

STOURPORT CIVIC AWARD 2012

The biennial Civic Award will be launched early in the new year. Please let us know of any interesting potential entries that you may have spotted. Projects can be anything that has enhanced the environment of Stourport, from architectural schemes and building developments to nature and wildlife habitat improvements. **What do you think has contributed to improving Stourport in the last couple of years?**

THE ELUSIVE MR YORK, 1742-1797

by Pauline Annis

One of the people who played a major role in the early days of Stourport's development was Aaron York but very little seems to have been recorded about his life. I hope to put that right over the next few months. With help from Betty Park (Bewdley) and Anthony Taylor (Stourport), I have put together some information about him. Any additional contributions will be very welcome.

Aaron York was born in 1742 and married his first wife, Sarah Tunks, in Dowles in 1766. She had been born in Dowles in 1744. She died in 1770 having had three children.

Aaron's second wife was Mary Roden whom he married in 1788 in Stafford. As York House was built c 1787 this would have been their marital home. Mary died in 1817 and is buried in St Michael's churchyard.

There are a number of references to Aaron York in *Berrows* newspaper:

In 1772 James Evans, a waterman, was gaoled for stealing some cloth from a vessel at Wribbenhall, "the property of Mrs Aaron York of Wribbenhall".

In December 1774 Aaron York was robbed by a footpad on the Kempsey Road outside Worcester.

March 1785 "The Hero, a trow, the largest and finest vessel that navigated the Severn belonging to Messrs. Glover and York of Stourport, was lost in the river near Lydney." It would appear the boat was carrying "Birmingham and Manchester goods to the amount of £40,000."

In August 1786 Mr York was advertising for a Clerk.

In *Bewdley: The Golden Age* it is commented that:

"Many such as Aaron York and Joseph Glover, formerly of Wribbenhall, moved the major part of their business down river, although Glover had been operating from Redstone for many years."

What more do we know about Aaron York? It is claimed that he moved to Mitton in 1775, that he purchased the land for the Wesleyan Chapel and that he was one of the last people to communicate with John Wesley before the latter's death. His name appeared in 1788 on the application for the licensing of the new Methodist chapel. In terms of the building of Stourport, he obtained permission from the Canal Company in 1776 to carry bricks for house-building over Company land. There are underground remains of a brick-kiln near York Street lock- is there a connection?

Aaron York's daughter, Sarah (1769-1796) married Jonathan Worthington who occupied the house next door to York House. Sadly Sarah died after seven years of marriage and shortly after the birth of her fifth child.

THE ELUSIVE MR YORK, 1742-1797 continued



In Memory of Aaron York

Who died March 19 1797 aged 55 years

Also Aaron his son

Who died August 10th 1793 aged 24 years.

Also Mary wife of Aaron

Who died January 29 1817 aged 78 years.

*In memory of Sarah wife of Jonathon Worthington of
Stourport who died December 22 1796 aged 27 years.*

We are still left with quite a few mysteries:

Where was Aaron York born ?

Where was his first wife buried ?

What happened to his third child ?

What range of commercial activities was he involved with in Stourport ?

MY FATHER'S STOURPORT ADVENTURES

By Carol Clements

From the age of 16, my late father, Albert Brookes, who was born in Hay Mills, Birmingham, used to regularly cycle to Stourport. He would travel with one or two of his pals for a weekend jaunt to fish, swim and enjoy the countryside. Between 1930 and 1937 this became a regular trip at weekends and holidays. He used to recount his 'adventures', and occasional, 'misadventures' to me as a child. Some were, shall I say, illegally mischievous ?!

They used to put soap on their hair, to look fashionable as they cycled. It kept their hair and partings in place. He told me of the time when the heavens opened and they were all "blinded" as soap suds ran painfully into their eyes and a stop was needed at Harvington Hall to wash the soap out of their hair in the pool. They used to take a small canvas tent (which, till I was ten, we still used in the garden to play in). This was secured by wooden pegs and very "iffy" guy ropes and often fell down in the wind at night as they slept !

They would camp by Lickhill Manor, which was derelict, near to Sandy Bottom. As they got older and wiser, they would roll the tent and the cooking and camping utensils in a waterproof ground-sheet and hide it, to save carrying it back and forth on their bikes each weekend. By then they had fishing gear, so that too would get stored in outhouses around the abandoned Manor House. One very stormy night, they noticed a sash-window of the Manor House was slightly up so they "moved in". Their equipment would stay dry but they saw signs of other "occupants" gear, but a mutual respect meant no parties interfered with likeminded owners' properties over the years.

My father believed the Manor was haunted and recounted tales of spooky noises and doors being opened as voices, footsteps and ghostly lights often disturbed them. He spoke of Lickhill Manor with great respect. When, in my late 40's I worked there on night duty as a Sister, I took him to show him around. By then he was in his 80's but he pointed out places where he'd slept, saying he still recognised many features, particularly the stairs and layout.

I still have copies of the newspaper reports of his "final" adventure in Stourport in 1934. I feel, reading it, that some issues were dealt with very leniently, taking into consideration their naughty "boyish" behaviour at the age of 20 !.....and the dreadful consequence of their "misadventure".

MY FATHER'S STOURPORT ADVENTURES continued



MIDNIGHT BOATING FATALITY

A camping holiday came to a tragic conclusion at Stourport in the early hours of Sunday morning, when two youths were rescued from the Severn after their boat had capsized. They were discovered clinging to the upturned boat, and on being rescued revealed that a companion had attempted to swim to the bank. He was not seen again. Up to yesterday (Thursday) evening the body had not been recovered.

The missing youth is Philip Wedley, 19, of Gotterills Lane, Alum Rock, Birmingham and his two companions were Leslie Cyril Atkinson, 8/63 Cooksey Road, Small Heath, and Albert Brooks, 204 Speedwell Road, Hay Mills. They were camping in one of the riverside meadows off Moorhall Lane.

It is believed that late on Saturday night they decided to go for a moonlight row, and took a boat, without permission, from Mr C.Cotterell's raft. The boat was intended to carry two persons only, and when almost opposite Redstone it capsized. Wedley struck out for the bank, but the two others remained clinging to the boat. Their cries for help were eventually heard by Mr Squire Lench, whose bungalow is close to the river, and he went to their assistance in a punt.

My father, when alive, would not talk about this incident. I believe, not only was he mortified at the death of his best pal, but felt guilty and ashamed of his behaviour. All my life I knew him as a very strict Victorian disciplinarian, extremely critical of parents who do not control their offspring !

He remained close friends with Leslie, well into his marriage with my mum and fishing expeditions continued throughout my childhood, Stourport and Bewdley being frequent venues.

I was thrilled, in 1976 at the age of 33 years, to finally live in Stourport and now have no plans to ever move. My father died in Birmingham four years ago but my mother is very happily living her final years in Ravenhurst Residential Home. She is aware of where her home is situated, and feels she is close to the place which her beloved "Al" loved as a youth, prior to meeting her.....

Note from editor

Do you have any stories passed on by friends or family which you could share with us ?

OUR NEW PROGRAMME

We have an excellent and varied range of speakers again this year.

We started with an interesting railway based talk earlier this month. This is followed in October by Liz Quinn, Head of Stourport High School, on preparing students for their future, and later in the year speakers from Wychbold Swan Rescue and the iron industry of Cleobury Mortimer. The New Year kicks off with our Festive Event - this year to be a meal at a local restaurant.

Finally an appeal for new members. For the society to continue to be influential and important to the town more members are needed. Please encourage friends and neighbours to attend our meetings. More programme leaflets are available from the committee.

Proposed New National Planning Policy Framework

By Ken Durnell



The draft for a proposed new National Planning Policy Framework was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July of this year. This document outlines overall policy aims and critical issues that the government considers need to be taken into account by local authorities when producing Local Plans or determining planning applications.

The proposed new National Planning Policy Framework is based on the concept of top priority being given to a 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development'. This presumption implies that in cases where Local Plans are not 'up-to-date', or do not give a clear basis for making decisions, development should be allowed, unless it would undermine key principles for sustainability that are contained within the Framework. The presumption also means that where a development conforms to the Local Plan, it should be approved without delay.

The new approach includes the following principles:-

1. Local planning policies should aim to meet the aspirations of businesses and the local community.
2. Planning applications should be approved unless they contravene specified sustainability policies.
3. Local authority planners should seek the assistance of 'the community' and businesses in preparing plans,
4. Neighbourhood development orders, as envisaged in the Localism Bill, would allow new homes and offices to be built in specified areas 'without the developers having to apply for separate planning permission'.
5. The policy for new housing would no longer give a priority housing brown field sites and local authorities would have to identify sufficient land to meet requirements for the next five years.
6. Town centre sites would continue to be the preferred locations of new retail and leisure developments.
7. Strong protection would be retained for Green Belts, Areas of Outstanding National Beauty, National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 'other special environmental areas'.
8. Good quality design and the importance of protecting 'heritage assets' are stressed, although no specific commitment appears to be given regarding Conservation Areas or listed buildings.

The above notes are only intended to outline main features of the proposed new National Planning Policy Framework. The 'pro growth' draft proposals have been subject to strong criticism by many national and local organisations, including the National Trust, Civic Voice (the successor to the former Civic Trust), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (which is understood to have over one million members) and national 'broadsheet' newspapers.

Further details of the proposals can be obtained from the Department for Communities and Local Government website at: www.communities.gov.uk,

or by post from the Department at:-

Eland House,
Bressenden Place,
London,
SW1E 5DU.
Tel 030 3444 0000

Objections or other observations should either be sent online by a form provided at the above website or by post to:

Proposed New National Planning Policy Framework continued



Alan C Scott,
National Planning Policy Framework,
Address as before
or by email to:-
planningframework@communities.gsi.gov.uk

The closing date for receipt of objections, etc., is 17th October 2011; however, the Department's notes indicate that these should preferably be sent at an earlier date.

HELL AND HIGH WATER



A lively, colourful and very enjoyable evening was had by all recently when The Mikron Theatre Company visited Stourport. The group specialise in outdoor theatre and previously have performed by the canal basins with the wonderful backdrop of the Tontine.

Due to a forecast of heavy thundery rain the show was moved into the Stourport Yacht Club which opened its doors, and windows on a hot evening, to accommodate the larger than expected audience.

The performance of "Hell and High Water" was a feast of music, laughter and colour which told the tale of canal construction and of some of the colourful characters who made it all possible from the flamboyant Duke of Bridgewater and canal pioneer, James Brindley, to the hardy female coal miner, Mary. The performance was enjoyed by the Civic Society members present.

The Mikron theatre group perform at other local venues including the Camp Inn at Grimley and the Lock Inn at Wolverley and usually tour with 2 different plays each season. To check the tour dates visit www.mikron.org.uk.

"Hell and High Water" was part of the annual programme of events held in Stourport Canal Basins. Full details of further events can be found at www.stourpottown.co.uk or Tel 01299 822827.

HEREFORD AND GLOUCESTER CANAL

By Pauline Annis



I wonder how many of our members are aware of the existence of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal ? I have to admit that it came as a bit of a surprise to me that a canal was built through such a rural locality.

The Canal was started in 1792 but not completed until 1845. It was 34 miles long and was one of the last major narrow canals to be completed in Britain. From the River Severn at Over it ran level to Rudford Lock, the first of ten before reaching Oxenhall Tunnel- at 2192 yards one of the longest in England. Seven more locks brought the Canal through the market town of Ledbury. A ten mile summit pound, including another tunnel at Ashperton led to three locks eight miles from Hereford. An aqueduct over the River Lugg, and the Aylestone Tunnel brought the Canal into the heart of Hereford. It had a total of 22 locks and 3 tunnels. The Canal was formally closed in 1881 to allow construction of the Ledbury to Gloucester Railway.

The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust is working to achieve complete restoration of the Canal. Although much of the Canal has been filled in and in places has disappeared without trace, a surprising number of lock cottages, wharf buildings and bridges can still be seen. Stretches of the Canal at Monkhide, Yarkhill and Oxenhall have been restored by volunteers and the stonework of House Lock at Oxenhall has been completely restored.

Working with the Waterway Recovery Group, the original canal basin at Over, where the canal connected with the River Severn, has been reconstructed. This was the largest all-volunteer canal restoration project in the UK in 1999-2000. To ensure the line of the Canal is not obstructed in the future the entire Canal corridor is protected in the Local Authority plans.

The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust was formed in 1992 and has a current membership of 1,300. They plan to fully restore the 34 miles of the Canal. The locations mentioned are:

Aylestone Park, Hereford

Oxenhall near Newent

Over Basin near Gloucester.

PLANS TO CELEBRATE CAMP BEWDLEY: BURLISH TOP

By David More

A meeting was held recently to discuss plans to highlight the history of the US hospital camps at Burlish Top and the Rifle Range in the 2nd World War.

Ideas discussed, included an information board with photos and map, a commemorative plaque and a trail with marker posts. Other more elaborate options such as an MP3 based self guided tour to download, or even "Smart phone Apps" were discussed, but these would require external funding. Further information will be sought on the design, price and design of boards. However, it was recognised that the ecological importance of the rare lowland heath habitat was paramount.

There were originally 2 camps on the site: Top Camp at Burlish Top and another at Burlish Crossing, now built over. As well as the old Rifle Range , there was a Church, situated opposite the car park on Kingsway, a Dropping Well below Birchen Coppice near the railway tunnel entrance, and an old ammunition hut hidden by extensive scrub growth. It is even possible to see an aerial plan of the old camps on Google Earth!

There will be a guided walk led by Paul Allen WFDC Ranger around the camp, highlighting the key features, on Saturday 29 October at 10am, starting from the car park. Sturdy footwear recommended.