer: 123,456,787,654,321.

A DAY ON MILFORD HILLS

On Saturday July 13 twenty-one Senior Boys went by bus to Pottal Pool and walked over the Chase through Sherbrook Valley to Milford.

The weather was scorchingly hot, but a very happy day was spent in climbing, bathing, "exploring", deer-stalking, rabbit-running and in playing cricket and golf. Walking should be mentioned as the double journey occupied five hours!

A dip in Pottal Pool finished off a very enjoyable day.

Teacher (sharply): "Now, Johnson, who killed Julius Caesar?"

Johnson (startled out of his daydreams): "P-please sir, it wasn't me!"