



Thursday, 14 May saw the presentation of the **2015 Stourport Civic Awards**. It was first introduced in 1995 and is offered to encourage and recognise projects which contribute to the quality of the environment of Stourport.

This year two Awards were presented by Will Scott, Civic Society President. Seven very varied entries were received.

The first Award went to the **Wyre Forest Crematorium**. Will Scott, representing the judging panel, said that *"the architects have succeeded in designing a building which is both functional and beautiful."*



Also *"considering the Crematorium to be a great example of how an inspirational new building can transform an area and provide a level of comfort to its users."*



**Bramble, the working boat** restored by volunteers, also received an award. They were represented by Eliza Botham of Stourport Forward and Jim Amos, one of the volunteers. Will Scott remarked *"the restoration of the working narrow boat, Bramble, is so*

*important to the industrial history of Stourport. The interior has been lovingly restored with all the necessary folding and pull-out features to make the most of the space. The sign-writing and painting were beautifully carried out."*

Two further entries received Commendations; the Black Star Pub for their recent refurbishment including the development of a canalside patio, and the Clock Gallery and Coffee House in New Street, where the renovation of this prominent historic building and ideal new use was welcomed.

## Civic Society Slide Collection Database

by Mike O'Shaughnessy



The Civic Society Slide collection held at the Archives has now been catalogued in an attempt to make finding a slide easier. In all 102 boxes of slides containing approximately 3000 slides have been catalogued and entered onto a computer data base. The master data base contains 704 entries and these have been further broken down into 11 categories and used to produce sub data bases to aid finding a particular slide. The sub data bases are: Basins, Buildings, Boats, Bridges, Canal, Carnival, People, River, Signs. Streets, Views and Miscellaneous. Where known, the date when photo was taken is also shown. A typical entry in the master data base appears as follows:

Slide box no.	Author	Title	Category	Notes
85	Anna Carter	River Severn Bridge	Bridges	View of bridge and details inc. old and new lamps

This entry will also appear in the "Bridges" sub data base.

The slides have been donated by many people including A. Carter, T. Baylis, G. Jackson, G. Neal, E. Verity, P. Annis and many more. Many of the slides were taken in the 1980's and 90's and show the ever changing face of Stourport. There are pictures of buildings that have now gone or changed significantly since they were taken. Photos of old steamers that once plied there trade on the Severn feature in the "Boats" section. There are also photos of old postcards showing the appearance of Stourport at the beginning of the 1900's.

The database is available to view at the archives on the society's computer.

The slides in boxes 1 to 21 have been digitised and can also be accessed using the "Scanned slides" data base which is also on the archive computer. This data base has the added advantage that, having selected a slide, by clicking on the "hyperlink" the slide can be viewed immediately on the computer screen.

There is also a large collection of slides of "Pub Signs" from all over the country donated by T. Baylis. These have not been catalogued.

Another database on the computer lists all the items that have been digitised by members of the society. These include digital images not in the slide collection, digitised documents and photographs. These can be accessed via the "Photo Archive" which contains 823 separate items.

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## **The Sorceress of Kidderminster** *Researched and written by Margaret Dallow*

Rebecca (Becky) Swan was born during 1771 in Kidderminster and was baptised in 1778 at the New Meeting House, the chapel at the bottom of Church Street. For over forty years Becky was a weaver, who lived as a tenant, later as owner of a cottage at the bottom of Comberton Hill.

*Cont . . . .*

## **The Sorceress of Kidderminster continued**

*by Margaret Dallow*

The site is now occupied by a roundabout in the ring road. The cottage had belonged to a Bombazine weaver, who had his weaving shed in the yard at the rear. From her late teens Becky was known in town for her knowledge of herbal medicines, and her ability to foretell the future.

When she retired, she set up as a herbalist and fortune teller, advertising her skills on a sign-board positioned outside her cottage. She travelled throughout the Black Country where she foretold the future. She also peddled her remedies, a cure for all maladies, and little charms, at all the markets and fairs. Her reputation as a peddler spread far and wide. Several of her clients wrote to her for advice on health matters and predictions. The money from her lucrative trade, was however spent in the local beer houses, her favourite tippie being gin. Becky became known as a sorcerer following her prophecy that the Magistrate who convicted her for 'obtaining money under false pretences' from a servant girl, had seen her spending a term in jail, predicted he would not be alive when she was released, with her prediction proved, she was treated with awe. Several unproved acts of witchcraft were added to her reputation.

Her fondness for animals, especially, black dogs and cats created tales of her supernatural powers. It was said these animals had originally been her human enemies who she had transformed into animal, and were locked in her cottage. It is reputed that on one of her evenings of drunkenness that contributed to her death one cold November night in 1850. Despite all efforts to rescue her, and save the cottage, she perished in the fire that totally destroyed the property. Although her remains were found amongst the ashes, no animal remains were found. This only increased the belief that she had indeed had supernatural powers, claiming she had spirited the animals up the chimney, before she died, having succumbed to the smoke and fire. The former Bombazine weaving shed was not destroyed. Despite the cottage being altered over the years, it was to survive until the 1960's, when it was demolished to make way for the ring road.

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## **Re-Dedication of Steatite's War Memorial**

*by Pauline Carroll*

Steatite and Porcelain Products (S&PP) started as a small company in Wandsworth (London) making rings and nozzles for the gas trade. In 1929 the firm moved to Stourport to a brand new factory. As it had trees and lawns at the front it was always known locally as the factory in the garden. Like all other companies Steatites' men were enlisted in WW2. Unfortunately 6 men did not return. ICI who in the early 1950's now owned the company erected a war memorial to remember them by. Today the firm is owned by Morgan Advanced Materials making industrial ceramics. In 2012 part of the land was sold where the war memorial stood which meant it had to be relocated. So on 30 April 2015 the war memorial was re-dedicated in its new place.

The service was led by Kidderminster Team Vicar Rev Jan Ashton whose husband works at the factory and she was assisted by Reverend Eva McIntyre the local parish priest. Lt Col Simon Halliday, Morgans Director of Strategic Programmes, who also serves in the Army Reserve laid a wreath on behalf of the company. The service was attended by senior directors, current and past employees from Stourport, representatives from the Royal British Legion and the Army Reserve and also relatives of the six men named on the war memorial.

*Cont . . . .*

## Re-Dedication of Steatite's War Memorial continued



The names of the six men are:



**Robert Burrows** – presumed dead when his aircraft failed to return to base after an attack over the North East coast of Sardinia on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1943. He was 23 years old.

**Albert Walter Farley** – lost at sea when his ship HMS Cornwall was hit by Japanese bombs on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1942. His name also appears on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. He was 25 years old.

**Charles Edward Hinton** – He was 25 when he died on 14 September 1942 and is buried in Tobruk War Cemetery, Libya.

**Thomas Moule** – Died on 9 April 1945 when his aircraft lost contact whilst flying low over the Bermuda Triangle and therefore his plane was reported lost. He was 24 years of age.

**Thomas Henry Vale** – RAF - his squad was based on the coast of North Africa. So during hot days the men used to land on the beach and cool down in the sea. Unfortunately Thomas was drowned on one such excursion.

**Robert Wilkes** - was just 21 when he died on 18 April and is recorded on the Ottawa Memorial, Canada.



## St Catherine and St Clement

*Researched and written by Margaret Dallow*

St Catherine Day was the first to be celebrated throughout Worcestershire, later joined by St Clement Day. Both born in Alexandria, Egypt.

St Clement (day celebrated on 23rd November), was in the year AD 100, tied to an anchor and drowned at sea. Legend tells angels made a coffin under the sea for his body. Each year under an exceptional low tide the tomb is revealed. As the anchor was made of metal, he became patron of blacksmiths, ousting Wayland, the Saxon God of smiths, who had previously replaced the Roman God, Vulcan. As smiths, are associated with both fire and metal, he was a popular Saint in the Black Country. For some unknown reason "clementing" ended during the early 1900s. This had involved the collecting of arms and associated the throwing of pennies and fruit. However, the tradition was revived 1961 with local schoolchildren scrambling to pick them up, but when the school closed in the mid 1980's the event stopped and finally he tradition of "clementing" ended. Shrines to St Clement were to be found throughout the Black Country.

The little martyred Princess Catherine died in AD 307, and during the 19th century on the 25th November, St Catherine Day was celebrated. Her name is frequently found on chapels and shrines throughout Worcestershire.

On 24th November, the eve of St Catherine Day, it was well known for ghostly activities in the two Worcestershire villages of Leigh and Little Shelsley. At Leigh Court, there appears two coaches, each pulled by four black horses. Their appearance is heralded by the tinkling of bells, as they circle the Court thirteen times, before heading towards the River Teme, where without a splash they drop into the river and disappear.

The Court House at Little Shelsley had been the residence of Lady Lightfoot, and the scene of her murder. At various times including the eve of St Catherine Day, she has been seen driving around the property in her coach. This then disappears through the wall of the house, from where she reappears shrieking and finally plunges into the moat.

Originally both Saints were celebrated by schoolchildren who were given the day off from their lessons. It became a popular custom for groups of children to wander through the Worcestershire countryside begging for apples whilst chanting a rhyme. Indulgent farmers entered in the spirit of the occasion. The abundance of apples orchards in Worcestershire with their autumn crops made this timely and fruitful celebration of the Saint's Days. Undaunted by inclement weather covering a wide area, the children remained in lively groups singing as they passed along the lanes. They chanted various verses of what became known as the "Cattin and Clement Carol".

*" From Astley, Areley, Dunley, Shrawley, Hartlebury, Elmley, Mitton, Torton, Titton,  
Charlton, Holt, Hallow and Grimley they come year by year  
Some of y'r apples and some of y'r beer"*

Charity, good humour and thanksgiving made these days to remember and even though there were times of hardship, they were celebrated and poverty was forgotten, as merriment prevailed.

*Cont . . . .*



## St Catherine Day and St Clement continued

by Margaret Dallow

The annual custom of celebrating Saints Catherine and Clement began in 1875 at Hartlebury on the eve of the 23rd November, when youths in the village visited every important house in the Parish. Each carrying a lantern made from a hollowed turnip creating a cut out face with eyes nose and mouth, inside was placed a candle which when lit created a strange face. The turnips were later replaced by pumpkins. At each house a youth from the group knocked on the front door, whoever opened that door was to hear a strange chanted verse.

*"Catherine and Clement come each year  
Some for your apples and some for your beer  
Some for Peter, some for Paul  
Some for the merry boys under your wall  
Peter was a good man  
For his sake give us some  
Now the worse, but some the best  
And pray God send your soul to rest  
Butler, butler fill the bowl  
Up the ladder and down the can  
Give us a red apple, and we'll be gone  
A plum, a cherry, a cup of perry, will soon make merry  
We go a cattie  
From Hinton to Titton  
From Hinton to Pilton, Hartlebury all three  
Then down to old Mitton, Areley, Astley and Shrawley  
Finish up at Holt, Hallow and Grimley  
A cattie we go "*

Although St Catherine Day was celebrated on 25th November, it is also associated with the celebrations on 5th November, Guy Fawkes Night, when the Catherine wheel forms part of the fireworks display. Legend tells that Catherine was beheaded, but it was milk, not blood, that poured from the wound, which led to her becoming Patron Saint of wet nurses.

According to legend she was a lace maker, and became their patron. When she heard of the plight of the lace makers she burnt her lace, allowing them to sell their work. It is reputed that lace makers in Nottinghamshire owe their trade to St Catherine. Legend tells that following the divorce of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, when living at Amptill Park, Bedfordshire, she taught local women the art of Spanish lace making, which became popular in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

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## Severn Trent Pipeline (Birmingham Resilience Project) *Update by Annette More*

Following meetings between Natural England and Severn Trent Water, the northern option for tunnelling under Wilden has been accepted subject to planning permission. This will avoid work close to the church and school. A two day public exhibition is planned for 13 & 14 November.

## Recognising Local History

by Will Scott



I first got involved in the affairs of the Stourport Civic Society nearly 35 years ago by Alfie Wood, who was the Chair of the Worcester City, Conservation Areas Advisory Committee. Alfie was instrumental in getting Worcester City Council up and running in all departments to do with the heritage of the built environment. His contacts with the Architectural and Planning professions and with English Heritage were very good. We devised an Architectural Design Award Scheme which was used as the basis of the Stourport Award and in similar way is used to recognise and reward those projects which have benefitted Stourport.

In the process of setting up this award, I met Anna Carter, subsequently Pauline and Richard Annis, and all of the Stourport stalwarts who work so very hard to protect and look after their lovely historic town.

In recognition of this association and friendship, Julia and I would like to create this Local History Award which will run alongside and between the Stourport Award, every two years.

The aims of the Stourport Local History award are ***"To encourage, recognise and reward interest in the local history of Stourport on Severn"***.

## Stourport Local History Award 2016

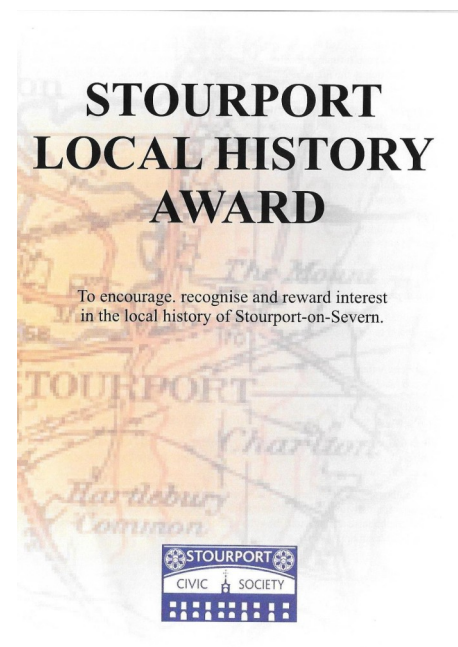
To encourage anyone to search out some aspect of Stourport's history, the Civic Society has created this biennial prize, to be known as the **Stourport Local History Award**.

It is open to anyone, amateur or professional, of any age, whether or not a member of the Civic Society, who has studied some particular piece of Stourport's past. Schools in particular are encouraged to take part. Examples of suitable topics would be family history, building history, notable persons, street names or any documentary research relating to Stourport.

The topic can be large or small and of any period. The submitted entry should be original and be the work of a single person or the collective work of a group, and have a maximum length of 5000 words.

Submitted works will be judged by a panel of assessors and an engraved plate will be presented to the winner at the AGM.

**Further details and entry forms are available from Pauline Annis. 01299 826383**



## Wyre Forest Local Plan Review



The District Council is preparing a new Local Plan to set out how new housing, employment and retail development will happen in the Wyre Forest District and where it will be located. It is anticipated that the new Local Plan will be adopted in late 2017.

The Society encourages all members to send in their comments. It is our chance to make Stourport's voice heard. There is much in it that is relevant to the town's future including the regeneration of brownfield sites (Baldwin Road and Parsons Chain site).

**Consultation on the Issues and Options Paper will take place between Tuesday 1st September and Friday 16th October 2015.** WFDC is encouraging responses to be made on-line via the District Council's interactive consultation system. However, you can submit your comments in any of the following ways:

**On-line** by following the links from our web-site: [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/localplanreview](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/localplanreview)

**A response form that can be posted in, is also available here.**

**By e-mail:** [Planning.policy@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:Planning.policy@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

**By post:** Planning Policy Team, Wyre Forest DC, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7WF

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### Transport to meetings

Now the nights are closing in, some members are finding it more difficult to attend and require a lift to and from our meetings. Are you able to help?

If you require a lift or are able to offer one please let Annette More know and she will coordinate car sharing arrangements.

She can be contacted on 01299 878718 or email: [davidemore@btinternet.com](mailto:davidemore@btinternet.com)