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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF STEVENTON AND THE ELAN VALLEY AQUADUCT
WROXETER ASHES UNDER URICON
A WRIGHT ROBINSON REREDOS

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF STEVENTON AND THE ELAN VALLEY AQUEDUCT



Water-pipe Bridge over Teme at Steventon

Civic Society member and Steventon resident Bernard North was so inspired by the issues on Victorian Ludlow that he decided to do some research in his own backyard and has come up with these fascinating findings which he has written down in his own unique style.

Much is known about the engineering aspects of the Elan Valley Aqueduct project, but until now, nothing has been recorded about the people involved and their duties. This article tries to put that to rights.

Steventon is a small settlement of only thirteen houses on the southern edge of Ludlow following the side of the River Teme. The road which passes through does not even have an official name although some call it Steventon Road. It is believed to be one of the very early roads leading out of Ludlow to the south.

Steventon is a quiet place where everybody knows everybody else, and one would not have thought that it had any claim to fame or any history of interest. However, some recent discoveries provided some interesting and surprising results. Passing through Steventon from west to east are four pipes carrying water from the Elan Valley through to Birmingham. They are underground but are carried over the River Teme on a rather ugly steel bridge. Originally, when the scheme was first opened in 1904, there were two 42-inch diameter cast iron

pipes. In the 1930s, to meet rising demand, a third 60-inch diameter steel pipe was added followed by a fourth 60-inch diameter steel pipe in the early 1950s.

By a strange coincidence Bernard North, who also lives in Steventon discovered some interesting information, finding that he knew several people who had been involved in the installation of these water mains.

By the 1930s Birmingham's population had grown and a further 60 inch diameter steel water-pipe was installed. Dorothy Teale lives in Steventon next to the pipelines. Dorothy's father, Charles Powell, was a ganger working on the installation of the third pipe and after its completion took on the post

of 'walksman' from 1936 to 1959. The job involved walking regularly a section of the pipeline from Hopton Bank to the Well House which is located at the edge of Mortimer Forest. He also looked after the monitoring house alongside the bridge over the River Teme. As walksman, Charles Powel lived in Steventon Cottage, also situated alongside the pipeline in Steventon, with his wife and two daughters, Betty and Dorothy, and his son George. This is the same Dorothy who now lives in Steventon at "Woodlands"- on the other side of the mains and Steventon Cottage.

Birmingham continued to expand. So in the early 1950s a fourth 60-inch steel pipe was installed. The headquarters for



Dave Bate and Eddie Brooks on Whitcliffe

the construction of the first two pipelines was Springfield House. This was a large brick house in Lower Galdeford which was demolished to make way for the Telephone Exchange. The Resident Engineer's Office for the installation of the third and fourth pipelines was a single storey wooden building which used to stand opposite the youth centre in Lower Galdeford. It was empty for many years and was finally demolished about ten years ago by South Shropshire Glass who occupied the premises adjacent at that time.

Dorothy Teale recently discovered some interesting documents regarding Stanley Wilmot. He was a water supply engineer and was the Resident Engineer for the installation of the third water main. He lived in her house, Woodlands, until he retired in 1973. This was when the regional water authorities were created, including Severn Trent. Stanley died in 1985 having sold Woodlands to Dorothy and Graham Teale in 1984.

He was obviously quite wealthy because he was the proud owner of an early monoplane. A Miles MR Hawk G-ACYA was purchased by S. B. Wilmot in Manchester in 1935 and kept at the airstrip in Ludlow Park – just across the river from his house. A landing strip was established as early as 1913 in an area referred to as 'Ludford Park'. The airstrip has long since gone but a small metal hanger remains to this day. Stanley Wilmot was not very good at landing his plane and sometimes he could not stop it. The plane would come to a halt in the hedge, nose down and tail up. He would call on Charles Powell, the walksman, who would go across

the pipe bridge over the River Teme with his two daughters to rescue him. Powell would lift his daughter Dorothy onto his shoulders so that she could reach the tail of the plane and pull it down.

After Stanley Wilmot retired in 1953 his place was taken by Freddie Waite who lived in the house called The Gables in Lower Galdeford, near to the then Shropshire Glass premises. Later it is believed he was replaced by a Mr Newman, living at the same house.

A further interesting connection to the aqueduct was discovered. David Tudor Owen lived at Mary's Meadow in Steventon and he was an engineer for the installation

of the fourth main. After Stanley Wilmot's retirement in 1953 David was promoted to Resident Engineer. He was responsible for some of the design work for the aqueduct. David retired in 1973 and died in 1987, but his widow, Eugenie, another friend of Bernard North, still lives in the same house today.

Yet another coincidence has emerged. Alan Lello was another friend of Benard who lived in Ludlow. Sadly, he died last August, aged 95. In March 1953 Alan joined the installation team as an assistant engineer and David Owen was his superior. Until about two years ago Alan did not know that Mrs Eugenie Owen was still alive. Eugenie had never met Alan and she expressed the desire to meet him. This was duly arranged, and many interesting facts and tales emerged from the meeting. The meeting brought to light many stories and details of the people at the Resident Engineer's office. Apparently, there was a third engineer in the office, but his name cannot be recalled. George Pinches was the secretary, and two clerks were named Jim Chalmers and Taylor. Perhaps there are descendants of these people in Ludlow?

Alan left the project in 1956 to go to work in Montgomeryshire.

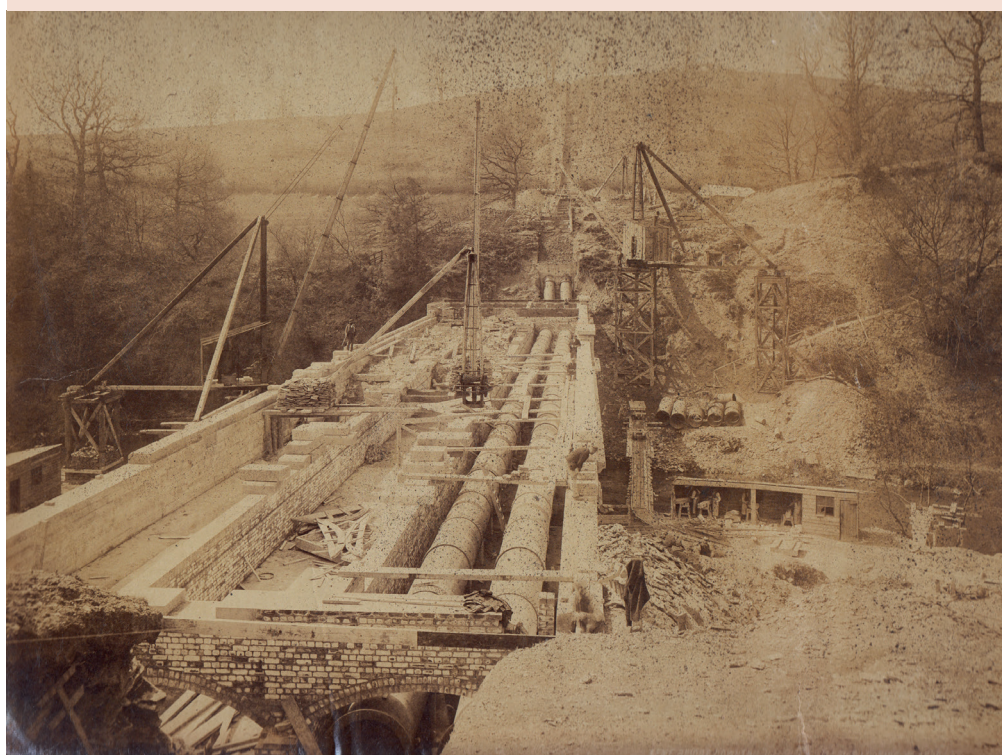
Yet another discovery. David Bate was a mechanical engineer working for the City of Birmingham

Water Board. He took over the position of walksman from his uncle Henry Bate who tragically died in a road accident in 1970. David continued as Walksman from 1970 to 2001. He sadly died a few years ago but his widow Kathy Bate, David's widow (another of Bernard's friends and a neighbour) still lives at Steventon Cottage, originally called 'The Waterboard House'. David's father, Jack Bate, was also a Walksman for forty years patrolling another length of the aqueduct near to where he lived in Leintwardine.

From Steventon Cottage the walksman was able to monitor meter readings and valve pressures, adjusting pressures if necessary. If the build-up of pressure was too great, they had to correct the problem by turning an extremely heavy wheel valve manually and altering flow levels. He also attended to the water levels at the Well House in Deep Wood, a noisy process due to the volume of water rushing through the confined space. Later, after many teething troubles, an automated Telemetry system was installed in the bridge. Maintenance became less important and the water board houses were sold. Kathie and Dave Bate bought theirs in 2002.

Every week the walksman covered his length of the aqueduct looking for any signs of leakage. If a leak was found the main was

Viaduct under construction





Construction Site at Steventon 1950s

isolated to allow repair work to be done. Access for vehicles was sometimes difficult. Welding of the pipes was required sometimes, and other maintenance involved grass-cutting and repairing and painting stiles.

Through the 1980s there were several threats from the Welsh Nationalists (Sons of Glendower) causing Severn Trent to issue amber alerts. There was one red alert where a water main had been blown up at West Hagley causing flooding to a road and houses. David Owen organised Walter Postans to take his children to school and for every person available to get to West Hagley, equipment was hired and bottled water supplied to the residents. It was a shocking mess but no-one hurt. David Owen was admired for his cool and calm manner in an awful situation.

One week every September was cut-off week to enable scrutiny of the tunnel for maintenance and repairs to be carried out. This was quite a feat as one man stayed on top of the ground while two men (usually a walksman and his helper) walked the tunnel from Deep wood to Downton, about a mile. Dave was over six feet tall so had

to stoop. They met at the chamber at Downton. In previous years the walksman's helper, Jack Pound (Alwyn Pound's father) had an ingenious idea - he lowered his bike into the tunnel and rode the length!

Severn Trent succeeded the City of Birmingham Water Department in 1989. Health & Safety and Time & Study courses came onto the agenda. Dave and his assistant Eddie Brookes, who had knowledge, understanding and pride in their job, were 'a little miffed' when the expert arrived to assess them. Their tactic was to walk much further than necessary. The poor chap became exhausted, fell asleep during his lunch break, abandoned his assessment, found his way back to his car and left! One advantage of the take over by Severn Trent was a car hire scheme. Dave was provided with a car with a car phone - practically unheard of in those days.

In the 1970s, two maintenance gangs worked from a depot in a yard behind Steventon Cottage. One gang had six members - Bill Greenhouse (ganger), Bill Preece (blacksmith), Vice Groom, Fred Russo, and Walter (Wally) Postans. The other gang had four - Jess Diar,

Sid Web & Ken Web (identical twins) and Effer Georden. Perhaps these men are still around, or perhaps their relations?

Some of the maintenance buildings still stand at the bottom of the yard. These included a store building and a welding shed, a personnel hut and a garage.

George Pinches and Eddie Sayers died some years ago and Kathie is no longer in touch with Alwyn Pound.

A further person connected with the aqueduct emerged - Alwyn Pound, who lives in Sheet Road. In the 1960s Alwyn worked for Birmingham Corporation as Area Manager supervising the operation of the aqueduct using the old Resident Engineer's office as his base. Dave Bate was the walksman who worked for Alwyn. The section for which David Bate was responsible was from Hopton Bank to the Well House where the four pipes came out of the ground. Alwyn remembers that when there was a leak the cut-off valves (technically known as penstocks) in the Well House were automatically closed to prevent further leakage and to enable repairs to be carried out. Apparently, those working

on the aqueduct called it the 'pipe track'. It was one of the duties of the walksman and an assistant to walk inside the aqueduct where it was tunnelled in the rock.

At some time, the management of the aqueduct was transferred from Birmingham City Council to Severn Trent Water. Alwyn Pound joined Severn Trent in about 1997 and retired in 1999.

Alwyn was a builder and built the house he now lives and where he has lived ever since. He related one of his exploits. Later, when he was employed by Treasure's, he climbed to the top of St Laurence's Church to replace the cockerel after it had been re-gilded - there were no safety measures in those days!

It is a strange coincidence that this research has brought to light no less than five people involved in the Elan Valley Aqueduct, all connected to the scheme, some still with us or with relations still with us in Steventon and Ludlow. Three of these people still live near to the pipelines and one in Ludlow. I wonder if there are others still around who had connections with the project?

Bernard North

WROXETER ASHES UNDER URICON

A CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ROMAN CITY (2022)

by Roger H. White. Archaeopress, 239 pp,
137 figures (mostly colour), paperback £17.99.

“To-day the Roman and his trouble/Are ashes under Uricon” is one of Housman’s great lines. It compresses in a stroke the fall of a great civilization, the end of each individual life, and the enduring presence of what Housman often called “trouble”. It is fitting therefore that in a social and cultural history of the Roman city of Wroxeter (variously also called Uricon, Uriconium and Viroconium) its title should reference this poem.

Readers looking for a technical, dry as Roman dust, archaeological monograph on Wroxeter with complex floor plans of the various phases of occupation will be disappointed. Readers looking for a colourful, engaging, and insightful text, drawing upon art, literature, poetry and biography, that examines the first and subsequent excavations at Wroxeter and the cultural reception of the site over the last 150 years will be delighted.

The book opens with a personal account of how the author in his youth (he is now retired from the University of Birmingham) undertook excavations at the site from 1976 onwards. We then learn how some of the earliest excavators approached their work. The first of these was Thomas Wright, a scholar and antiquarian who was born in Tenbury but who grew up in Ludlow. He persuaded the MP for Ludlow, Beriah Botfield, to fund his excavation which began in 1859. In describing Wright’s work and the work of a later archaeologist, Professor Donald Atkinson, who began work in 1924, Roger White is particularly good in exposing the tendency of archaeologists to create fanciful narratives, often based on flimsy evidence, that more often reflect their own assumptions than what might have actually happened.

One of these oft-repeated stories is that the remains of an old man and two other skeletons (one female) found in the hypocaust with a heap of Roman coins nearby must have resulted from the destruction of the city by marauding Saxon invaders. White convincingly shows how the evidence for fire is minimal and that the remains could easily be the result of a later casual burial.

Another often cited conclusion that White questions relates to the discovery of a finely carved dedicatory panel discovered by Donald Atkinson in 1924. About 75% of the original panel survives but there is general agreement on the missing text. It reads (in translation):

For the Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus, son of the deified Trajan, conqueror of Parthia, grandson of the deified Nerva, pontifex maximus, in the fourteenth year of tribunician power, thrice consul, father of his country, the Canton of the Cornovians (erected this).

The inscription allows a dating of the dedication to around 129 AD. The quality of the carving is high and led Atkinson to tentatively suggest that its creation coincided with a visit by the Emperor Hadrian himself to the site around 1220 – a conclusion more firmly

endorsed by a later archaeologist called Graham Webster. It is a lovely story and one I remember being told when I first visited the site many years ago. White exposes just how weak is the argument linking the inscription to a visit by the Emperor, a visit that itself now looks to be very unlikely.

A chapter likely to be of considerable interest to local readers is entitled “Poetic Visions”. It considers the work of five poets: an unknown Welsh poet writing around 800-900 AD in a collection of poems called *Canu Heledd*, preserved in manuscripts comprising the *Red Book of Hergest* (c.1382-1410), A. E. Housman, Henry Lang Jones (a relatively unknown teacher and later headmaster 1876-1972), Wilfred Owen and May Webb.

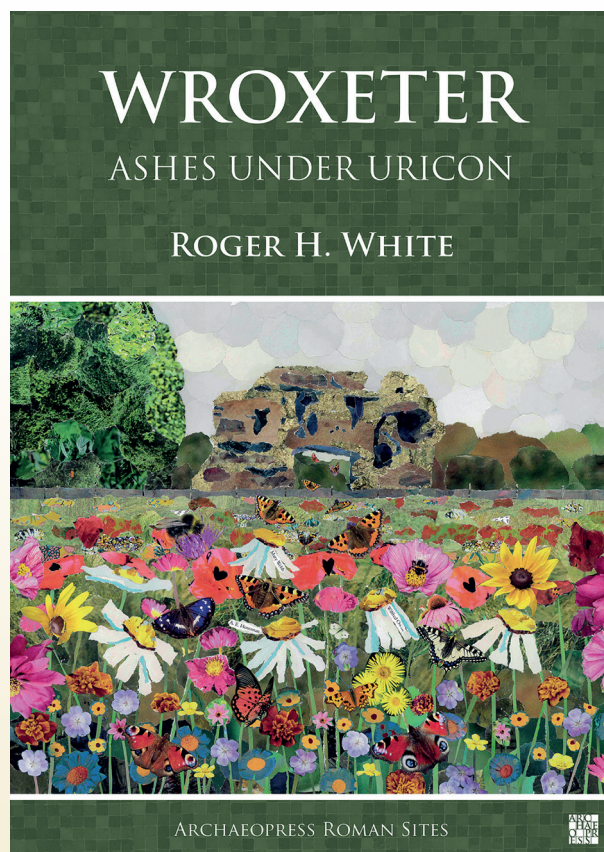
The author quotes a relevant section from the early Welsh poem referring to the destruction of Wroxeter and the loss of lands by the Welsh to the invading Anglo Saxons. There is then a rather long digression on Powys and the lands east of the Severn designed to show that the poems are not historically accurate. It is a fine piece of reasoning, but this section would have benefitted from a clear signposting of the supposed dates of the original Welsh collection (I had

to look up elsewhere for the details to make sense of the chronology discussed). The digression also detracts from the main thrust of the chapter.

Housman gets two pages of treatment in a discussion of his poem “On Wenlock Edge the wood’s in trouble (ASL XXXI). White follows Wells (1988) in suggesting that Housman used *Murray’s Handbook for Shropshire and Cheshire* (1879) for information about Wroxeter and Shropshire. White speculates that the young Housman and his family may have travelled to Wroxeter, but notes that he has not found Housman’s name in the visitor books relating to the site.

The influence of the *Handbook* often cited is where Murray refers to the view of the Wrekin from Shrewsbury castle tower where nearby is to be found the “City of Iconium”, whose ashes smoulder beneath its slopes..” (Murray, 1879, p. 58). Wells (1988) explained that in Housman’s copy of the *Handbook* he had underlined “smoulder”.

White moves on to consider a long poem by a young Wilfred Owen : “Uriconium, an ode”, written in 1913. Owen had visited Wroxeter in 1909. The language is flowery and archaic (with “thees and thous”) and describes the usual narrative





The Roman baths at Wroxeter (image courtesy of Stephen Jones)

accepted at the time of Romans conquering the Celts, creating an ordered civilization that was brutally destroyed by the ruthless Saxons. It is a poem very different in style to his later war poems.

Finally, we come to Mary Webb, author of many novels associated with Shropshire and the Marches. White quotes in full Mary Webb's poem "Viroconium" – a mournful reflection on a lost city. Reading the poem in full enables us to make a contrast with Housman. "On Wenlock Edge" ends with the thought that the troubles that haunted the lives of ancient Romans are still present: "The tree of man was never quiet:/Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I". Whereas Mary Webb draws a more upbeat conclusion about the persistence of love and passion:

"But when, through evening's open door,
Two lovers tread the broken floor...

There haunts within them
secretly.

One that lives while empires die,

A shrineless god whose songs abide
Forever in the countryside"

White makes the interesting point that the poems of Housman, Owen and Webb, full of pathos as they are, were written when the site of Wroxeter was ruinous and unkept. None or few poems appeared after the Second World War when the whole site was tidied up and now has an unromantic feel.

There follows a splendid chapter on depictions of Wroxeter in art. A study of paintings and drawings enables us to see how reliable as topographical illustrations such works were since nearly all showed the "The Old Work" – the imposing slab of masonry that still stands. White examines the works of well-known artists such as Thomas Girtin as well as lesser figures. The section on Tom Prytherch is particularly good.

The chapter on "Writing and Visiting Wroxeter" describes the impressions committed to print (in both fictional and factual writing) by visitors to the site. The

importance of Thomas Wright (see Wright, 1852 and Wright, 1872) once more comes to the fore, as does the ever-present problem from Wright's excavations onward of protecting the site and gaining permission and funding to excavate. In this chapter, White brings a sharp critical intelligence again to some old stories associated with the ruins. One of these is that a party of miners paid a visit to the site and not understanding it knocked down the hypocausts. White shows how there is little direct evidence for this and how it probably reflects middle class prejudices about how working-class visitors were believed to behave.

Wroxeter was once the fourth largest Roman town in Britain and almost as large as Pompei. The excavated portion that visitors see is but a small fraction of the whole. White estimates that only about 5% of the city has been excavated but cautions against digging more up unless there are specific questions to be answered – the remains are

best preserved for the moment underground.

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of Roman Britain and the antiquities of Shropshire. Wroxeter is a complex site churned over by generations of diggers. To make sense of the remains you really need to visit, and this book will certainly inspire you to do just that.

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John Cartwright

A WRIGHT ROBINSON REREDOS

Have you found something of yours which, until that moment, you did not realise was lost? The high altar reredos, in the chancel at St Laurence's church, is an example of such a phenomenon.

Resting beneath the east window, fulfilling its role as backdrop to the high altar, the reredos was formed as part of the chancel extension, built between 1433 and 1447 but within the next two hundred years, it was maliciously damaged. Was it reformation by Henry VIII, or deformation by Oliver Cromwell?

In his 'Handbook to Ludlow', published in 1865, James Thomas

Lloyd, in his 'History and a Guide' to the church (1980) indicated that the damage was caused "probably in 1548...". Legislation of that year removed 'images' from the Church of England and perhaps prompted the damage, resulting in four pence being paid for "...nayles (nails) to hang up clothes when the images were pulled down." Whichever 'probability' is correct, the outcome was that the damaged reredos was covered up, most likely with cloths or tapestries initially but much later, by an oak wainscot.

In 1730, antiquarian John Loveday (1711 -1789) wrote of St. Laurence's, how Henry Arthur Herbert MP (later the Earl of Powis - 1748) "is going to put up an altar piece here." No drawing of this work has apparently survived but it was likely in the 'Grecian Style' and is described in an early guidebook as "...a neat wainscot..." thirteen feet high. Thus, in Georgian England, the still damaged reredos disappeared behind oak panelling; out of sight, out of mind and, for most, forgotten about for more than one hundred years.

Henry Peach Robinson, born on 9th July 1830 in Linney, Ludlow, was the eldest son of John and Eliza Robinson (nee Peach). John was the headmaster of the National School, then in the Buttercross. Eliza had been gifted three houses in Ludlow, as part of her marriage endowment. Henry was educated at the Horatio Russell academy in Ludlow until the age of thirteen years. Then, for one year, he was tutored by one Richard Penwarne in the art of drawing, which was Henry's passion. Thereafter, for five 'dismal' years, he was indentured to Ludlow bookseller and printer, Richard Jones with premises at 5 Broad Street 'in the yard' of the Angel Hotel. Working from 7.00 am to 9.00pm daily, with only two or three 'half-day' holidays a year, Henry was not happy in his work but did continue with his art.

After completing his



H. P. Robinson

Irvine, who had been the 'Clerk of Restoration' for works undertaken at the church in the 1850s, concluded it was "defaced, probably in the time of Cromwell." Certainly, it is thought, 'Roundhead' soldiers were sharpening their swords on the church's ancient font during the siege of Ludlow in 1646. As Protestants, perhaps they took a dislike to the iconography in the reredos? Interestingly, Mr Irvine also referred to fragments of the reredos being in the Ludlow museum.

Later, local historian David



St Paul in Reredos

apprenticeship, he moved to Bromsgrove and later to London. In 1852 he exhibited his oil painting, *On the Teme Near Ludlow*, at the Royal Academy and that same year, he began to explore the 'new' medium of photography. He was the first to develop photography into an art form and founder member of the 'Linked Ring', a society devoted to photography as art. He went on to receive Royal patronage from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, together with international acclaim. In 2008, one of his original photographs was offered for sale by Sotheby's in New York, with an auction estimate of between \$80 - \$120,000.

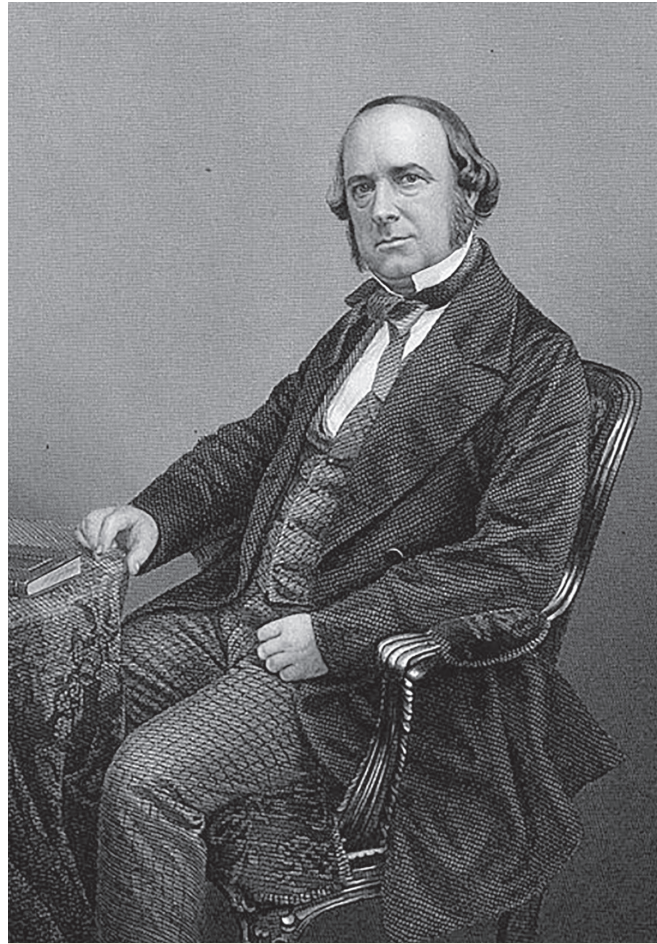
Henry Peach Robinson is among the most remarkable Ludlovians produced by this beautiful town.

Thomas Wright (jnr) was born at Tenbury Wells on 23rd April 1810 and educated at Ludlow Grammar School before attending Trinity College, Cambridge. Like his father (also, confusingly, named Thomas Wright), he went on to become a respected and influential antiquarian and also founder member of the British Archaeological Association, writing numerous authoritative works (some still relied on today), on the history and customs of the British Isles.

In the 1822 edition of his work, *The History and Antiquities of the Town of Ludlow* (page 135), Thomas Wright (snr) described the east window in St. Laurence's church but made no mention of any reredos, simply recording "*the oak stalls are still perfect but injudiciously daubed over with paint.*" He also recorded that Cromwell's officers regarded statues of saints "*superfluous and irreligious and were accordingly either much mutilated or entirely destroyed. Numerous similar works in various parts of the church suffered the same fate.*"

In his 1888 reworking of Wright's book, artist and engraver Oliver Baker (1856-1939), wrote that the reredos "was probably mutilated in the fourth year of Edward VI..." Yet another probability! Baker was however, to meet and confer with Gothic Revival architect, Richard Kyrke Penson (1815-1885) and learned more about the damaged reredos before its refurbishment. (*Ludlow Town and Neighbourhood* - page 47)

And so, our characters are



Thomas Wright (jnr)

in place to expose our 'Wright, Robinson, reredos...'

By 1848 decades had passed since the reredos was last seen but all was soon to be revealed. Due to a leak in the east window above, the oak wainscot needed to be removed to effect a repair. Imagine the sense of 'discovery' as the removal of each oak panel revealed more and more of the ancient, defaced reredos. It created quite a stir.

In February 1849, then aged 19 and still indentured to Richard Jones, Henry Peach Robinson recorded in his diary how he "went to take a sketch of the newly discovered altar piece." Already a more than competent artist, he made a detailed sketch of the complete reredos, in colour, illustrating all of its magnificence and all of its malicious damage. Whilst there he met Richard Kyrke Penson, already an architect, who was there also sketching the discovery. Henry was invited by Penson to Dinham House, to view other artwork. He recorded, "I never thought watercolours could be brought to such perfection."

Inspired by his meeting and the importance of the discovery,

he wrote to the *Hereford Times* suggesting a public subscription to aid in restoration of the reredos. He also sent his coloured sketch to the Ludlow historian, Thomas Wright in London.

Whether Wright travelled to Ludlow to view the 'newly discovered' reredos is not clear but as a man of considerable reputation, it is perhaps unlikely he would have committed himself to give an account without a personal viewing. Either way, on 13th April 1849, Thomas Wright reported the 'discovery' to the British Archaeological Association, as reported in *The Literary Gazette* 21st April 1849 (page 296).

At the meeting, Wright exhibited Henry's coloured drawing and described the "newly-discovered reredos, in Ludlow church..." He went on that "notwithstanding the injuries it has suffered...[it] is still in fine preservation, and, as a work of art, worthy of restoration." He described the upper portion as nearly perfect, consisting of a cornice and canopies, beneath which was a series of sedent crowned figures which had suffered damage to their heads. Colours

of brilliant green, vermilion and gold were still evident. He hoped, along with Henry, that the people of Ludlow would subscribe to its restoration.

The reported discovery caused a flurry of interest around the country with reports in the *Morning Herald* (16.04.1849), the *Exeter Flying Post* (19.04.1849) and the *Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Standard* (24.04.1849) to name but a few.

Although Wright supported Henry's idea of subscription to fund repairs, Henry was rebuked by 'influential Ludlovians' for making such a suggestion. He later wrote: "The upper classes, although very kind...thought everyone should keep his place..." Nevertheless, subscription was raised, with particular input from Lord Dungannon.

By now, Henry had completed his apprenticeship and was allowed some time to practice his love of art. He practiced stone carving under the tutelage of sculptor, 'Mr. Blackburn', who had been employed to carve new statues for the reredos. Henry recorded how he was allowed to "try his hand on a full size block of Caen stone."

In her biography of Henry Peach Robinson (1988), Margaret Harker, wrote that Henry's contribution can be seen in the figure of St Paul (holding a sword) to the right of the altar. Henry wrote, "But I must not claim all; the sculptor went over it after me. I had the misfortune to break St Paul's sword twice and it will be found to be cemented together."

Further restoration to the church, including the reredos, was undertaken in the 1890s and no, Henry's cemented sword is not evident...I have looked. However, the figure of St Paul has distinct similarities to a painted portion of a figure on display in the Ludlow Museum and donated in 1908. A photograph, dated 1892, in the Francis Frith Archive shows a restored reredos, in which the right hand of St George (over the doorway) appears intact. It has, presumably, been lost since. There has been criticism of many later Victorian refurbishments of ancient buildings amounting to 'rebuilding', with the loss of some ancient artefacts. Such criticism was being levelled contemporaneously and is evident in Richard Oliver's work.

Thus, to conclude, it seems

that the reredos, damaged by representatives of Henry VIII, Edward VI or Oliver Cromwell, was actually remarkably intact when first 're-discovered' in 1849 with most of its statuary and colours in place. A young man of Ludlow, Henry Peach Robinson, was in the vanguard for its restoration and went on to rank as an artist

and as one of the most important photographers of his age and, indeed, this. And, Thomas Wright, a man born near Ludlow and educated here and who achieved great renown as an antiquary and expert on the history of Ludlow and its environs, used a drawing by Henry, to broadcast what was, to the people of the time, a momentous

discovery. And what of that drawing?

The British Archaeological Association still exists and has archived a great deal of correspondence to and from Thomas Wright. Senior members of the Association have confirmed to me that they do not have the drawing made by Henry Peach

Robinson, which has been recorded to have been in Wright's possession. Sadly, some records were destroyed in the Blitz during the Second World War...but is it still out there, somewhere?

The reredos is the backdrop to the High Altar; this story, is the backdrop to the reredos.

Eric Griffiths

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Copyright applies.



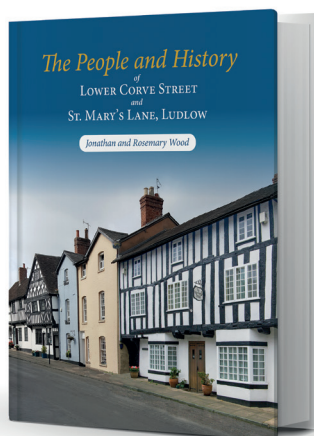
Fragment of St Paul from early reredos (Ludlow Museum)

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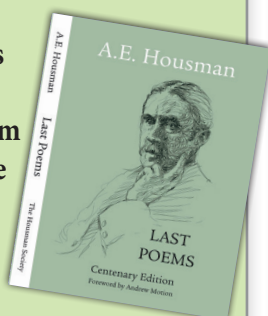
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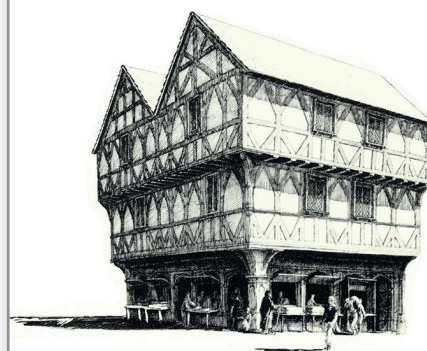
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Home to the largest collection of Reynolds of Ludlow Furniture (1946-1980). Beautiful examples of the furniture can be appreciated in contemporary room settings, displaying the versatility of the Arts and Crafts designs of Arthur Reynolds and progressive Modernism of Garth Reynolds. They include the now iconic Ludlow Yew Flower/Coffee tables, a selection of which can be purchased.

The gallery is also home to a large collection of oil paintings, watercolours, etchings, maps and books relating to Ludlow, many of which are for sale.

We are working with Garth Reynolds on a book on the history of Reynolds Furniture Company and would love to hear from anyone with furniture, stories to share or the Quaker connections.

To view by appointment only, discuss your interests, or to purchase or sell any Reynolds furniture, please contact: Roy Thwaites 07967 134116 or email: inspiredbyludlow@gmail.com

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COMMITTEE NEWS

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Since the last edition of Heritage News, the Committee has been hard at work arranging talks, visits, and social occasions, as well as examining planning proposals. In August, we had a most successful trip to Clifford Castle, just outside Hay on Wye, and to Hay castle itself – the latter recently restored and refurbished to a high standard. The tour guides were able to explain how the restoration of Hay Castle was undertaken whilst also relating the intriguing history of the castle. Most people took advantage of the splendid café in the castle for lunch and there was also time to explore the charming town.

At Clifford Castle the group was welcomed and guided by the present owner - Keith Hill. The castle is rarely open to the public and is a particularly impressive example of an early motte and bailey castle on the Welsh Marches. It was built by William FitzOsbern around 1070 and it was one of the earliest Marcher castles. It was primarily used as a military garrison intending to control traffic to and from Wales in this part of the valley of the River Wye.

Later that month, on the 31st, Committee members braved what was perhaps the coldest day in the summer to set up a stall promoting the work of the Civic Society at the

Mayor's charity market. We had some useful conversations, sold a few publications, and gained one new member.

The Society was also pleased to support the launch of a new publication of Housman's ever popular *A Shropshire Lad* by Merlin Unwin books. This collaboration between the Housman Society, Merlin Unwin and the Civic Society produced a most enjoyable evening in St Laurence's Church on 4th September.

But perhaps the most interesting and innovative occasion the Society has been involved in of late was the Corve Street History Forum organised by Rosemary and

Jonathan Wood in conjunction with the Civic Society Committee on 13th September. I quote from Rosemary's account of the day:

"On Wednesday 13 September, nearly 80 people gathered in the Parish Room of St. Peter's Church in Ludlow to learn more about some of the men and women who lived and worked in the industrial, northern quarter of lower Corve Street in the C19 who made their mark as successful entrepreneurs, and whose descendants still live in the town. Garth Reynolds, who had lived in St. Mary's Lane, shared memories of his renowned father, Arthur, with Roy Thwaites, a Ludlow resident and passionate collector of Reynold's furniture. Simon Bolton, Paul Sayers, and Skye Whitney of Rooftop Theatre, performed a short play, written by Simon specially for the Forum, commemorating the men and boys living in lower Corve Street and St. Mary's Lane who left Ludlow to fight in WWI. The audience was invited to sing, "Pack up your Troubles" and "It's a Long Way to

Tipperary" and was near to tears when the story ended with bugler, Paul Kemp, playing "Last Post", commemorating those who died".

One issue the Committee is struggling with is the project to repair a section of the cobbles in Broad Street. Finding a contractor willing to take on the work and overcoming the numerous planning challenges continue to tax the efforts of Committee Members. On a more positive note, our latest information board has been manufactured and we await installation outside Castle Lodge by Border Engineering in the near future.

The Committee is fortunate in acquiring a new member, Peter Salter, whose background in architecture promises to prove most useful. We are sad to report that Lynn Heffernan has had to step down from the Committee but we all thank her for her service and efforts over the past year.

John Cartwright

EVENTS

This comes to you only a few months after my notes in the August edition of Heritage News but through September to November we have had a couple of excursions and talks.

In September we experimented with the usual format with our entertainment of members with the "Lower Corve Street Forum" based on the book "The People and History of Lower Corve Street" by Jonathan and Rosemary Wood. The morning consisted of a talk about life in bygone days in Lower Corve Street and St Mary's Lane discussing among other topics the Reynolds Furniture factory and the men from this Street who fought in the First World War. Our audience were invited to contribute to the

discussions. The morning was rounded off by a light lunch. Our thanks go out to Rosemary Wood for organising the event.

We had in August taken a trip to Hay Castle with all its renovated and refurbished glory, then moving on to the less well known Clifford Castle nearby. The present owner of this ruined castle gave us a tour and a talk with many nimble and brave taking the challenge of the steep incline up to (and back down from) the castle walls!

Our first talk was about the

history of the Coaching Inns of England, of particular interest to Ludlovians who today have a fine example in the Angel Inn on Broad Street.

I recommend to all our members the talks over the winter months which amongst others include the Kembles a theatrical family who visited Ludlow also as they toured the West Midlands. You will find details of all the talks both on our website and the website of Ludlow's cultural events at <https://www.ludlow-arts-word.org.uk>

This past year has seen good numbers attending the talks and joining the excursions.

Where places are limited on the excursions we are sorry when we have to turn late bookings away. So as we go onto plan talks for 2024 -2025 the committee would like to hear from anyone who can recommend a speaker for a future talk. As members know the subject matters of the talks are wide ranging but topics of a local nature are always popular.

When you read this Christmas will be approaching. The Committee wish you good cheer and hoping you will join us at the events next year.

Jane Hunt



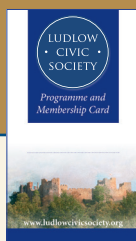
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