

# SEDGLEY JOURNAL

The occasional news-sheet of Sedgley Local History Society

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## A SILVER CELEBRATION FOR THE SOCIETY

The Society reached a milestone this year. Andrew Barnett and Trevor Genge launched the local history group in 1984. The nine Staffordshire villages of Sedgley Manor have always been the main focus supported by a museum that ran from 1988 to 2004 and a website started in 2003. Regular talks have been held at St. Andrew's Church in Sedgley for over two decades. Members have listened to more than 150 speakers, written books, given talks and sketched and photographed every nook and cranny in the Manor.

### THE MONARCH PASSED BY

In August 1575 Queen Elizabeth I was entertained in Dudley Castle. While in 1585 the Castle was fleetingly considered as a fortress to imprison her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. No action was taken.

Queen Victoria passed through the eastern edge of the Manor in the royal train on at least two occasions. Firstly in 1851 when the train stopped in Wolverhampton as she journeyed to Scotland. On the platform she received a 'loyal address'. Secondly when she visited Wolverhampton on November 30th 1866. Folklore says as she travelled to Low Level Station she had the curtains drawn to keep out the Black Country views!

In her Silver Jubilee Year [1977] Queen Elizabeth II was driven from Wolverhampton to Dudley in July passing through Sedgley and Upper Gornal before attending a presentation at Dudley Castle.

She paid a second visit to the Castle in June 1994 to inaugurate a permanent exhibition about the Castle's history.

*Note:* Dudley Castle is arguably in Woodsetton, a village in Sedgley Manor.

### A SEDGLEY MANOR MYTH

The Beacon Tower is regularly reported as a Victorian site for astronomical observations.

The story may have been taken from an 1898 book written by the Black Country historian Frederick Hackwood. He said it was built in 1846 and used by Lord Wrottesley for that purpose.

A more credible story, backed by the Society's research, asserts the building was undertaken by Mr Petit, a Beacon Hill quarry owner, on behalf of the Lord and rates as one of England's least known follies.

The tower was probably built to mark the highest cultivated ground in England. A local claim made well into the C20th.

### SEDGLEY MANOR TRIVIA

In 1939 Sedgley Urban District covered 3,848 acres and had a population 20,700.

In 1939 Coseley U. D. covered 3,294 acres and had a population of 29,640.

The same year Dudley County Borough's population was 62,100 and Birmingham's 1,052,900.

## VILLAGE SPELLING IS ALWAYS A PROBLEM

Sedgley Junction signal box was the standard L & NWR design. It stood at the junction of the Walsall-Dudley "South Staffs" line and the double track spur round to Dudley Port High Level known as the Sedgley Loop. The box was destroyed by fire on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1964 shortly after becoming redundant.

The name board on the signal box read SEDGELEY. Fortunately railway maps and Ordnance Survey maps had the correct spelling leaving only train drivers bemused.

The *Dudley Dodger* used the line carrying passengers between the more central Dudley station and Dudley Port – a journey of a few minutes.

The 'e' continues to be a problem for sign writers. In September of this year Dudley MBC erected a board announcing the site for Coseley's new youth centre with the spelling COSLEY.

Today's spelling of Sedgley is difficult to date, but the Coseley spelling was definitely on record in the C17th.

The Manor's largest village, Ettingshall, has also suffered from the 'e' syndrome. Among its various spellings was Ettingshall.

Even Woodsetton was chiselled out on a house name as Woodsitton.

## HERITAGE WATCH

The Grand Junction on High Holborn closed in 2006 and was put up for sale in May 2008. In the summer of 2009 extensive renovations were undertaken. Shortly it is due to reopen not as a pub, but as a dental practise.

A short distance away Dormston House dominates Dudley Street now that its Gornal stone exterior is once again revealed. The Grade II property has been sensitively converted into apartments while still retaining its elegant Georgian facade.

Singing the praises of a 1960s leisure centre invites ridicule. Yet the loss of Coseley Swimming Pool is a major blow to swimmers and public building devotees.

Closed in August 2009 it is due for demolition early next year – a great loss to the local community.

Coseley's iconic public building has been allowed to slip away through neglect and poor maintenance.

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## STREET NAMES

All family researchers eventually face the confusion of streets that have had their names completely changed or altered. Some draw the conclusion that the family has moved; others diligently check census returns to reveal a simpler explanation – *same street, different name*.

Sedgley ~ Church Street to Dean Street / Old Street to Gate Street / Stone Pit Lane to Castle Street / Duck Lane to Gospel End Street / Doctor's Lane to Beacon Lane

Coseley ~ Can Lane to Hurst Hill Road / Ettingshall Lane [Hell Lane] to Ettingshall Road

Lower Gornal ~ Reddall Road to Redhall Road / High Street to Louise Street

Upper Gornal ~ Botany Street to Vale Street / Shepcote Wall to Kent Street

Some lanes were named after farming families ~ Downings Lane to Catholic Lane, Bagley's Lane to Dibdale Road

And many streets are lost forever ~ Tup Street, Diddles Lane, Peg Alley, Chain Alley