

SEDGLEY JOURNAL

The occasional news-sheet of Sedgley Local History Society
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WOODSETTON CHARITABLE TRUST

Recently the Turls Hill & Swanbrook Valley Residents Association reinvented itself as Woodsetton Charitable Trust. This new status allows it to acquire, by donation and inheritance, open land within the designated area thus affording greater protection of a valuable Manor landscape. As a 'landowner' the Trust is in a better position to apply for grants. News and maps can be viewed on the Trust website ~ www.woodsetton-trust.webs.com

A NAME FROM THE PAST

Hurst Hill born, [C1784], Joseph Nicholds was the Manor's most well known C19th composer. He was a talented brass player and wrote sacred music. His favoured instrument was a vertically held three to four foot long 'trumpet' called an ophicleide made from cherry tree wood.

Joseph was a member of the Providence Baptist orchestra and following local employment at a lime works and steel-works he joined George Wombwell's Menagerie as leader of their brass band. For over twenty years he travelled through England and Wales before returning to Coseley as licensee of the Hop and Barleycorn. He died in 1860.

The oratorio *Babylon*, his most well known work, was first performed in Ebenezer Baptist.

DUDLEY'S little book of big history

In July Dudley MBC launched an illustrated booklet outlining the history of the town. There are pictures of artefacts and civic insignia and the borough coat of arms is fully explained.

Printed in full colour it is available from libraries and Archives, free of charge.

A SEDGLEY MANOR MYTH

Fiction: Sue Lawley, broadcaster and television presenter was born in Lower Gornal.

Fact: She was born in Dudley – Woodside, between central Dudley and Brierley Hill. Lower Gornal connection: Sue came to live in the Ellowes area at about the time she began attending Dudley Girls High School.

SEDGLEY MANOR TRIVIA

The original Sedgley workhouse was next-door to the parish church, All Saints, in Vicar Street. Built around 1740 it was able to accommodate some 60 inmates. There are entries in the 1770s parish registers.

Sedgley & Gornal were centres of nail making for centuries. Cardinal Wolsey obtained local nails for use at Hampton Court in the early 1500s.

The last casting from British Steel's blast furnace, 'Elizabeth', was in October 1977 and the Ettingshall based complex closed in 1979. The original C19th name was the Staffordshire Steel & Ingot Iron Works.

Remember to check out the Society's website for news and useful links
www.sedgleylocalhistory.org.uk sedgleylhs@hotmail.com

SAFE MAKING STILL SECURE IN GORNAL

The Manor has a long history of safe making. Trade directories refer to safe manufacturers or fireproof safe manufacturers.

Some were small operations others the result of craftsmen joining together. In 1880s Davies, Giles & Co. were running the Beacon Safe Works somewhere in Sedgley, around 1900 Arthur W. Moss was working in Upper Gornal and Bradley & Flavell in Lower Gornal.

Sedgley's premier safe business was established in 1890 – Stephen Cox & Son. In 1900 the Dudley Road works described their products as 'bent steel safes, solid and joint-less at the corners'. By the middle of the century cabinets were all electrically welded and the limited company described as bank engineers. Closure came in the early 1980s.

The tradition of safe construction can still be found in Upper Gornal where Dudley Safes, founded in 1982, make safes suitable for business and domestic use. The Deepdale Works turn out over 5,000 units each year. The firm is a leading UK manufacturer.

On display in the Black Country Living Museum are three examples of this local craft – safes by Arthur Moss, Stephen Cox & Son and Cyrus Price & Co. Ltd of Wolverhampton. However, many safes are still in regular use in local businesses, churches and chapels. A large Cyrus Cox safe can even be found in Berkeley Castle!

HERITAGE WATCH

The closure or proposed demolition of a public house always brings cries of anguish from the local community. The Grand Junction on High Holborn closed in 2006 and was put up for sale in May 2008. The building has a certain amount of protection as it is locally listed and situated in Sedgley's All Saints conservation area, but future use is more problematic. SLHS is keeping a watching brief on the outcome.

Woodsetton Methodist Church closed for worship at the end of December 2007. Ironically the same month marked the 125th anniversary of the opening in 1882. Although some of the fabric needs attention the locally listed buildings should command a future use. All too often demolition is the first response. Let's hope this is not on the agenda.

Good news – the Ruiton mill is having a new kitchen and courtyard makeover.

LISTED BUILDINGS

The Statutory List, supervised by English Heritage, grades buildings of national importance giving them protection against demolition and unsupervised conservation. In Sedgley Manor there are around forty Grade II properties, but only one Grade I – Dudley castle! Notable listings include – Beacon Tower, Dormston House, Old Bull's Head & brewery, Ruiton Mill, Coppice Baptist, Cooper's Bank Farm, and Coseley Tunnel portals.

The Local List, drawn up by Dudley MBC, is quite extensive. Unfortunately protection is more limited and no guarantee against demolition. This listing gives the property and its boundaries 'recognition', prevents changes without permission and could attract funding for the preservation of its character.

Furthermore DMBC designate areas of conservation. The Manor has three ~ *All Saints* covers the centre of Sedgley; *Coppice* an area around the Baptist Chapel and *Oak Street* to include St. Chad's and the mill.

Full details of both lists and maps of the Conservation Areas can be found on Dudley council's website – www.dudley.gov.uk