

Stourport History Writing Competition for Young People 2018

We were very pleased to receive sixteen entries and the winner can now be revealed.

The judging panel consisted of Pauline and Annette, our chair and vice chair, plus two retired primary school teachers. The judges were unanimous in their choice of the same winning entry. The judges comments were as follows:

- 16 entries in total were received, 1 from an individual. 6 from Gig Mill Primary school in Stourbridge and 9 from St Wulstan's Primary school in Stourport.
- All entries were from 10/11 year olds.
- The judges were impressed by the use, retention and interpretation of information and knowledge.
- The entries showed good use of facts and fiction.
- Good creation of atmosphere.
- Impressed by use of language and images, grammar and the structuring of the stories.
- Impressed by the hard work and effort that had gone into producing the entries.
- All the entries were well presented. Handwritten copies were neat and easy to read, with effective use of illustrations.



There will be a display of all the entries in the foyer of The Civic in New Street for 2 weeks from Saturday 12th May. It is open between 10:00-14:00 Monday to Friday and 11:00-13:00 Saturday and also when there is an event in the hall. Do please try and go along.

Winner - Rory Fudge - *The Basin Ghost*

This entry evokes the history of Stourport in an imaginative way. This well constructed story, with good use of descriptions to create atmosphere, encourages the readers to identify with the central character. Left the reader wanting more! The story is reprinted further on in this newsletter.

Runner up - Eleanor Gillett - *Bricklaying in Stourport*

The entrant used her historical knowledge to back a personal narrative. Easy to read, with good detail and a true insight into workers' conditions. Clever use of continuity with the present.

Runner up - Zoe Roberts - *Bramble*

This entrant demonstrated a good understanding and consolidation of information and showed empathy with her character, giving us a clear picture of what life would have been like on the boat.

STOURPORT TELEPHONE EXCHANGE



by *Pauline Carroll*

As a result of our February meeting by Roger Tapping on the National Collection of Telephone Boxes, quite a few people didn't know that Stourport used to have its own telephone exchange. I can vouch for that as I worked there for a short while in the mid 1950's. It was situated then in the High Street above the Post Office which is where Herons Foods are now, previous to that it was Woolworths.

In those days telephone subscribers were not able to dial any numbers including local ones, so everything had to go through the operator. Of course, not many people then were on the phone apart from businesses, doctors etc. Even so it was a very busy switchboard (4 in all). Besides the Stourport subscribers to answer you also had all the other telephone operators from all over the UK calling to be put through to our subscribers. It was extremely busy all day, as it was all plugs, your switchboard looked like a complicated knitting pattern with the plug cords going in all directions.

Therefore, it was very easy to cut people off trying to find the right plug to disconnect. On the incoming board from other exchanges it was so easy to get a full board. So, you had to be very experienced to be allowed to operate this board. You answered these calls with Stourport and then put them through to the number they required. After my first day on this board apparently, I woke up in the middle of the night sat upright in bed shouting STOURPORT, STOUPOUT ETC. my parents came rushing in as they thought burglars had broken in.

Eventually in the late 1950's semi automation came in and Stourport Exchange closed with all calls being transferred to Kidderminster. This then allowed callers to dial local calls and over a period of time long distant calls till eventually we were able to dial anywhere in the world like we do today.



The old Post Office in the foreground with Martins Bank (now HSBC behind)

Three short tales from Civic Society member Margaret Dallow



1/ A Shooting Incident on Hartlebury Common

The only known prosecution under the Byelaw of the Open Space of 1906, on Hartlebury Common, took place on 11 June 1966. An 18 year old man from the Walshes estate accidentally shot his friend while trying to make a pot shot at pigeons. The slightly injured young man was taken to Kidderminster General Hospital in Mill Street, where he was interviewed by the police, who later established that the man possessed a gun licence, while also being satisfied he kept the gun in a safe place. However, it was decided he should be prosecuted as a warning to anyone with a gun that they were not toys and should be handled with care. **It is believed he was fined £5.**

2/ Areley Kings, Recorded in the Domesday Survey 1085

"Upper Arley (Areley) was held by the Canons of Wolverhampton, who also held two hides in Upper Mitton. At Areley there is land for 6 ploughs; in Demesne, 1 plough and two slaves, 7 villains, 3 borders and 4 ploughs. There are 3 free men, and woodland 6 furlongs long and 4 furlongs broad. To this land belongs half a hide, and another Upper Arley which Osbern Fitz Richard, has taken away by force from the Canons. This land of 1 plough with 4 villains".

- **A Hide** was a measure of land of about 120 acres, sufficient to sustain a peasant's family with one day of ploughing with a team.
- **A Demesne** was a portion of land on the estate belonging to the lord of the manor, cultivated for him by villains.
- **Villains or Villeins- were Bondsman**, who held land by tenure from the lord of the manor, working on certain days for him, also bound to him by service which could mean taking up arms in support of him. He was also the highest rank of peasant, holding between 30 - 100 acres, ranking him above that of Freeman.
- **A Slave or Serf**, was the property of the lord of the manor, who owned his body and soul with no regress.
- **A Freeman** although free, paid either with rent or had obligations to the lord of the manor.
- **Borders or Bordars** were small holders, ranked below that of a Villain, yet better than a Collar, who was the lowest rank of peasant, holding less than 4 acres of land.

3/ The Early Form of Ale Testing

An ale tester not only tested ale brewed in towns, and sold at the weekly markets, but visited all ale houses where they brewed ale on their premises in the area. Although the main purpose was to tax this popular beverage, it was also to ensure customers got the quality ale for which they had paid. The simplest means of testing was by the leather breeches the ale tester wore. A small quantity of Ale was poured onto a wooden bench on which he then sat on. If the seat was sticky, then there was unfermented sugar in the liquid, and if not then the ale was fully fermented and **fit for sale and drinking.**

Stourport Cinema 2008 (now part of M&Co)



The committee were wondering if the old Stourport Cinema could possibly be listed, as it wasn't on the local list. Ann Taylor researched the adverts and items in the trade directory's, found later in this article. She also tried to find if during it's history there was any WW1 connection in the way of show's ,special newsreels etc as that may of helped to get it listed, but nothing could be found .

Ned Williams, who recently spoke to us about Almshouses, wrote this article about our local Cinema. It is reprinted from a newsletter from Autumn 2006.

"I have long been intrigued by the idea that Stourport may be one of those towns to claim an early cinema. Most cinemas started life after 1st January 1910 when the Kinematograph Act came into force, but a few towns did have purpose-built or "purpose-converted" premises for regularly showing films before that date. Several historians claim that films were regularly shown in Stourport from 1908 onwards. Renault Beakbane supported this by saying that his grandfather had shown films since that date in the buildings that formed part of the family's tannery. More recently Audrey Cooper provided some family-based evidence that films were being shown in Stourport in 1908.

I have now had a brief opportunity to look through past copies of the Kidderminster Shuttle to see if any evidence can be found. I did not find any mention of cinematograph shows in Stourport in the 1908 papers. The Electric Theatre in Lickhill Road first advertises in 22nd February 1913. A news item in the edition published on 1st February 1913 says 'Picture House: The new electric picture house is expected to be ready for use in the second week of February. High class films are to be procured and every comfort seems to be the aim of the promoters.'

I would suggest that the first films were shown on Monday 10th February 1913 as the advert of the following week says nothing about the cinema opening. There seems to be no news coverage of the first night or any description of the building and its promoters - which is very disappointing! From March 1913 onwards the Stourport Electric Theatre advertises fairly regularly and we learn that shows were presented twice nightly and at a Saturday afternoon matinee. Prices for adults were 3d and 6d children were admitted for 2d. The first manager to be identified in the adverts was Mr. Priestley Don.

Four venues had been showing films in Kidderminster since 1912, so on this basis Stourport had no special claim to fame - but - of course there may still be some substance to the stories of these film presentations in 1908. Perhaps someone in Stourport can tell us more."

Stourport Cinema Snippets



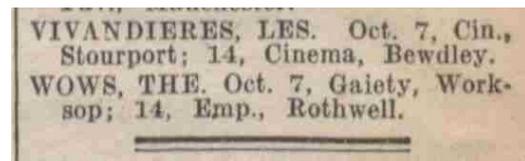
Birmingham Daily Gazette 16 September 1916



Birmingham Post 29 April

Parliamentary secretary to the
Manager
Alleged to Have Staged Robberies
Police who were called twice to a Stourport cinema to investigate robberies decided that they had been staged by the manager to cover deficiencies in his stock. It was alleged at Stourport yesterday.
Michael J. Hutchin (34), of Rosemary Road, Kidderminster, was fined £25 on each of the two charges of stealing £17 belonging to his employers and fraudulently converting to his own use £16 from the staff holiday fund. He was ordered to pay £7 13s. 6d. costs.
Other Charges
He was also charged with stealing cigarettes, confectionery and cash worth £192, obtaining £98 from the Sun Insurance Office, Ltd., Birmingham, by pretending that insured stock had been stolen, with attempting to obtain £93 by similar means and with falsification of a weekly stock sheet.
He elected to go for trial on those charges and the hearing was adjourned till to-morrow.
Mr. M. F. James, prosecuting, said that police went to the Haven Cinema in June after Hutchin reported that it had been broken into, but they found no sign of forcible entry except a broken lock. Hutchin subsequently claimed £93 from the firm's insurance company.
In November he again complained of a breaking-in and said that property and money worth £112 were missing, but detectives were not satisfied.

Birmingham Daily Post
14 January 1959



The Stage 10 October 1929

Recent planning applications and other matters

Planning application number **18/0160/FULL**

[Land north of Baldwin Road that borders the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal.](#)

Application is for 19 houses plus an access road. Clearance has now started.

Planning application number **18/0188/FULL**

[Squirrel Inn Areley Common](#)

Conversion of existing pub into two 2 bed and one 3 bed cottages, plus construction of one 3 bed detached dwelling, and two 2 bed detached bungalows.

Planning application number **Wyre Forest DC 18/0043/LPAC** [Pearl Lane, Areley Common](#)

Malvern Hills DC 17/01710/FUL [Pearl Lane, Areley Common](#)

Erection of 65 houses with access off Pearl Lane. The original application from Malvern Hills was approved in 2013 despite objections from Wyre Forest. Our understanding is therefore that the current applications are just renewals in view of the 5 year time lapse.

Tan Lane Pet Shop and Cottages

Members will have seen within the last month that the pet shop in Tan Lane is to close and the rumour is that the building is to be demolished and that the site sold to Bromford for additional parking for the School Gardens complex. This sees a long standing family business that has operating from buildings that date to the Tannery being forced to relocate. The parking issue was also highlighted commenting on the planning application.



The winning entry of The Stourport History Competition for Young People 2018



The Basin Ghost

by Rory Fudge (age 10)

It was a dark and misty Halloween night, lanterns were scattered around Stourport, like thistles in a field, some still burning brightly, waiting for a scream. Anyway I am the ghost of Stourport basin, you are probably wondering who I was when I actually lived, that will be revealed shortly. I live in the dark, murky waters of the canal basin next to the marvellous Tontine, waiting to scare...maybe you. Walking through the many rooms of The Tontine is quite fascinating, the ballroom is my favourite, the posh men dressed in their best clothes drinking wine and dining on expensive food, planning their next move in their business empire, they don't see me, not anymore.

Now it is time for some fun, after all it is Halloween. I glide swiftly down to the basin and walk past The Wharf, trading has now finished for the day and its quiet, still and feels extremely eerie. As I walk along the basins edge I notice the Bramble, it is still and calm on the water, and to my surprise no lights are on, I bend down and carefully untie the boat from its moorings and gently push it from the edge, I watch as it slowly floats away from its safe resting area. I laugh loudly, no one hears me, that's the way it is for me now, except for my friends, who are hosting a party. I must dash.

I make my way to to the party, tonight it is at the vinegar factory. Making my way towards the doors I can hear that the merriment had already begun. The band were playing and folks were dancing, everything was so perfect at that moment, I didn't feel quite so alone and haunted anymore. There is never any food or drink at our parties, as we are no longer mortal we cannot eat or drink, sometimes I long for the pleasure of drinking an ale or two, maybe to even feast on a steak pie. The smell of vinegar brewing takes me back to when I was alive, happy and living my life. Maybe it is now time that I told you who I really am.

My name is Henry Felton, I am 24 years old, I was a navvy for 9 long years, working hard building the walls of the canals, digging constantly in all weathers for my pay, the rooms we slept in were damp and depressing, but I was alive. As for James Brindley he didn't get his hands dirty like us, but I suppose he did work hard, planning and designing the way forward. I shall tell you how I met my end.

One stormy day the wind blew and the rain came down, it was about 10 times more powerful than a normal drizzle of rain. I had just started work and was already soaked to the bone, we had to drive the cows along the canal bottom to help push the clay down, the cows were slipping and I was worried, I felt uneasy. First I heard the cows panic and cry out, then the cows started running and knocked me back against the wall of the canal, the wall gave way and I can only remember the darkness. It took the men six hours to dig me out, but I was dead, suffocated under the mud, cold as ice. That is how I met my end, dead at 24.

I am the ghost of Stourport Basin, I cannot rest in heaven, the canal and river water runs through my bones, I can only leave this place when the river ceases to flow, until then I have no choice but to float through this town and wait for my peace. Maybe you'll come across a white shadow...it might be me!!

Bill Munn, former director of Thomas Vale



We were sad to hear of the death of Bill Munn, former director of Thomas Vale, in September 2017. Bill was very supportive and enthusiastic about the Stourport Civic Award. From the start in 1997, Thomas Vale sponsored the Civic Award for over 15 years and Bill would personally make the presentations.

Leaving his position as director at 63, following Thomas Vale's acquisition, Mr Munn joined Speller Metcalfe and took this opportunity to share his passion for a better industry. At Speller Metcalfe, his personality and devotion compelled others to listen and learn, streamlining company procedures and stabilising the company's growth.

Mr Munn also helped mentor and coach the younger generation to success through the innovation and excellence board, an initiative he introduced at the firm. His position as trustee for Speller Metcalfe's charity, Worcestershire Construction Apprenticeship Academy, and his introduction of the Knowledge Series, a series of CPD accredited events held in Birmingham, also demonstrated his commitment to developing skills within the industry and region.

The committee is considering renaming the award in his honour, The Bill Munn Stourport Civic Award.



Bill Munn (right) presenting the winner of the 2012 Stourport Civic Award

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018

The above regulation will replace the Data Protection act from 1998, which applies to the holding of personal data. Stourport Civic Society holds some personal details of its members and friends in a secure electronic format. Our policy has been reviewed and is compliant for our current membership. Only relevant emails will be sent out and when mass mailing takes place this will be using "Blind Carbon Copy", keeping your email address private. The person in charge of this information, our Data Controller is David More.

The wording on the new programme/membership form will include a privacy statement to comply with the regulation, which will need to be signed **by all new members. The new form must be completed by all members as they renew their subs after this date**

If you have any concerns or queries, please email David:- stourport.civic.soc@gmail.com or phone 01299 878718.



Stourport Civic Society Talks September 2018 – July 2019

7.30 pm at the Elizabeth Mills Centre, New Street, Stourport

13th September 2018

The Zeppelin Outrage

Ian Bott

A forgotten local incident in the First World War. An interesting saga.

11th October 2018

A Travelling Life for Me

Rob Gardener

The adventures of a Planning Inspector. A bit of a pantomime featuring lost files, freezing village halls, reluctant witnesses and pompous barristers!

8th November 2018

The Little Ships

Carole Clements

Little ships with a big story! A detailed account of the huge bravery of men with boats who rescued hundreds, during the second world war.

13th December 2018

National Service

Paul Harding

Paul tells us of how national service came about, how it affected young men's lives and much more. He brings interest and humour to his talk which comes alive with the telling.

10th January 2019

Festive Event

A social evening at a local restaurant.

14th February 2019

Henry VIII

Max Keen

Just for Valentine's Day! We hear from Max Keen of Henry VIII and his 6 wives. What more could you want?

14th March 2019

The Kidderminster Shuttle

Clive Joyce

Clive talks with humour and anecdotes of his memories as editor of our local paper.

11th April 2019

A Blackbird's Tail

Robert Barber

Robert, a member of Kidderminster Historical Society gives an illustrated talk on the life of one of Britain's favourite birds in the local area.

9th May 2019

AGM and Civic Award Presentation

13th June 2019

The Hartlebury Incinerator

Kate Stott

An informative talk about recycling and how the Hartlebury incinerator generates our electricity.

11th July 2019

Life in the 1950's

John Billingham

A Full On, Total Recall of life in the 1950's ...With lots of audience participation!

Entrance: £1.50 members, £3.00 non members (Light refreshments included)

All welcome