

Stourport Heritage Port

In September 2023, Stourport became one of the country's first 10 heritage ports/harbours. Stourport Civic Society has taken a leading role alongside Stourport Forward and Stourport Town Council to establish Stourport Heritage Port.

At the national level, National Historic Ships UK, Historic England and the Maritime Heritage Trust have worked together to create Heritage Ports/Harbours as places of historic maritime significance. They retain original features, buildings and facilities important for supporting historic vessels and maritime skills, which help connect the public to the UK's maritime past.

'Heritage Harbour' is not a form of legal designation like listing a building or registering a park, but the status underlines the historic importance and potential of harbours. The concept seeks to safeguard and restore the infrastructure and skills necessary to support maritime heritage, including historic vessels, boatyards, basins and buildings.

Andrew Booton, Chair of Stourport Civic Society, said, "Stourport's basins and canal connections led to the creation of Stourport as a town. They are critical to our identity and our heritage. We hope to use our Heritage Port status to breathe new life into the town. We want to promote enjoyment of our heritage port through events, open days, activities and trails. We're also exploring how this can help to complete the heritage-led regeneration of the basin area through to Bridge Street."



Gill Edwards from Stourport forward proudly showing off the Heritage Ports Plaque

Talks Spring/ Summer 2024



8th February 2024

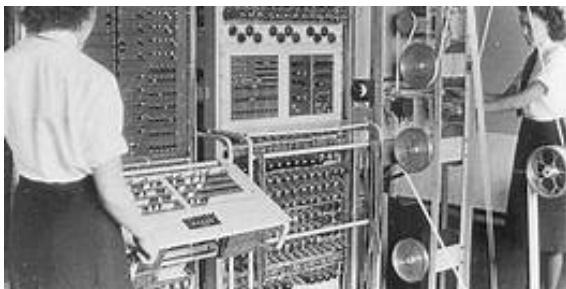
Poorly & Cowardly (recent excavations and The Civil War at Hartlebury Castle)

Doug Smith

14th March 2024

Mr Mitchell's quite wonderful wall on the Kidderminster Ring Road

Michael Loftus



11th April 2024

Bletchley Park, the other half of the story

Rod Broadbent

9th May 2024

Chairmans Address : Campaigns of Cheltenham

Andrew Booton

Saturday 18 May - Trip & guided walk of Cheltenham



13th June 2024

Great Witley church

Howard Robinson

11th July 2024 Meet the Planners & Summer Social

Berrows Journal 14 March 1868

by Ann Taylor



In this copy of the journal there was a long article entitled 'Church Affairs at Lower Mitton'.

This was a report of a vestry meeting held at Lower Mitton Church on Monday 9th March 1868. The subject was the rearrangement of the church for the greater convenience of worship and accommodation of the parishioners.

A circular containing the results of the committee's discussions had been issued. Those opposing the alterations issued a second circular, stating that until recently the Church was a Chapel of Ease to Kidderminster. Pews were allotted to various houses in the chapelry according to the requirements of the occupiers. The pews had constantly been sold and conveyed jointly with the houses to which they were allotted.

On the enlargement of the church in 1834 many were induced to advance much larger sums of money than they otherwise would have done on the understanding that the new pews would be their private property and they would be able to sell or let them as they felt disposed. Some of the pews had been bought and sold by the last two incumbents.

A few years previous Dr Cloughton, the Bishop of Rochester, previously vicar of Kidderminster, gave his opinion that the altering of the position of the pulpit or reading desk would be improper and that alterations or repairs of the pews was unnecessary and that there was room in the church for at least double of the number to attend.

The circular concluded by mentioning (in answer to the alleged assertion of the vicar that pew rents were illegal) that in neighbouring towns the rents were considered quite proper, and it asked if the distinction was, that in Lower Mitton the pew-rents go into the pockets of the laity, whilst in other towns they find their way into the pockets of the clergy.

Because of the large numbers attending the meeting it was adjourned from the Vestry to the Girls School Room. The Vicar, Reverend Gibbons, took the chair. Listed in the article are several figures of note including J Brinton and T.J Baldwin.

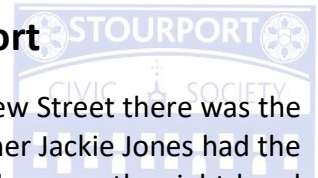
There was further discussion regarding the moving of the pulpit and reading desk and the buying and selling of pews.

On the Tuesday and Wednesday a poll took place at the Town Hall. The poll resulted as follows:

For the adoption of the report, embracing the alterations required by the Vicar 56, against 234. Leaving a majority of 178 in favour of no alterations being made.

This is part of a larger article that can be read online at the British Newspapers Archive site or the Hive Worcester.

A Miscellany of Muriel Smith's Recollections of Stourport



Where the Children's nursery is now, on the corner of Bridge Street and New Street there was the Market Hall selling vegetables and animal feed run by Freda Jones, her father Jackie Jones had the stables had the stables what is now Coopers Lane it was about halfway down on the right hand side, (now a garage) stored his animal feed and garden seeds etc in there, as where the Civic Centre is now that piece of land was allotments for many years there was stress gages in the Civic Centre as it was believed it had been built on 'shifting sands' but over the years it has settled.

The two houses on the left-hand side of New Street by the Civic Centre (in Martins Way) were built by Mr Bickerton gents' hairdresser in High Street.

Sarah Palmer lived in the house by the Bridge Inn, which is now the Severn Tandoori. Her parents owned some of the steamers on the river.

At last, the riverside at Stourport has had money spent on it, the pirate ship with a 'zip' wire is up and running, being well used. In fact, the riverside on the west side of the bridge is looking at its best with the trees all golden in colour. Work is also being done on the paddling pool. It very different from when it was decided to develop the boggy field it was. This was just after the war (1939-45) ash from the power station was used and topped with soil and grass seed down. Over the years the area was developed to what we have today.

Stourport is known for its basins, but the play area and the rest of riverside should be given more mention. People don't realise there are lots of free parking for the 'disabled' and is flat walking as you go past the putting green you will it is lower than the play area this is the real level of the field.

Coopers Lane was not named, it is named after the family who still lives in the detached house at the end. It was built by my father, Walter Howard Murray Cooper. A competition was held by the 'Stourport News' as to what to call it, as it was now used by the public as access to the riverside and car parks 'Coopers Lane' is on.

Mr Ron Ready, made the putting green by cutting many times using cart horses pulling a mower with their "huffs covered in sacking", this is why when the river floods this is the first part to flood.

Muriel was a valued member of our society until her death in 2022

Anyone Remember the old street names Stourport used to have?

The bottom of Gilgal used to be called Pall Mall.

Raven Street used to be called White Raven Street and then later, Pudding Bag Lane.

Mill Road used to be Jenny Hole, and Vernon Road was Wimswood Place.

Raven Street was previously Bennett Street and Aylesbury Street and Gilgal was Piccadilly.

Lichfield Street used to be Union Street and Stour Lane used to be Hell Lane.

Foundry Street used to be called Holborn Street, Foundry Road, and New Road whilst Mitton Street was Drury Lane.

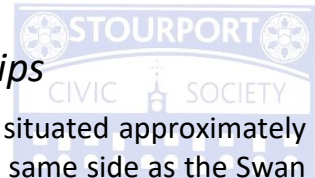
Parkes Passage used to be called Back Alley and Baldwin Road was called Farm Bed. Kingsway used to be Called Buggy Lane and Lion Hill used to be known as Tontine Road and Church Street.

Pall Mall, Piccadilly, Holborn and Drury Lane are City of London names, like Cheapside and Lombard Street today that date back to when Stourport was one of the most affluent and important towns in England.

Item from a Facebook post, author unknown

Larr's Toy Shop 1940s- 1950s

by Rita Phillips



This was a very small shop with one door and a window onto the street, situated approximately where the pedestrian crossing is now at the top of the high Street on the same side as the Swan Hotel.

I think the family lived above the shop and Mrs Larr was usually serving in the shop. My mother Vera, helped out in the shop two or three afternoons a week, and my sister and I called there after school to walk home with mum. I was fascinated on these afternoons, the window was filled with every small toy and game I could have imagined, as was the counter and walls inside the shop. Mrs Larr sometimes gave us a packet of transfers; I loved these and couldn't wait to get home and stick them on. Unfortunately, they didn't last on our skin very long. Mum sometimes bought us a little book, which was magical for me, as when a paintbrush, dipped in water, was brushed on the page a coloured picture would appear as if by magic. The counter was on the left-hand side of the shop and the door at the back led to the kitchen and living room One of mum's jobs was, when Mrs Larr said, " I think it's time for a brew Vera, " to make a cup of tea in the back kitchen. We were never allowed in there, so it always remained a mystery to me as to what it actually looked like.

I think it was Gladys who kept a big horse over Areley Kings way, and she used to ride into town along York Street to Parkes Passage where she tethered the horse behind the round brick wall at the end of the allotment garden, she was a keen gardener and worked on the allotment.

Businesses at 50 High Street Stourport on Severn, prior to 1948

As Sourced from various Directories

Year	Occupant	Business	Research Source
1948-9	H Larr		Midland Countries Directory
1940	Hubert Harry Larr	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1936	Hubert Harry Larr	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1934	ME Larr	Fancy Repositories	Copes Directory of Worcester
1932	Hubert Harry	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1928	Hubert Harry	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1924	Mrs Mary Elizabeth Larr	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1921	Mrs Mary Elizabeth Larr	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1919	Mrs Mary Elizabeth Larr	Fancy Repositories	Worcester and District Trade Directories
1916	Mrs Mary Elizabeth Larr	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1912	Mrs Mary Elizabeth Larr	Shopkeeper	Kelly's
1908	Henry Dutfield	Tripe Dresser	

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- The Co op has now closed and the new owner is marketing it as Tannery Retail Park with smaller retail outlets available, fronting onto the car park.
 - Demolition has started on the old Civic buildings. By yesterday the old fire station buildings had disappeared. The site is for sale and is zoned for housing!
 - York House, the old doctors surgery is still for sale. We have made the planning authority aware of all the missing lead flashing on the roof.



Two pictures of the Larr's shopfront, from the Harold Matthews collection 1957, referred to in the previous article by Rita Phillips

Stourport Swimming Baths

by Rita Phillips
CIVIC SOCIETY

The floating swimming bath was made by Henry Hudson, the boat builder of Shrewsbury. It floated on two barges braced together to give a water space of 55 feet by 16 feet, a number of changing cubicles and a doorway to the river for experienced swimmers. A sloping bottom gave a deep end upstream and a shallow end downstream. The finance was raised by the sale of 350 shares locally. Mrs. Moore, wife of Doctor Walter Moore of New Street, hoisted the flag at the opening ceremony on 13th August 1879. A water gala with swimming races across the river and back, and canoe races marked the opening celebrations in the evening. The first Superintendent of Stourport Swimming Bath was Sergeant Thomas Matthews, appointed because of his experience as a swimmer on the Irish sea coast, was swept away and drowned within six months of his arrival in Stourport in 1879 when the new bath broke away from its moorings and he attempted to recover the mooring chain in a punt. He left a wife and eight children. This was one of the many drowning tragedies in the Severn at Stourport.

Compiled from Stourport on Severn, in old picture postcards by T.J.S. Baylis



The Hobblers

by Rita Phillips

The aged boatmen had had a hard life working the canals, much time spent legging through tunnels, an arduous and extremely uncomfortable job. When they could no longer work, they sought a meal and a bed in return for helping at the locks, mooring boats and any odd jobs available. They were known as "Hobblers", as they hobbled about from place to place. The recipe for a Hobbler's meal below is a nod to them in their old age.

- 4 large or 6 small chicken breasts
- 2 good sized leeks, sliced
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 2 thick rashers of bacon cut into small pieces
- 6 medium mushrooms (wild Abrahams or Horst mushrooms)
- 2 tablespoons wheat flour
- 2 tablespoons porridge oats
- 1 tablespoon oil (or cooking fat)
- 2 teaspoons yeast extract
- Salt and pepper

Set oven at 350 °F or on Gas mark 4

The Hobbler's (continued)



by Rita Phillips

Mix flour, oatmeal and season will with salt and pepper. Coat chicken in the mixture, then brown in hot oil. Cook onions, leek, bacon and mushrooms for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Put in the breasts and remaining flour, stir well, add yeast extract and enough water to cover the chicken. Bring to the boil, cover, and cook until the chicken is tender (1½ to 2 hours).

Serves six hungry Hobbler's

Information collated from Favourite Boating Recipes

Easier Access to Historic Wills under new Government plans

...or harder work for historical research? by Ann Taylor

Below is an extract from the consultation document on the proposed "Digitalisation of Wills".

"Currently about 110 million physical documents are stored costing taxpayers £4.5 million per year. The consultation is seeking views on keeping hard copies for about 25 years, in recognition of their sentimental value to families, while saving them digitally longer term."

"Where wills belong to notable individuals or have significant historical interest the physical copies would remain preserved. The wills of Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens and Diana, Princess of Wales are among those currently stored at the Ministry of Justice facility in Birmingham."

The concerns of myself and other members of History Groups is that once the paper copies of wills are destroyed there is no way back. Digitisation has its place, but unless this is very strictly monitored we could lose some very valuable information for historians. Digital copies do not last forever and need to be regularly updated to keep up with modern technology. How many of us have information on old storage facilities? You only have to see how video tapes, cassette tapes and C.D's have been replaced by more up to date developments. It is stated that it takes approximately four and a half million pounds a year to store these wills, but I ask what is the cost of scanning all these wills and keeping the technology up to date?



Who decides which wills are to be kept? Will the next step be for the information to be put in spreadsheet form and the pleasure of seeing the old handwriting and terminology be lost.

Please take a look at the consultation and if you agree to the concerns of mine and many other historical groups please sign the petition, using the links below. **Unfortunately, this is only available to those with online computer access.**

[Ministry of Justice - Digitalise Wills Consultation closes 23 February 2024](#)

[Online petition against destruction of paper wills after 25 years](#)

Burlish Top Nature Reserve

by *David More*



We are regular visitors to Burlish Top and whilst walking the dog recently we came upon this wonderful bit of Hedge Laying. The total length must be nearly 100 metres and it is very high quality. We can appreciate the time and skill involved having done a similar but more modest project on the Leapgate, Old Railway Line in Stourport.

Top marks to Wyre Forest District Council Rangers who manage the site.



They have also cleared the site where , in World War II American General Patton gave his legendary “blood and guts” speech at the site in 1944.

They have also replaced the wobbly stile with a new kissing gate giving a great view over the old golf course, now part of nature reserve.

