

# SEDGLEY JOURNAL

The occasional newsheet of Sedgley Local History Society  
AUTUMN 2007 – Number 1

## SEVEN SISTERS IN THE FINAL FOUR

The Black Country bid for up to £50 million from the Big Lottery Fund is still on track. An ITV telephone poll in December will decide the winner. Remember YOUR VOTE is VITAL if you wish to see the Wren's Nest canals and caverns become a world class attraction. The manmade limestone spectacle is unique and a tribute to miners, quarry men and navvies working over two centuries.

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### A NAME FROM THE PAST

The newsheet's name echoes that of a newspaper printed from November 1874 to the autumn of 1875! Its title the *Wolverhampton Times and Bilston, Willenhall, Wednesfield and Sedgley Journal*. Surely one of the longest titles ever used by a British newspaper.

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### HERITAGE WATCH

The Limes and Dormston House in Sedgley, and the Straits House in Cotwall End will become key buildings in new residential developments. Unfortunately the Boat Inn at Deepfields will almost certainly be demolished and the site used for other purposes.

Dudley Archives will remain in the old Mount Pleasant School for some time to come. Improvements to the heating system and minor works have extended the suitability of the site. However, a rumoured move to new premises [yet to be built !?!] near the Black Country Living Museum have been heard. Given the protracted saga, and ultimate failure, to move to Kingswinford, the jury is out on this issue.

### BEACON VIEWS

In 2005 the Society joined the Beacon Hill Tenants & Residents Association to press DMBC for the restoration of the Grade II listed landmark tower.

In response the council produced a comprehensive report [September 2006] covering all aspects of Beacon Hill and the promise of forming a Friends group. Since then nothing has materialised.

The tower's stonework is in poor condition, the internal staircase unusable and the immediate vicinity a shambles.

The tower featured on the badges of Sedgley and Coseley UDC and now tops the borough's coat of arms. This September the Mayor, Councillor David Stanley, proudly presented Sedgley Community Centre with a photograph of himself wearing the Sedgley UDC Chairman's badge. Good to see the tower's importance was recognised by a local lad.

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### SEDGLEY MANOR TRIVIA

The last film shown at Sedgley Bull Ring's Clifton cinema was *The Stud* in 1978.

## CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION

Sedgley Manor boasts many groups of activists supporting and protecting heritage and environment projects. Often they alert the council and public to issues that would otherwise be overlooked or ignored.

If the list is incomplete please contact the Society so that additions can be made:

Friends of Cotwall End Nature Reserve  
Friends of Dudley Archives  
Friends of Dudley Castle  
Friends of Jubilee Park  
Friends of Milking Bank  
Friends of Mount Pleasant School  
Friends of Priory Park  
Friends of Springvale Park  
Friends of Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve  
Beacon Hill Tenants & Residents Association  
Coseley Civic Trust  
Turls Hill & Swanbrook Valley Residents Association  
Upper Gornal Mill Trust

Clubs, Museums, Societies and Trusts bordering the Manor or covering the Black Country include:

Black Country Living Museum and Friends of BCLM  
Black Country Memories Club  
Black Country Society – 40 years young in 2007  
Dudley Canal Trust  
Dudley Local History Society  
Wolverhampton History & Heritage Society

## TRAFALGAR ROLL CALL

On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 1805 the British fleet defeated the combined French and Spanish fleets off Cadiz. Although the victory is often portrayed as 'beating the French' it was really a bigger blow for Spain.

In Nelson's 26 ships were some seventy Black Country lads including two from Sedgley. Benjamin Gutteridge, aged 20, was aboard the 64 gun *Polyphemus* and Thomas Hartland, aged 17, sailed in the 74 gun *Revenge*. Both were Royal Marines, one a Private, the other a Boy.

*Polyphemus* lost 2 men with 4 wounded, while *Revenge* lost 28 with 51 wounded.

Admiral Horatio Nelson's 100 gun flagship was aptly named *Victory*. His battle plan won the day, but the encounter came at great cost. The Commander in Chief lost his life along with 56 of his crew – another 102 were wounded. The full battle toll ran into hundreds.

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## UPPER GORNAL CANARY EXPERT?

We have recently received an enquiry that we cannot solve through the usual channels of census returns, local knowledge and the internet.

In 1911 a book was published by Cage Birds, London titled *Our Canaries*. This is now regarded as a classic with text by Claude St. John and colour plates painted by Harry Norman. Furthermore he wrote *Bird Ailments and Accidents* in 1919!

The problem name is **Claude St. John** who is believed to have lived in the **Upper Gornal locality**. The book says 'Upper Gornal, Dudley, Worcestershire'. Any mail was picked up from the local post office.

Searches are beginning to suggest that Claude St. John was a nom de plume – in which case we are looking for a mystery canary expert writing at the beginning of the C20th!!

We should like to know the writer's identity. Is it a man as the name suggests, or may be even a lady?