

## Geoff Neal 9th May 1922—18th February 2017

Geoff Neal was an active member of our Society for many years until his death on 18th February 2017. Latterly he had held the post of Vice President and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. He worked with Anna Carter on the "Images of England" book about Stourport, helping to identify people and places in the many photographs that Anna had collected. In the Society archive are tapes of him in conversation with Anna on topics including the Stourport Town Band and Carpets of Worth. He was also the narrator and presenter on the DVD "**Stourport: The Canal Town**" produced by Albert Mogg. **Below is a shortened version of his son Alan's eulogy read at his funeral, a fitting tribute to a wonderful man who gave so much to Stourport.**



"Born in Warwick Street, Stourport on 9th May 1922, the youngest of seven children, educated at Stourport High School, in a different age when progress at school beyond the age of 14 was out of the reach of many because of cost. Today he would have sailed through further education and University where his love of history could have flourished. Whilst this opportunity was denied him, he put his considerable intelligence and memory to good use in later life as we shall see.

On leaving School he went to work at Worths and thence The Steatite. His work was broken by the war years when he volunteered for the RAF. Turned down as a pilot because of his eyesight, he became a Leading Aircraft Man, sent to fight the terrible, forgotten war against the Japanese in India and Burma. He never said much about his experiences, but they left a mark on his health, suffering from a number of tropical diseases including malaria. I remember my early childhood was blighted by his being away for periods in hospital. I still have one abiding memory of standing by my mother at the entrance to the Worcester Racecourse, holding her hand, as I waved to a figure, clad in a dressing gown, high up at a window of the then Worcester Royal Hospital. But as they say, "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" and living till almost 95 certainly provides proof of this.

Dad loved both sport and music. He played cricket and football as a young man. He tired of the latter when he felt it had become overblown and driven by money. He turned his interest to rugby and athletics instead. I can still see him shouting at the television during the Six Nations or a 4x4 relay, a side of himself he rarely showed in other contexts. But his first love was cricket. He taught me how to bowl, he watched my games at school and when I played for Bewdley, he often umpired, entirely impartially, turning down my wild LBW claims. We still talked about cricket till the end of his life, in the last few days before his death wondering what sort of captain Joe Root will make.



Whilst being his own man, Dad was very much half of a bigger whole. He met Mom at The Tontine; they married in 1948 and never looked back. They should seriously consider changing the expression “Darby and Joan” to “Geoff and Joan” as theirs was a marriage built on the strongest foundations of love, mutual respect and kindness. Together throughout their married life, they threw themselves into project after project with unstinting energy and success. Each became almost an obsession taking over their spare time, their reward being the enjoyment of others. They learned to dance years before “Strictly” was a word in the TV vocabulary, winning medals and from that launched the Dancing Club at The Steatite. After he had prostate cancer, they became very active in the charity, raising money for research into this killer disease. Then came the walking club. They founded “The Severnside Ramblers”. Miles of Worcestershire and the surrounding counties were tramped by a happy crowd following them and listening to Dad’s exposition on the history of this, or the industrial archaeology of that. Maps, plotted trails, muddy walking boots and the like then dominated home.

It was through this that Dad met Bill Gwillam who ignited his long held love of history. He became an active member of the Stourport Civic Society. Dad researched the walks, attended talks, read extensively, recorded everything in his beautiful copperplate handwriting and then started lecturing, travelling across the length and breadth of the county, captivating and delighting groups with his fascinating discourses. He appeared both on local radio and TV. Just after his ninetieth birthday he completed “Stories of Stourport” – this labour of love was an instant success, with a launch in that October 2012 , the first print run being sold out; the second with only a handful of copies left – still available if anyone wants one. But to underline the man he was, every penny he raised from his talks, book sales etc he donated to charity.

Perhaps one drawback of his encyclopaedic knowledge, was his tendency enthusiastically to launch headlong into a detailed exposition of the topic – whether it be the history of a Stourport family, music, British history or otherwise – A married B, who had an illegitimate daughter by C, who .... and so on –you all know what I mean! I remember a story told by my son-in-law, Paul, who, having to go to Little Hereford, rang Dad for directions. After a lengthy phone call, he was left with a detailed knowledge of the history of every village and hamlet en route, but still had no idea how to get there.

He loved his extended family, always taking an interest in what they were doing in their jobs, at school etc. He was proud of them and gave every encouragement, particularly in their education which he held high as one of the virtues and advantages of life. My son, Jamie, having taken an engineering degree gave him immense pleasure and much to talk about.

To end, I want to pick a poignant moment from the day before his death. On the Thursday evening his great grand-daughter, Chloe, had performed at “La Petite Gare” in Kidderminster. The audience had prevailed upon her to sing “Over the Rainbow”, which she had sung at her first public performance when she was six. Dad always loved her singing this so Chris recorded it on her phone and played it to him on the Friday morning, the day before he died. Propped up in bed, in pain, he clutched the phone in what were then his frail, bony fingers, a smile coming to his face, his eyes becoming moist. **A wonderful husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, friend and man. We shall all miss him.”**



## Your new committee

Following a successful AGM and elections the society is pleased to welcome 3 new members to the committee. The committee and officers are as follows:-

Pauline Annis	Chair	larkrise80@aol.com	01299 826383
Annette More	Vice Chair		
Richard Annis	Treasurer		
Sue Bridgwater	Secretary	suebridge80@tiscali.co.uk	01299 828788
Mary Johnson	Membership		01299 823811
Jim Amos			
Margaret Jenner			
David More	Newsletter and e-correspondence		
Anne Taylor			

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## Time to Celebrate Vinegar

*by Margaret Dallow*

The production of vinegar began as a small concern by Hicken Bold about 1780, situated near the River Sever, approached from Stour Lane, formerly known by its Saxon name Hell Lane.

In 1798 it became an important industry when a vinegar factory was built on a prime site at the confluence of the rivers Stour and Severn, when Hickin was financed in his expansion by Charles Swann from Wribebenhall. The enterprise became known as Swann and Co. The site required 20,000 tons of earth to form a base, which came from the former site of Worcester Castle, which stood in College Green, near the Cathedral. The soil was transported upstream by barge and unloaded at the Stacking Wharf. The vinegar works was to have two long wharves stretching beside both rivers. It subsequently became known as the Stourport Pure Malt Vinegar Brewery, being one of the earliest businesses to be set up in Stourport. During the 1870's the business merged with Birmingham Brewery.

A disastrous fire in 1882 resulted in the complete destruction of the original premises, and when a large modern factory was built it was known as the Birmingham Vinegar Brewing Co, who earlier in 1880 had begun producing Holbrook Sauce. In 1900 the Stourport factory was restyled as Holbrook, requiring the purchase of adjacent land, making it three times larger than previously. It was capable of producing 5 times more of its former brewing capacity, with a modern layout and improved working conditions.

In 1953 the factory was acquired by British Vinegars, which included the London company Sarsons, and from 1954 Sarsons Vinegar was produced in Stourport. The premises were again altered in 1979, and acquired by Nestle about 1988, who closed the factory in April 2000.

As the production of Sarsons vinegar was ending, its new owners, commissioned a commemorative mug to celebrate 200 years of vinegar production, and presented it to over 50 of its staff. One was also presented to Stourport Town Council.

**However the 1920's picture featured on the mug was not the Stourport factory but one from a Sarsons factory in London!**

## Summer Recital Series at St Swithun's, Worcester

by **Will Scott**, Chairman of  
the FOSS



For the past seven years, the Friends of St Swithun's [FOSS] have been holding a series of Friday lunchtime organ recitals from June to August.

These popular recitals have been organised by Andrew McCrea, Deputy Director and Director of Studies at the Royal College of Organists [RCO]. We are very lucky to have Andrew as our Organist-Curator at St Swithun's. In 1977, St Swithun's ceased to be used for full time worship and was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund, now the Churches Conservation Trust [www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk) and like all their other 349 churches, St Swithun's remains consecrated.

Rebuilt in 1736, on the same footprint as the earlier church, by the business community of Worcester, the grocers, sugar-bakers, Pewterers etc, St Swithun's lies in the heart of the City [WR1 2RH] and is the perfect place to chill out on a hot summer day, or take shelter from the rain! The west-end gallery organ was built by William and Robert Gray of London and had only one major addition in 1864 by Nicholsons of Worcester. This organ was restored, by the FOSS, with funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund and others, by Goetze and Gwynn, from Nottinghamshire in 2010. We also have a reconstruction of a Tudor organ of 1535, known as the Wetheringsett, on loan from the RCO, which is also played during our recital series.

All the recitals are free but we ask for a retiring collection, which goes towards the maintenance of the organs and to running the recitals. See the attached programme for this year, especially the recitals by the students of Birmingham Conservatoire and Kimberly Marshall.

St Swithun's, Worcester WR1 2RH  
[www.swithuns.org.uk](http://www.swithuns.org.uk)

## Lunchtime Organ Recitals 2017

Fridays at 1.10pm (except last week of July)  
Gray/Nicholson Organ (1795/1844, restored by Goetze & Gwynn in 2010)  
&

Wetheringsett Organ (reconstruction of a pre-Reformation Tudor organ, built by Goetze & Gwynn in 2002)

- 2 June Thomas Allery (Worcester College, Oxford)
- 9 June Students of the Organ Department, Birmingham Conservatoire
- 16 June Prof. Kimberly Marshall (Arizona State University, USA), followed by masterclass in association with the Royal College of Organists
- 23 June Andrew Benson-Wilson (Basingstoke)
- 30 June Simon Gibson (Cheltenham)
- 7 July Richard Cook (Sub-Assistant Organist, Worcester Cathedral)
- 14 July Hilary Norris (Director of Studies, Diocese of Hereford Organists' Training Scheme), and Leila Basletic, part of St Swithun's Festival 2017
- 21 July Richard Hobson (Grosvenor Chapel, Mayfair)
- Tues 25 July at 1.15pm Herman Jordaan (London) part of Worcester Three Choirs Festival (RCO Young Recitalist)
- 28 July No recital at St Swithun's (Recital at Cathedral, part of Three Choirs Festival)
- 4 August James Perkins (London)
- 11 August Andrew McCrea (Curator-Organist, St Swithun's)
- 18 August Gerdi Troskie (Worcester)
- 25 August Roger Judd (Hereford)



St Swithun's, Worcester WR1 2RH  
[www.swithuns.org.uk](http://www.swithuns.org.uk)

[visitchurches.org.uk/Ourchurches/Completestofchurches/St.Swithun-Church-Worcester-Worcestershire](http://visitchurches.org.uk/Ourchurches/Completestofchurches/St.Swithun-Church-Worcester-Worcestershire)

## ST SWITHUN'S FESTIVAL 2017

FRIDAY JULY 14<sup>th</sup>

1.10pm Festival Organ Recital: Hilary Norris and Leila Basletic

The St Swithun's 1795 Gray organ and the reconstructed Tudor 'Wetheringsett' organ

SATURDAY JULY 15<sup>th</sup> - St Swithun's Day

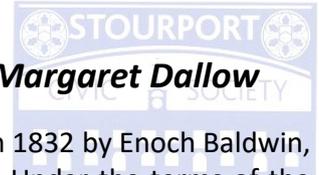
11.00am Playing by Jon Colborne, Lute and Duncan Bell, Treble Viol

7.30pm Summer Concert by the Elgar School of Music's Baroque singers  
Directed by John Wilderspin. Tickets at the door £10 (£8 concessions).

SUNDAY JULY 16<sup>th</sup>

6.30pm Festival Evensong

Sung by the gentlemen of the Cathedral Voluntary Choir. Officiant and Preacher Canon Dr Michael Brierley, in the presence of the Mayor of Worcester. Light refreshments to follow.



## **Baldwin's Friendly Society and Truck Shop**

*by Margaret Dallow*

The society had been introduced to the workforce at the Baldwin's foundry in 1832 by Enoch Baldwin, son of Thomas the founder of the Baldwin iron master family of Stourport. Under the terms of the friendly society each worker automatically became a member for a small minimal weekly payment. Known as a "fee", each member was entitled to its' benefits. If they fell sick they were expected to produce a medical certificate proving the illness was not related to intoxication or any other misconduct. By Christmas, after expenses had been deducted, any surplus money was divided amongst its members in proportion to their contributions paid. Amongst the rules by which they were to pay a fine included:

No member was to insult another man's religion, use foul language or throw anything at an other; No man should stand idle or hang around when there was work to be done, the fine being 3d for each offence; No man should strike another on work premises. To ignore this the fine was set at 2/6d.; While any man shielding another from an offence, for which he had been fined, but not paid, they would be forced to pay that fine and an additional 3d.

Appearance was of the utmost importance, a tidy man being thought of having a tidy mind and of good character. They were expected to turn up for work on Monday, clean shaven and wearing a clean shirt, with failure to do so incurring a fine of 6d.

When Enoch acquired Wilden Ironworks from the Lewtyns he formed a partnership with his nephews Pearce and William, trading as EP and W Baldwin. The friendly society was then also introduced to the workforce. The Friendly Society ended in 1912, when a National Health Assurance was introduced.

**The Truck Shop**, based on the principals of the Cooperative Society was set up by the Baldwins in the small house attached to the Wilden Inn, Wilden Lane(now demolished). It was formerly called the King of Prussia and was renamed to prevent offence to local families who lost men during World War One, due to the hostilities between England and Germany.

The shop offered workers items deemed to be "necessities of life" at low cost. Beside such commodities as tea, sugar, salt, soap candles, matches, paraffin and fire wood, each week a Stourport butcher provided the shop with fresh meat reasonably priced which may have been subsidised by the Baldwins. When it closed in 1902, the workers and villages used the village store, which subsequently provided the village with a Post Office.

The shop and PO closed in 2015. It is reputed that the idea of setting up a truck shop came from Enoch Baldwin for the foundry workers and it is believed a room was set aside in the Rising Sun for this purpose, until transferred to the Moulders, Arms that was situated at the junction of Foundry Street and Worcester Street

## **Lower Mitton Stocks and Pillory**

*by Margaret Dallow*

The Pillory stood half way along Gilgal, placed close to the stone wall that separates Gilgal from the Staffs and Worcs canal towpath, just above the Sion or Zion steps that lead up to the canal and chapel bridge. From 1816 -37 the only offence to which a pillory could be used was that of perjury. Reputed to be dilapidated by the end of 1850, it was removed and taken to the Tannery yard off Lombard Street from where it disappeared, its' fate unknown. While the term " Children on the Wood" was used for children put in the stocks. Not to be confused with "Babes in the wood" which refers to the Pantomime. Stocks and Whipping Posts usually had two sets of holes, one for adult hands and one for children. An example of this can be seen in Rock church (St Peters).



### The Organ at St Swithuns

Organ recitals are again being performed in St Swithuns church in Worcester. Details are in the article by Will Scott, the Civic Society President.

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## Wyre Forest Local Plan

This important document outlines proposals for where housing, employment and supporting services are to be located in the future.

Residents are being asked to consider 2 options and express their preference.

Do please make your personal comments directly to WFDC. We will be responding as a society and would welcome copies of your individual comments to help put together the society's formal response. Please [email us](#) or pass on a paper copy to any committee member.

On first glance, there are some things of particular interest; site for travelling showmen at Wilden Top, housing for Burlish Top, redevelopment of vinegar works, lapsed planning application for housing at the old Carpets of Worth site, general expansion of housing targets for Stourport, Gladman / Pearl Lane housing developments, redesignating of Green Belt for housing and possible development adjacent to Wilden Marshes in Kidderminster (the old settling ponds from the sugar beet works)

(The Local Plan can be viewed online using the link below with section 32 page 180 for housing) .

### On Line Local Plan

<http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/media/3024571/-Preferred-Options-Document-June-2017-R.pdf>

The local plan can also be viewed at local drop in sessions. The dates and locations are shown below.

<b>Wednesday 26th July 2017</b>	<b>Areley Kings Village Hall</b>	<b>1.30pm - 6.30pm</b>
<b>Saturday 29th July 2017</b>	<b>The Stourport Civic Hall</b>	<b>10am - 4pm</b>
<b>Friday 4th August 2017</b>	<b>St Oswalds Church, Kidderminster</b>	<b>2pm—7pm</b>

**The closing date for comments is 5pm Monday 14 August 2017.**

**This is our chance to have a say on Stourport's future and make sure our views are taken into account.** Please comment and encourage others to. Often it is the number of responses that influences decisions. Your response does not necessarily need to be long and detailed.



## Donations received by Stourport Civic Society

### The Midcounties Co-operative

Stourport Civic Society were pleased to receive a Midcounties Co-operative Community Support Donation of £250. This was put to good use helping to fund the recent 2017 Civic Award. Please see the back cover for photos of the winners.

Stourport Civic Society also received a donation of £200 from the Monday Night group, to buy educational materials for The Working Boat Bramble, which we co-own. This will be managed by Friends of Bramble and Stourport Forward.



<http://mondaynightgroup.org/>

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## What's Going on in Stourport

A variety of dance, music and theatre events on at The Civic in Stourport.

[www.thecivicstourport.co.uk](http://www.thecivicstourport.co.uk)



And don't forget

Country & Western Festival, Stourport Riverside, Saturday & Sunday 19th and 20th August 2017

The Land and River Carnival 2nd September 2017

Stourport Rowing Regatta 13th and 14th August 2017

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## URGENT appeal for laptop

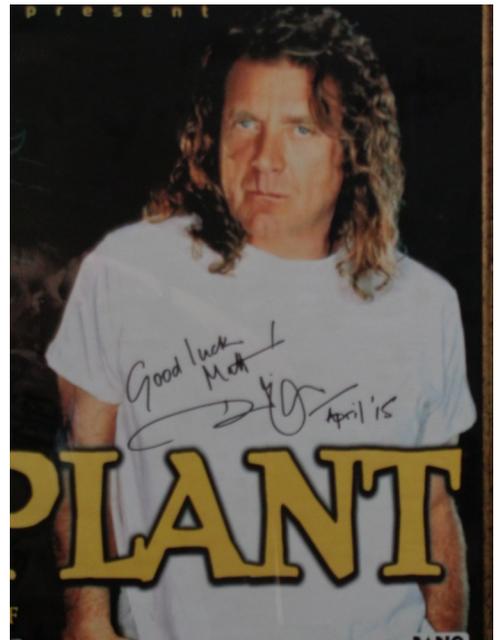
The Civic Society laptop which is more than 15 years old has broken and is beyond economic repair. Does anyone have an old one which we could have for a nominal sum? We only need something basic to be used occasionally at meetings by our speakers. Please contact - David More 01299 878718 if you think you can help.



The Swan and Burlish Park Middle School were both winners in the 2017 Civic Award. A Commendation was also given to The Wharf in Mart Lane.

**And why is there a photo of the signed poster of Robert Plant (ex lead singer from Led Zeppelin) also pictured which is on display at The Swan?**

Robert Plant was in the audience at our June meeting when the topic was Owain Glyndŵr.



**Mikron Theatre** has 2 outdoor productions this year and is coming to Stourport and other locations locally.

**Wednesday 30th August 7pm**                      **Tontine Gardens Stourport**  
"In at the Deep End"                      A story of an RNLI lifeboat station

**Thursday 31st August 7.30pm**                      **Springfield Park, Kidderminster**  
"Best Foot Forward"                      A tale of the YHA

<https://www.mikron.org.uk/> for full details and tour dates