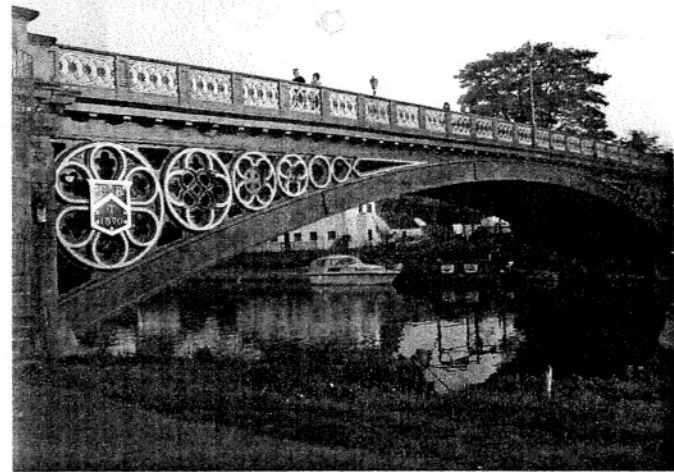
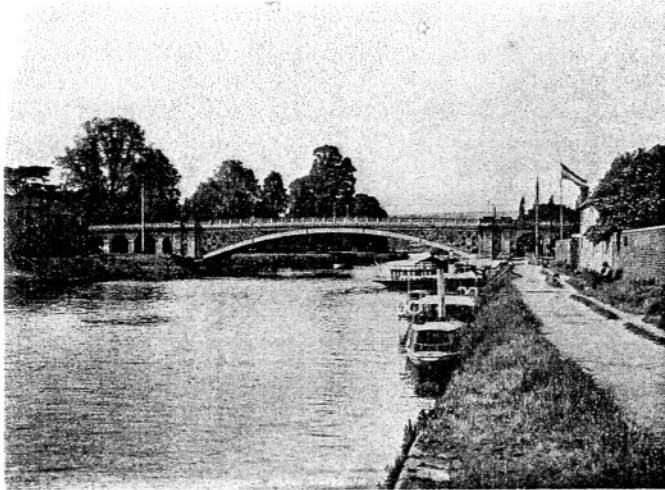


## EDWARD WILSON, 1821-1877

Edward Wilson was the designer of the current Stourport Bridge so let's have a look at some of his other achievements.



Born in Edinburgh in 1821 he became an architect and civil engineer. Prior to 1847 he had been Locomotive Superintendent of the Hull and Selby Railway then Locomotive Superintendent to the York and North Midland Railway (1847-53). Following this appointment, he was made Loco Superintendent to the Midland Great Western Railway of Ireland (1853-1856). He then became Engineer to the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway until 1860. When the latter railway amalgamated, with others, to form the West Midland Railway, he became its Chief Engineer (1860-1863) residing in Worcester.

Following the takeover of the West Midland by the GWR in 1863, he became Construction Engineer for the GWR's West Midland Division which included Stourport and the Severn Valley Line. Whilst at Worcester he is credited as designing the present Shrub Hill station, which when opened in 1865, had an overall glazed roof.

As well as being Engineer to the GWR, he also carried on his own business as a Consultant Engineer from his Westminster address in Deans Yard. Perhaps his finest work as a consultant was designing London's Liverpool Street Station opened by the Great Eastern Railway in 1874.

Apart from Stourport Bridge, his other (and last) major works in the area, which can still be seen today, are the Falling Sands Viaduct and Foley Park Tunnel, both built from plans he had drawn up as Engineer on the construction of the Kidderminster to Bewdley line which commenced in 1874. Unfortunately, as work was in progress, he died at Westminster on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1877 aged 56, just six months before the completion of the line in March 1878. The line eventually opened to passengers in June 1878 and is now part of the preserved Severn Valley Railway.

So next time you look at Stourport Bridge remember that it was designed by a railway engineer.....

( Written from information supplied by Keith Beddoes)

# *The Severnsiders: A marching Jazz Band*

Marching Jazz Bands have become less fashionable today than in the past but one Stourport band evokes many happy memories: the Severnsiders.

The origins of the Severnsiders go back to 1973 after the band competition during Stourport's carnival weekend. After the prize-giving to the various bands, Dick Rogers, the then Carnival Chairman, said it was a shame that Stourport did not have a marching band and asked for anyone who was interested in being involved to put their names forward. A meeting was subsequently held in the Walshes' Tenants' Hall and amongst those attending were three people who were to be stalwart supporters of the band: Doreen Westwood (Secretary), Margaret Phillips (Treasurer), Adrienne Robinson (Trainer). A significant number of parents and children also attended the meeting.

In the early days it was a question of "make do and mend" and outfits were made by parents and helpers. Many parents carried on working for the band even after their children had left. The following and help of committed parents was vital to the group. Some kazoos were borrowed from the Wollescote Toppers Band and the new group practised under the arches of Stourport Bridge. They did not have any drums so they concentrated on marching and discipline. Originally the band consisted of boys and girls but in the end it was all girls.

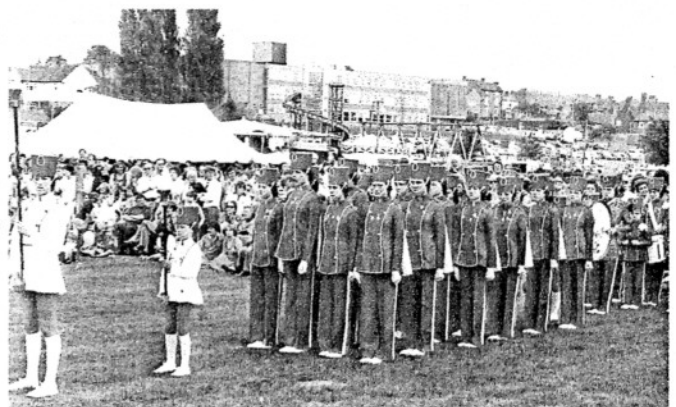
Raising funds was difficult but they did all they could to raise money to purchase equipment and uniforms and pay for coach hire. Various venues were available for practice: the Day Centre, a church hall and the field at Riverside Meadows (much to the annoyance of the residents). The first public appearance of the newly formed group, wearing shorts and tee-shirts, was at Wilden Primary School in 1974. The first leader was Diane Barlow. Successive leaders included Nora Holden, Carole Wilson and Deanne Conlan. The first mascots were Trudie Southern, Sharon Yarnold and Katie Seabright. The boys completed the drum section, with girls on everything else.

The first success of the Severnsiders was at Ossett, Yorkshire. At Stourport they won the Junior and Senior competition so became the West Midlands Champions. This was particularly pleasing as they were on home soil. The band visited Stourport's twin town of Villeneuve-le-Roi several times and managed to include a visit to Euro-Disney which was enjoyed by parents and children alike. They also visited Zegge, Holland where they befriended a Dutch Drum Corps who also attended Stourport Carnival.

The Severnsiders were members of the All Midland League of Marching Bands and this led to them competing at venues across the region. They won contests in Dudley, Lichfield, Telford, Tamworth, Dawley and Newport. As well as more local venues in Kidderminster, Worcester, Stourport and Bewdley. They became both West Midlands and West Yorkshire Champions.

Sadly, by the 1990's some of the volunteers had retired and band members moved on, and so the band folded. They have left behind an interesting photographic archive part of which has been saved on computer disc in the Civic Society archive.

Information supplied by Mrs Val Wilson.

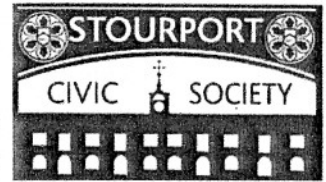


# Stourport on Severn Civic Society

2009—2010

- SEPTEMBER 10<sup>th</sup>: *The Secret Life of Wyre Forest Adders* - Sylvia Sheldon  
*An illustrated talk exploring the interesting but secret life of adders living in the Wyre Forest.*
- 30th September: There will be a visit to the Hurd Library and Bishop 's State Rooms at Hartlebury Castle.
- OCTOBER 15<sup>th</sup>: *Finger-prints and Criminal Detection* - Darren Riley  
*A regional finger-print expert will explain how finger-prints, and other body prints, are used in the detection of crime.*
- NOVEMBER 12<sup>th</sup>: *The Creation of a Porcelain Figurine* - Roger Green  
*An illustrated talk explaining the process of creating a figurine from clay model to finished article.*
- DECEMBER 10<sup>th</sup>: *Historic Garden Tools* - John and Anne Guest  
*A 'hands-on' session enabling you to see part of the Guests' collection of historic garden tools and learn more about their uses.*
- JANUARY 7<sup>th</sup>: *Annual Festive Event (members only)*  
*Our usual buffet with wine and some activities to test your local knowledge.*
- FEBRUARY 11<sup>th</sup>: *Meet the Planners*  
*Your opportunity to find out about future plans for Stourport and to question a representative of Wyre Forest planners.*
- MARCH 11<sup>th</sup>: *The Restoration of Droitwich Canal* - Ivor Kaplan  
*An illustrated talk outlining the main stages in the restoration of Droitwich Canal which has involved major tunnelling work underneath the A449.*
- APRIL 15<sup>th</sup>: *Uncovering a Hidden Landscape* - Adam Mindykowski  
*An illustrated talk based on the LiDAR survey of Wyre Forest which explores the prehistoric and historic land-use of Wyre Forest and surrounding area.*
- MAY 13<sup>th</sup>: *Annual General Meeting and Civic Award*
- JUNE 10<sup>th</sup>: *The Gunpowder Plot and Worcestershire* - John Sparry  
*An entertaining guide to the people and places in Worcestershire associated with the Guy Fawkes' Plot.*
- JULY 8<sup>th</sup>: *Idle Women* - Vince Williams  
*An illustrated talk exploring the role played by women in keeping the canal network moving during World War Two.*

## Workmen's Club Song



The following song appeared in a 1932 newspaper article under the heading, Local Talent. It was, apparently, written by Ted Barton, a popular entertainer at the Workmens Club. It was sung to the tune of "Galway Bay". You may recognise some names in it.

If you walk into the Workmen 's Club at Stourport

When it 's near the closing of the day

You can sit and watch the members playing snooker

And hear the prattle of the chess fiends as they play.

You can sit and read the " Stourport News " or " Tatler "

You can ponder while you drink a modest half

You can smile and say hello to fellow members

But watch your step and do not joke or laugh

If you 'd like to have a hand at solo

The sharks will take you on if you have " dough "

But watch for two named Bickerton and Millner

Or you 'll be well nigh broke before you know.

When the solo game is over, try the darts board

To see if you can get your laurels back,

But first of all you want to see who is playing.

And mind you don 't take on old Sam or Mac.

No doubt by now you 're feeling rather thirsty

So try one ere you toddle home to bed

Struggle through the crowded bar to the Steward

Who is known to all the members here as Fred.

He will serve you with a beer or " Double Diamond "

The latter drink you 'll find it has more pep

So don 't drink more than twelve or fourteen bottles

Or when you leave you 'll miss the blinkin ' step. "

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## Stourport Basin Restoration Nominated for National Award

The Stourport heritage restoration project has battled its way through to the final stage of a prestigious national competition, with public vote decided who will be the winner.

The National Lottery Awards are an annual search to find the UK 's favourite Lottery-funded projects and the Restoration of Stourport 's Canal Basins is in the running for the award for best heritage project.

It has to beat two other finalists in its category to collect prize money of £2,000 to spend on the project.

Chris Bailey, programme manager for Restoration of Stourport 's Canal Basins, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have reached the final of the awards and want to thank everyone who has supported us so far.

" We hope that people wihave voted for us to win so that our staff and volunteers receive the recognition they deserve for helping with this project that has restored the basins back to their former glory."

Stourport 's canal basins played a vital role in developing the UK 's canal transport system. The project enabled the restoration of canal structures such as locks and 28 buildings, and the landscaping of public areas.

The five canal basins that make up the docks where the narrow boats were loaded and unloaded have now been restored and turned into a major community resource and tourist attraction.

The awards have seven categories to reflect each area of Lottery funding, and all seven winners will be announced during a special star-studded BBC1 programme, The National Lottery: Big 7, broadcast live on September 5.

## *A quick word from the editor:*

Hopefully you will have noticed this newsletter looks slightly different to the old ones. The society has updated its logo and it was felt a redesign of the newsletter was needed. Hence where I come in. Most of you will know me as the one serving mulled wine at the festive event, cleaning plates and glasses at the end and setting up the laptop computer and projector at the meetings. The perfect person for the job? You decide!

Unfortunately from September I won't be around anymore. I have secured a place at the University of Exeter's Cornwall Campus which is just outside Falmouth. I will be starting a three year course studying Applied Geology. Shiny Rocks and fossils here I come!!

All that's left to say is I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter!!

Acting Editor: Stephen More

## *Searching for Monica Baldwin: Part Two*

Monica Baldwin entered an enclosed convent in Bruges in 1914 at the age of 21. It would appear that it was whilst she was at finishing school that the idea of becoming a nun first came to her. She said in *I Leaped Over the Wall* that :

*"I was at a convent school and just seventeen years old when the idea first came to me that I wanted to be a nun. "*

It is not unusual for teenage girls who attend convent schools to aspire to be nuns but it is an ambition which most of them grow out of when they become aware of what the wider world can offer. What is interesting in Monica's case is that she does not appear to have had any second thoughts about giving up a very privileged lifestyle for the austerities of a strict, enclosed, contemplative convent. The Finishing School which she had attended was attached to the convent and so Monica converted to Catholicism and entered the convent at 21. We don't know what her mother, Lucilla, felt about this but her cousin, William Sparrow, wrote warning her not to enter the convent:

*"Your end will be your Beginning. I commend these words, with those of the family motto, to your meditation. Taken together, they may suggest a course of action in years to come... "*

Little was he to realise that his words would influence Monica's actions nearly 30 years later. William Sparrow, sadly, died in action in October 1918 in the final days of World War One. Monica clearly remembered his words as many years later she gave her book the title of the family motto:

*Per Deum Meum Transilio Murum (By the help of my God I Leap over the Wall )*

( The origins of the Baldwin family motto are interesting. Thomas Baldwin of Diddlebury leaped to freedom from the Tower of London having been imprisoned for a plot to free Mary Queen of Scots c 1585 and his escape gave the family their motto )

Monica became a nun a few months before the invasion of Belgium in 1914 and she was to remain in the convent until October 1941. The many significant events which occurred in Europe and Britain during that period largely passed her by

[www.unlocking-stourports-past.co.uk](http://www.unlocking-stourports-past.co.uk)  
[www.stourporttown.co.uk/civic\\_society.htm](http://www.stourporttown.co.uk/civic_society.htm)

and when she did leave the convent it was to be an extremely traumatic experience for her.

In her later book she gives us vivid descriptions of the "conditioning" she underwent in order to become a successful nun:

*"You must give up your own tastes and habits and allow the Rule to mould you according to the pattern of the Order to which you belong."*

*"Instead of observing, remembering, deducing, reflecting, my whole energy was employed upon effacing from my memory every kind of impression almost before it was received."*

*"A nun's cell is so small that there is only just room for herself, a tiny chest-of-drawers and a prie-dieu, one chair, a minute folding table and a hard little bed."*

She described the rough, woollen sheets which were washed only once a year. Her cell had no washstand, or jug and basin and she became accustomed to bare boards and white-washed walls in what was a 300 year old building. The convent imposed a rule of total silence and the nuns were awakened at 4-45 am every day. Monica admitted that: "One of the things I found it hardest to get used to was the smallness of people's houses". Food was eaten with bread and a fork, and after being used to clean her greasy pewter plate, the bread had to be swallowed. No waste was allowed.

*"Solitude of spirit being essential to union with God, it is safeguarded by the rule of silence... The result of all this is, of course, to throw one back more and more upon oneself. Everything that would normally be learnt from other people - new words, new ideas, new ways of looking at things - is ruled out."*

We do not know what contact Monica had with her mother but Lucilla, died in 1927 at Littleton Hall, Shenfield, which appears to have been a nursing home. She was described on her death certificate as "late of Field House, Ashford, Middlesex". Her death resulted from complications following an accidental fall at Field House on 19<sup>th</sup> January which had caused a fractured femur. She died on 3 March, a few days short of her 67<sup>th</sup> birthday. Lucilla Baldwin clearly did not remarry after the untimely death of Monica's father and appears to have been living in residential care.

We do know that Monica had some contact with her family during this time as Stanley and Lucy Baldwin used to visit her en-route to holidays in France. She would later stay with them at Astley Hall after leaving the convent.

Monica finally left the convent on October 26 1941 after she was released from her vows by special dispensation from the Pope. She admits in her book that she had doubts about her religious vocation after the first ten years but it took another eighteen years to make the decision to leave. Her sister, Frieda, went to Bruges with a suitcase of clothes to fetch her away but what intrigues me is how they were able to make the journey from Belgium to Britain through occupied Europe at a time of war.

The escape from the convent was to open up a new life for Monica Baldwin but first she had to deal with the 28 years of "conditioning" she had received in the convent together with the many changes which had occurred in the outside world during that time.

To be continued..... © Pauline Annis 2009

Finally a quick plea for more information for our newsletter. Your memories of old Stourport, or those of other people, or photos and information you may find clearing out cupboards etc may be valuable to us. Speak to Mary Johnson.