

Diary Dates

Saturday 17 March 2018

Friends Volunteer Showcase and Open Day

An opportunity to find out about the fascinating and varied projects carried out by volunteers at Shropshire Archives.

10.00am - 1.00pm Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ
Cost £5. See leaflet for further details

Tuesday 22 May 2018

Visit to Hardwick Hall near Ellesmere

Hardwick Hall is a grand Grade II * listed Georgian Hall of three floors and a cellar. It was built by John Kynaston who had inherited the land in 1693 and finished the house before his death in 1733.

2.15pm Hardwick Hall, near Ellesmere, SY12 9HG.
Approach from the A495

Tuesday 12 June 2018

Friends AGM at the Flax Mill Maltings

The Friends' AGM and a talk by Penny Ward on the Flax Mill and its renovation followed by a guided tour of the site including the canal and former industrial buildings.

6.30pm Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, Spring Gardens, Shrewsbury, SY1 2SX

Thursday 19 July 2018

Visit to Harper Adams University library and archives, Newport

A guided tour of the main campus and visit to the library and archives

2.00pm Harper Adams University, Newport, TF10 8NB

Saturday 20 October 2018

World War One Showcase Day

10.00am - 4.00pm Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6ND

Tuesday afternoons, 18 September - 23 October 2018

Palaeography Course

Do you want to read old handwriting? Our experienced tutor, Helen Haynes, will use a variety of documents from collections at Shropshire Archives to help you improve your skills

Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ

More details coming soon - to reserve a place, email museumeducation@shropshire.gov.uk

News Extra...

Do you have any stories to tell about Shropshire's history or have any news about Shropshire Archives? If you have, the editor is waiting to hear from you now. The contact details are below and photographs are always welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The newsletter of the Friends of Shropshire Archives is edited by Andrew Pattison and designed by Nat Stevenson, Shropshire Archives' Image Services.

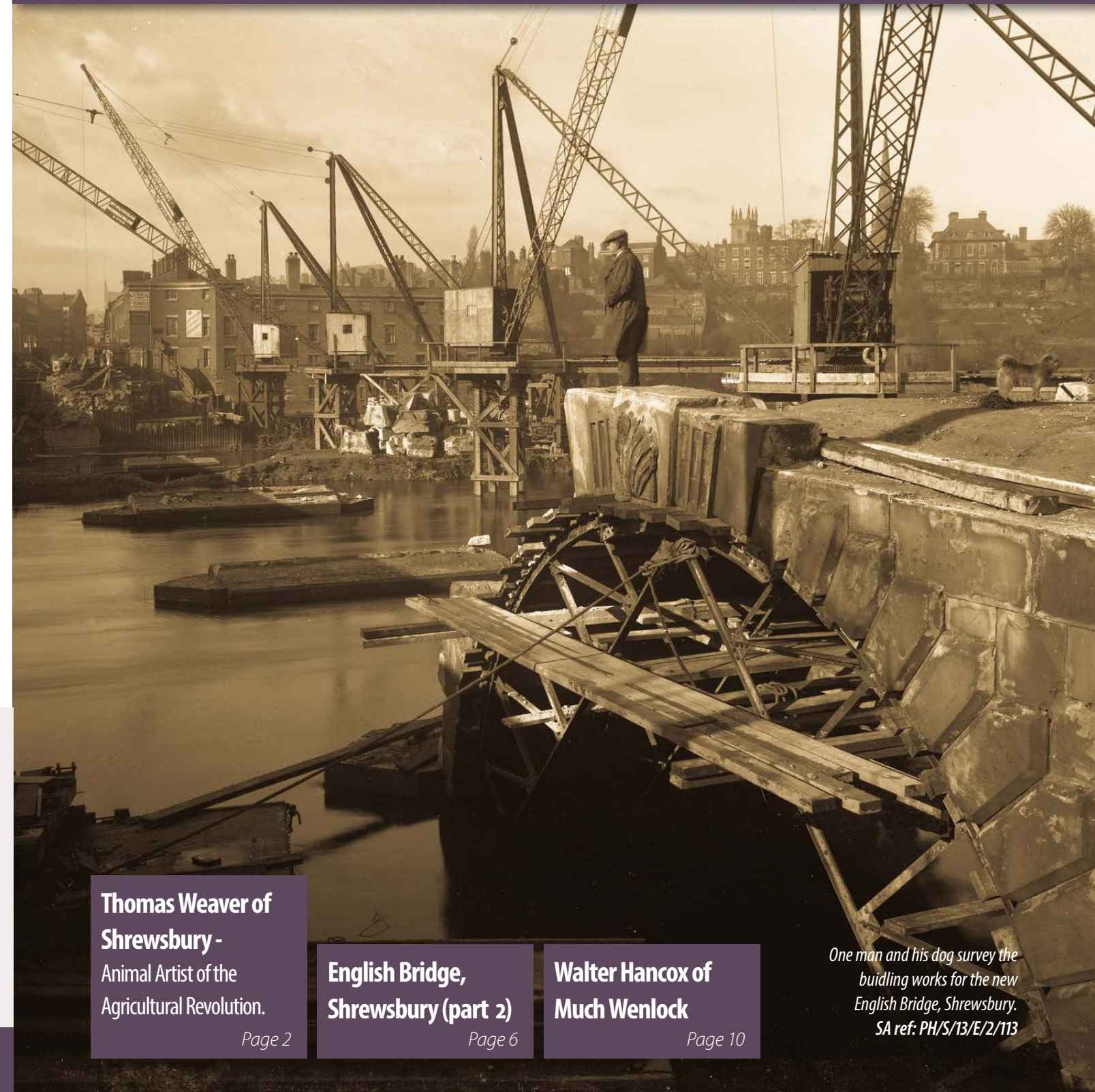
There are three issues per year, paid for by the Friends. The contents are provided by friends and well-wishers. If you would like to join the contributors, please contact the editor at apattison@clara.net

DISCLAIMER: We have made every effort to ensure that the information in this publication is correct at the time of printing. We cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions.



Salopian Recorder

The newsletter of the Friends of Shropshire Archives,
gateway to the history of Shropshire and Telford



Thomas Weaver of Shrewsbury -

Animal Artist of the
Agricultural Revolution.

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English Bridge, Shrewsbury (part 2)

Page 6

Walter Hancox of Much Wenlock

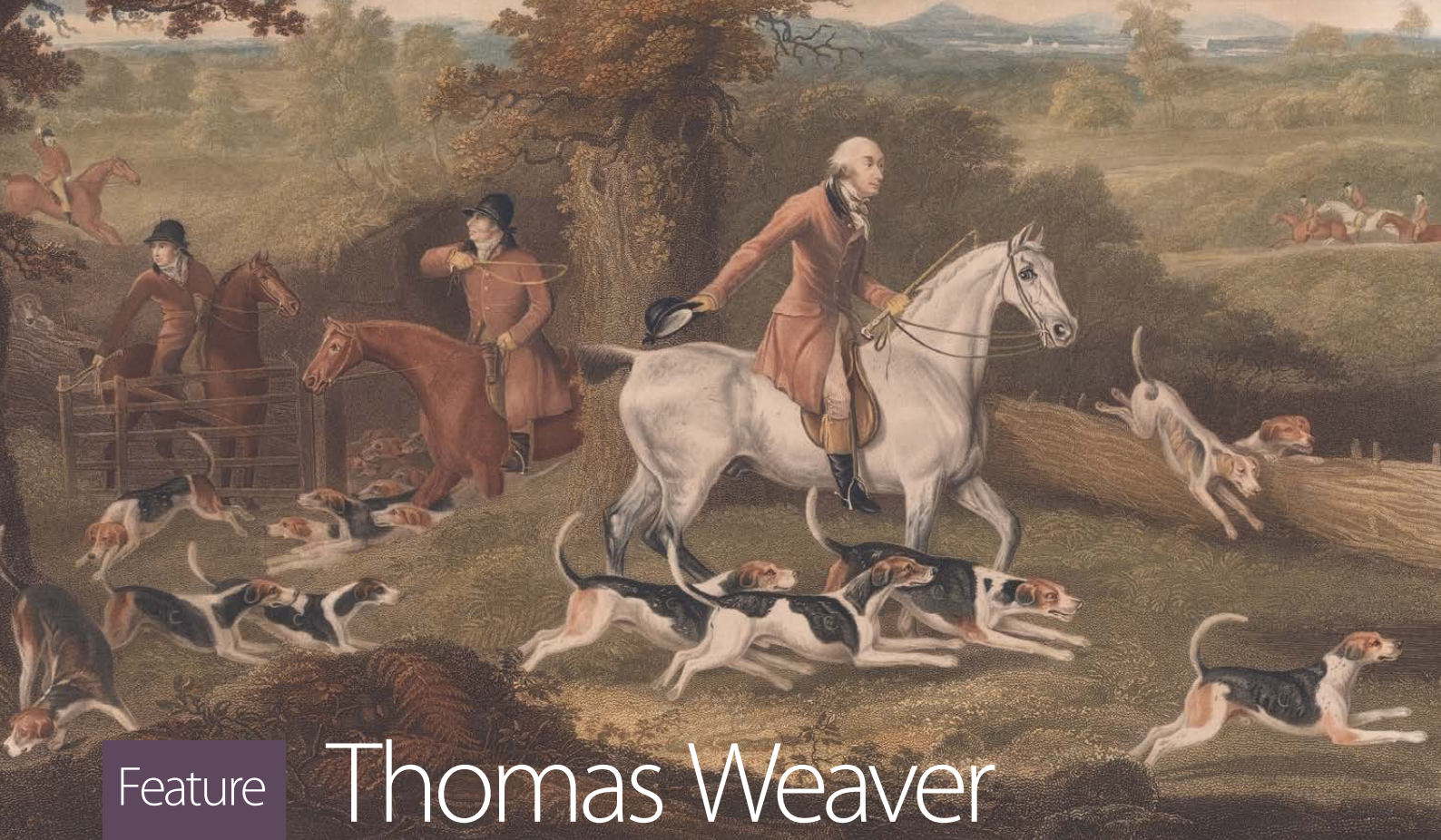
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*One man and his dog survey the building works for the new English Bridge, Shrewsbury.
SA ref: PH/S/13/E/2/113*

Contact... For further details or to pass on your comments, please contact:

Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ • Tel: **0345 6789096**

Email: archives@shropshire.gov.uk • Website: www.shropshirearchives.org.uk



Feature

Lawrence Weaver

Thomas Weaver of Shrewsbury –

Animal Artist of the Agricultural Revolution



Above: Self portrait
of Thomas Weaver.
Private Collection.

Thomas Weaver was a painter of sporting and farm animals. Born in Worthen in the winter of 1774, he established a studio in Shrewsbury, where he painted *'pedigree animals for pedigree people'*. He married a clergyman's daughter, had eight children and died in Lancashire in 1844. His customers and patrons included many of the gentry and nobility of Shropshire and its surrounding counties. His best paintings were turned into prints.

This was about all I knew about Thomas Weaver until I inherited a leather-bound collection of his papers, and an ancient family tree purporting to trace the ancestry of the Weavers back to the thirteenth century. Alongside the name of my great, great, great, great uncle were pencilled the words *'The Painter'*. Intrigued, I started working my way through 192 documents, including 160 letters, as well as newspaper cuttings, notices of agricultural meetings and art exhibitions, pamphlets about art and medical affairs, farming disputes and new educational institutions; poems, stories and jokes; copies of reviews of plays, books and public lectures; bills, invoices, receipts and bank statements; advertisements, obituaries, epitaphs and a prescription. They had been pasted into a scrapbook, in no particular order at some unknown time by an anonymous hand.

Most letters had dates and the address of the writer, and of the recipient, and all were written in longhand. Many were addressed simply to *'Mr Weaver, Artist, Shrewsbury'*, delivered to the Post Office in Wyle Cop, next door to the Excise Office where his father worked. His mother, Ann, was the daughter of John Lawrence of Shelve in the Stiperstones, where he owned the Bog lead mine. As a bachelor Weaver lodged above the shop of Mr Brayne in Mardol until 1811, when he married Susannah Pyefinch, daughter of the Rector of Westbury, and the newlyweds settled in St John's Hill next to the offices of the Shrewsbury Chronicle. Here he had a studio behind their terrace house, reached by a narrow passageway from the street along which horses could be led to have their portraits painted. Weaver developed a mutually convenient relationship with his neighbour Thomas Donaldson, framer and gilder, whose work can be seen in Attingham and other Shropshire country houses. Together they supplied the local gentry with gilt-framed paintings of their favourite mares, hunters or dogs, at five guineas for one animal, ten guineas for two.

Thomas Weaver travelled all over the country. The map of his itineraries plots the networks of animal breeders, country landowners, farmers, family and friends amongst whom he moved, from country house to house, along threads of kinship, marriage, business, politics and patronage that wove together the gentry and nobility.

His best pictures achieve an accurate likeness softened by humour, charm and luminous skies.

These included many of the leading agricultural improvers of his time, including Robert Bakewell and Thomas Coke, and the Earls of Bedford, Shrewsbury, Powis and Chesterfield. Many of his paintings were engraved by the leading London engravers, William Ward and Charles Turner. Some, such as John Corbet and his Warwickshire Fox-Hounds, went through many editions, and found their way onto the walls of sportsmen, farmers, agriculturalists and wealthy

landowners, where they can still be seen – at Attingham Hall, Weston Park, Calke Abbey, Shugborough and Holkham. Others can now be found in Tate Britain and the Yale Centre for British Art in New Haven, USA, in the Walker Gallery in Liverpool, and the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading.

Weaver was a contemporary of Jane Austen, John Constable and J.M.W. Turner, alongside whom he exhibited at the Royal Academy in London. He became friends with many members of the *'Shropshire Enlightenment'*, his sons went to Shrewsbury School with Charles Darwin, and were treated when ill by his father, Dr Robert Darwin, and by William Clement, whose portrait he did. His correspondence spans forty-four years, from 1798 to 1842, peaking during the Regency era. His letters capture provincial Shrewsbury during the eclipse of its wool trade by the ironworks of Coalbrookdale, and mercantile Liverpool as it grew to be Britain's greatest seaport. Many concern the tasks of satisfying patrons, framing and dispatching pictures, liaising with agents and engravers, securing subscribers for prints, travelling and exhibiting. Penned personally by peers, such as Earl Spencer of Althorp signing up for a print, or Viscount Anson of Shugborough settling his bills, they are enlivened by news of Napoleon at Calais poised to invade, or the Peterloo Massacre. MPs, such as Sir

Main picture, opposite page: John Corbet and his Warwickshire foxhounds. 'Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection'.

Below: Two Prize Rams. Christopher Davenport Jones.



George Harpur Crewe of Calke Abbey, issue instructions for his favoured format for a portrait of a pet pony, and breeders, such as Charles Colling, report on the progress of the 'White Heifer that travelled'.



Above: *The Bull Comet. Public domain. TW painted five versions of this bull.*

Weaver painted hundreds of animal portraits. They range from images of a single animal, sometimes attended by a shepherd or cowman, to conversation pieces in which proud breeders are portrayed alongside their favourite livestock in scenes choreographed to display their meatiest and most potent parts.

His equestrian portraits show progression: from a static 'horse in a landscape' with or without a groom, to huntsmen in scarlet with foxhounds in full cry, and racehorses with jockeys decorated in the colours of their wealthy owners. Framed by delicate foliage and luminous skies, well-bred livestock occupy landscapes that display the latest agrarian practices against idealised backgrounds made recognisable by a church spire, country house or a familiar landmark like the Wrekin. His best pictures achieve an accurate likeness softened by humour, charm and luminous skies. Aspiring in mid-career to be a fine artist, Weaver depicted horses in the romantic style of James Ward or Théodore Géricault.

Before stud, stock and flock books, pictures of livestock were vital visual pedigrees, and animal portraiture demanded verisimilitude and artifice, merging dispassionate observation with sentimental anthropomorphism. Animal breeding, field sports and portraiture went hand in hand, and Weaver's animals have an animated charm, with expressions of doleful docility, and his pictures are at once 'natural', 'representative' and 'contrived', aiming to create a likeness and project the ideals of 'pedigree'. Thomas Weaver is remembered by one critic as 'possibly the greatest animal artist of the English Revolution'.

My book, *Painter of Pedigree*, is the story of this accomplished painter during the 'age of agricultural improvement' — engaging in it, witnessing it and recording it. It takes us into a world at the interface of art, advertising and agriculture, and, written for the general reader, this book will appeal to lovers of sporting art, animal portraiture, and historians of Georgian country house life, farming and agriculture. **'Painter of Pedigree – Thomas Weaver of Shrewsbury: Animal Artist of the Agricultural Revolution'** is available in all major bookshops and online retailers or direct from www.unicornpublishing.org.

I would like to acknowledge the kind assistance of the staff of Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery, and the editor of the Salopian Recorder. ■



From the Chair

Jill Ming

Above: *The Friends on their guided walk of Bridgnorth.*

It seems a long time ago now, but our final summer visit of 2017 was a guided walk of Bridgnorth by Blue Badge Guide Dorothy Nicholle. We began at the Castle at the south end of town and made our way via many interesting buildings and some lovely views to St Leonard's Church at the north end. Dorothy is a fount of stories and local history knowledge which we all enjoyed. The afternoon concluded in our usual style with a cream tea at the Old Mill Antiques Tea Room.

History Day

With considerable planning and a huge amount of help and support from The Bishop's Castle & Area Heritage Forum, we hosted the Bishop's Castle History Day on 30 September. We were rewarded for our efforts by an audience of over 80 people, some excellent talks on subjects as diverse as Sir Albert Howard, community archaeology, the railway, and Myndtown Church. Over a dozen local history groups mounted a fine exhibition of their work and interests, and during the afternoon we enjoyed tours of the town and its museums and the

very popular Three Tuns Brewery. My particular thanks to Patricia and Tony Theobald for their help in organising the event.

Annual Lecture

In November we were delighted to welcome Dr Roger Bruton to deliver our annual lecture on 'The Road to Enlightenment: Shropshire 1750-1830'. Roger's lecture was a comprehensive guide to the effect on Shropshire of improvements in transport and communications, industrial development and agricultural improvements. The overarching theme was the sharing of ideas, knowledge and experience in the 'enlightenment' spirit of the age. After a Q&A session, coffee was served, and the audience was invited to view original documents relating to the lecture.

Gift

One of the functions of the Friends is to provide funding for items that cannot be purchased



Many thanks from Nat Stevenson, Reprographics Officer at Shropshire Archives, to the Friends of Shropshire Archives for their extremely generous donation of a new computer. It is very much appreciated!

within Shropshire Archives' budget. We were particularly glad to be able to donate £2129.58 to buy a much-needed new computer for Nat Stevenson, who among his many responsibilities at the Archives, designs and produces this newsletter, event flyers and publicity material.

Volunteer showcase

Our next event will be a Volunteer Showcase on Saturday, 17 March which will be an excellent opportunity to hear about the amazing work done by volunteers at Shropshire Archives. Their work is largely unseen by most researchers and deserves a wider audience. Come along and see and hear what they do. ■

A selection of new accessions

- Church Stretton Probus Club records 1969-2016 **9247**
- Shropshire Caledonian Society records 1923-2016 **9298**
- Survey of Badger Hall estate 1796 **9358**
- Adamson Alliance and AB Cranes of Telford drawings mid-late 20th C **9367**
- Westbury St Mary's C of E School records 1864 - early 20th C **9381**
- Much Wenlock Borough records 1901-1952 **9382**
- Wombridge and Wrockwardine Wood Schools records 1846-1962 **9389**

Feature

Anthony L Price

English Bridge, Shrewsbury - Part 2

After many years of debate, dismantling of John Gwynn's bridge commenced on 21 August 1925. The plan was to build a wooden trestle bridge adjoining the existing bridge, as a temporary measure, in order to keep the traffic flowing into the town and along the A5, during the rebuild. Also, coffer dams were built around the cutwaters, so that the arches could be removed to the river bed. It was found that the original arch foundations were built on oak baulks which had not moved or rotted since they were installed in the 1760's. Also found was the original foundation stone, with souvenir coins placed there from the reign of King George III.

60% of the £86,000 cost of the rebuild was funded by the UK Government, with the balance coming from the Borough and the County. At the time the government was upgrading the A5 throughout Shropshire, which included replacing John Gwynn's other bridge at Atcham, which was completed a year after the English Bridge opened. There was much pride that the

bridge had been funded locally, and had never been subject to a toll. There was national interest in the project, with many newspapers recording the progress, including the London Illustrated News and The Times, which ran with Mallinson photographs. The Gloucestershire Newspapers ran regular reports on the rebuilding, as they were lobbying for a similar project in Gloucester.

The plan was to code all the sandstone blocks with letters and numbers, right down to the foundations. Stones were moved by trucks, on a newly laid, purpose built railway track, to a storage yard by the Abbey and Abbey Foregate Station, in order for them to be used in the rebuilding of the bridge. At the same time the opportunity was taken to replace damaged stones. The stones were lifted by four or five 'electric' cranes which were positioned in the river. As part of the rebuilding, the new foundations were made of concrete, together with the saddles between the arches. Also a new foundation stone was laid with coins and papers underneath.

On 23rd October 1925, while the dismantling was taking place, there was one of the regular River Severn floods, which washed away one of the central arches, causing men who were working on the bridge at the time to jump clear.¹ The Edinburgh Evening News reported that Mr WA Robinson of Trench was charged with the manslaughter of P.C. Woolham, who was on point duty at the temporary English Bridge. The paper reported, 'The car, after being called on, hit the constable in the back'.²

The Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) was asked to open the rebuilt bridge on 26th October 1927. All the preparations were made, including the production of a souvenir brochure, at a cost of 1/- (5p). However, the 1st Marquis of Cambridge died on the 23th October 1927, just three days before the due opening. He was the younger brother of Queen Mary, the wife of King George V, and uncle of the Prince of Wales. The Royal Court went into mourning and the opening was cancelled.

Main image: John Gwynn's English Bridge from Carline Fields as it was in 1924, before work on the current bridge commenced. Shropshire Archives ref: PH/S/13/E/2/11



Stoneyard by the Abbey Foregate station where the stones were moved to be reused in the new bridge. Shropshire Archives ref: PH/S/13/A/5/338



A collapsed arch caused by flood damage during the dismantling of the old bridge on 23 October 1925, with the temporary wooden trestle bridge to the right. Shropshire Archives ref: PH/S/13/E/2/60

The Marquis had been a Shropshire resident, living at Shotton Hall, Harmer Hill, near Shrewsbury. Queen Mary had made several private visits to her brother, and had taken the opportunity to visit antique shops in Shrewsbury. On one of these visits, on 13th August 1927, she took the opportunity to be driven over the partly completed bridge, having followed the rebuilding with interest. This visit led to a report that Queen Mary was the first woman to be driven over the bridge.

These events caused some discrepancies in the recording of the opening date. AW Ward, in his book 'Short History of the English Bridge' recorded that the Bridge was opened by Queen Mary on 13th August 1927. This was also reported in the Monmouthshire Beacon newspaper, of 24th August 1928. Looking back it is possible the town felt deprived of a royal opening of their bridge, and history was rewritten, with the Queen's drive on the bridge being seen as the opening.

The Marquis' funeral cortège, watched by a large crowd, including the mayor, travelled over the new bridge one day after the official opening should have taken place. The cortège conveying the body to the railway station halted on the English Bridge for prayers and a small ceremony.³ The newspapers reported that the body was transported to Windsor by train, but there is in the Archives a photograph of the cortege passing Lord Hill's Column, going down the London Road.

AW Ward, the Borough Engineer who oversaw the project, gave lectures and wrote

References

- 1. Lincolnshire Echo, 23/10/1925
- 2. Edinburgh Evening News, 22/6/1926
- 3. Aberdeen Press and Journal, 27/10/1927, and Dundee Evening Telegraph

Dismantling old pier
No 5. Shropshire
Archives ref:
PH/S/13/E/2/100



Reconstruction of the
bridge in progress,
with the temporary
trestle bridge to the
right. Shropshire
Archives ref:
PH/S/13/E/2/119



Queen Mary traversing
the partly completed
English Bridge by car
on 13 August 1927.
Shropshire Archives
ref: PH/S/13/E/2/135



a small book entitled 'Short History of the English Bridge', which was published by the Shrewsbury Chronicle, and sold for 1d, on behalf of the poppy appeal in 1941.

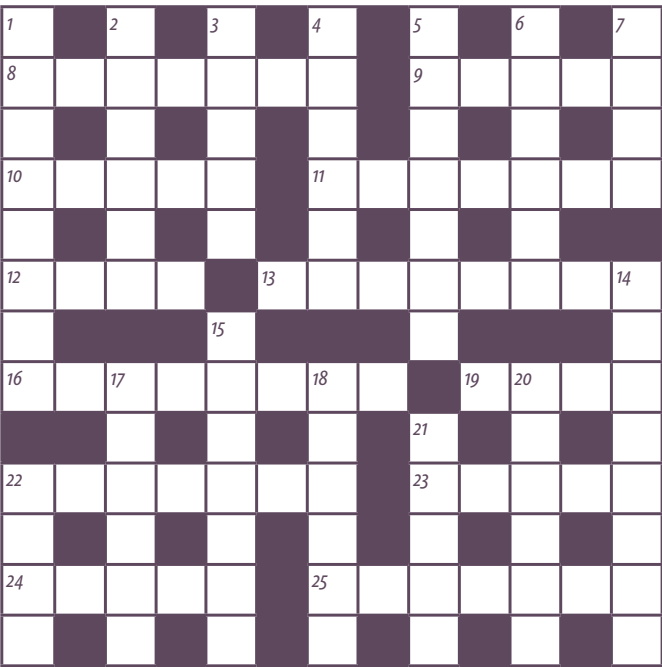
Much of the foregoing has come from the extensive records about the English Bridge held in the Shropshire Archives and newspapers of the day.

Below: Funeral cortège
of the Marquis of
Cambridge, watched
by a large crowd.
Shropshire Archives
ref: PH/S/13/E/2/136



New arches under construction at the Wyle Cop end of
English Bridge. Shropshire Archives ref: PH/S/13/E/2/110

Shropshire Themed
Prize Crossword

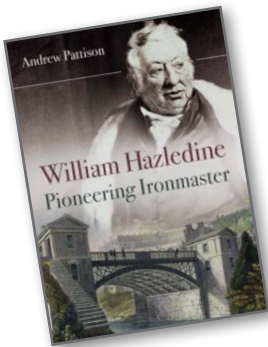


Across

- 8. One ancient bridge in Shrewsbury... (7)
- 9. ...the other (5)
- 10. To have being (5)
- 11. Seen on a gravestone (7)
- 12. Only one of these a week in the old days! (4)
- 13. What we all have to be to decide how much tax to pay (8)
- 16. What we hope to be when a job's well done! (8)
- 19. Robert, architect (4)
- 22. A suffragette carried one (7)
- 23. Horse manure makes this (5)
- 24. Old time officer who managed fields or commons (5)
- 25. I wish I could remember! (7)

Down

- 1. Christmas month (8)
- 2. Thinks highly of himself (6)
- 3. Used to be only recorded in parish registers (5)
- 4. STFC's pet name! (6)
- 5. Longed and hoped for (7)
- 6. Every time (6)
- 7. Old ruler of Persia (4)
- 14. William I's famous book (8)
- 15. The old flat iron dealt with these! (7)
- 17. Shropshire painter or cloth worker (6)
- 18. Make attractive or lovable (6)
- 20. Rich silken fabric (6)
- 21. Old name for leg (5)
- 22. Attingham, for example (4)



The first correct entry sent to Andrew Pattison, 77 London Road, Shrewsbury SY2 6PQ or apattison@clara.net by February 28th will get a copy of his new book William Hazledine, Pioneering Ironmaster.



Feature

John Ravenscroft

A sketch by Stanley Leighton showing High Ercall Hall, Wellington, dated 26 October 1892. *Shropshire Archives ref: 6805/5*

Walter Hancox of Much Wenlock

Leafing through Pevsner, *The Buildings of England – Shropshire* (as you do), I came across a reference to the master mason who worked on High Ercall and probably Conover Halls. I was attracted to a footnote at page 30 which quotes a letter from Sir Francis Newport, who had High Ercall Hall built. The letter, dated November 1595, was addressed to the Bailiffs of Shrewsbury and in it he says (original punctuation and spelling):

“Whereas I am enformed that you intend to build a new market house of stone in that towne and so go forward with the work next spring, I pray you let mee comende a Mason of approved skylle and honesty, one Walter Hancock, unto yo for the doing thereof... I have great cause to make tryall of workmen ... and ... can well write unto you ... that you cannot match the man in these parts (with any of that occupacon) neyther in science and judgement of workmanship, nor in the playnes [plainness] and honesty to deal with all. ... I know that if Mr Justice Owen were in the country he would say as much as I have done...”

Pevsner adds, “Conover was built by Mr Justice Owen. Hancock died in 1599 and is buried in Much Wenlock.”

There then follows a quote from the Wenlock parish register which seemed worth looking for in its entirety. I had a little trouble finding the relevant entry in the register in the Shropshire section of FindMyPast.co.uk until I discovered, from the Shropshire Burial Index, that his name had been spelled ‘Hancox’. Even then, Walter does not appear to be indexed and only by finding a Thomas Hancox buried the previous year was I able to look at the images and browse through to 1599 and find the entry. I am grateful to Joan Gate for transcribing the entry as follows:

“Walter Hancox a free mason was buried the 16 day of September. this man was a very skilfull man in the art of masonry in settinge of plottes for buildings & performing up the same, ingravinge in alabaſter, & other ſtone, or playſter [plaſter], & in divers other giftes that belongs to that art, as doth appeare by his workes which may be ſeene In divers parts of England & Walles. moſte ſompteuſe buildings, moſte ſtately tombes, moſte curyoſe pictures. And to conclude in all workes he tooke in hand he hathe leftie behind him longe laſting monuments of ſkilfull workmanship. & beſides theſe qualitees he had others whiche paſſed theſe, he was a moſte honeſt man, devout & zealous in religion, pittifull to the poore & had the love & goodwill of all his honeſte neighbours.”

News

Mary McKenzie

Digital preservation

Like many archive services across the country Shropshire Archives is investigating the issues around the long term preservation of records in digital form, both those that are originally created digitally, known as ‘born digital’ and those which are digitised from hard copy originals. Digital preservation can be described as *‘the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital material for as long as necessary’*. The challenge is the scale, variety and complexity of the material involved. There are concerns that if digital material is not preserved and managed *‘a black hole of history’* will result.

We have been working with colleagues across the West Midlands on this issue, and the first stage is a survey of current practice, which was completed in 2017. Following on from this, detailed planning will take place early in 2018 to define the way forward. Shropshire Council IT services are supporting the process. I will keep you informed of our progress with this crucial area of work.

Please send any comments to:
Mary McKenzie, Acting Museums and Archives Manager,
Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ
tel: 0345 6789096
email: mary.mckenzie@shropshire.gov.uk
website: www.shropshirearchives.org.uk



Shropshire Registration Service records project

Work has started on a partnership project with Shropshire Registration Service to index their registers of births, marriages and deaths dating from 1837. We have recruited a team of four people, Heather Simpson, Judith Pinfold, Lynn Ford and Julie Burden to work on this project for 12 months. The indexes, together with digitised images of the registers will, in due course, create an online resource for all of the Shropshire records. This will improve ordering of, and access to, copies of birth, marriage and death certificates.

Wilfred Owen Project

Shropshire Archives and Museums has been awarded £41,600 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to commemorate the centenary of the death of Wilfred Owen this year — look out for more details of the plans in the next Recorder.

Staff Changes

Alex Moxon our apprentice left us in September. Alex was a cheerful addition to the team and made great progress in the 12 months he was with us. We wish him all the very best with his future career. We decided to reconfigure the post into a part time Archives Intern post to make it possible for graduates to apply. We have appointed Meriel Lees to the new post and she started work with us in November. Meriel is from Cornwall but has family connections with Shropshire. She hopes to apply to one of the postgraduate courses in Archive Administration in due course.

Ted Oakley our Caretaker is also moving on to a full time post with a Shropshire furniture recycling company. Ted has been a great asset, we will miss his practical contribution and ability to find solutions to all sorts of issues, but we all wish him the very best in his new job.

References

1. Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) 2008