

SEDGLEY JOURNAL

The occasional news-sheet of Sedgley Local History Society
AUTUMN 2010 ó Number 4

ARCHIVES ON THE MOVE

Dudley Archives & Local History Service is moving from its Coseley base late in 2012 to a multi-million pound purpose built centre next to the Black Country Living Museum. Plans include a large search area, four small research rooms, an exhibition space and a meeting room. Extensive environmentally controlled storage facilities will cater for the ever-increasing amount of archive material. Offices for cataloguing, imaging, conservation work, website inputs, project development and research enquiries complete the two storey centre.

BORN IN THE MANOR

Ian Powell might not be a household name to many readers yet his employers Price Waterhouse Coopers will be all too familiar as an international accountancy firm often linked with businesses in trouble.

He attended Queen Victoria Primary School, High Arcal Grammar School and gained an economics degree at Wolverhampton Polytechnic. Ian joined PWC as a trainee in 1977 . today he is head of the UK division.

Ian is a committed Methodist fostered by strong family ties with Hurst Hill Methodist Church.

Out of the office he gets behind the wheel of a classic 1965 Aston Martin or takes off in a power boat. And to confirm his Black Country roots he supports West Bromwich Albion.

LOWER GORNAL HEADMASTER

Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank England, was educated at Wolverhampton Grammar School. His father was headmaster of Robert Street Secondary Modern Boys School in the late 1950s.

A SEDGLEY MANOR MYTH

Even as late as the 1940s Sedgley Manor's local historian, E. A. Underhill, was peddling the legend of priory buildings near the centre of the village.

Immediately south of All Saints Church property was identified as The Priory on 1851 census returns while Priory Lane and Ladies Walk strengthened the connection.

There is no written or archaeological evidence for a priory, but Dudley's Priory of St. James held land in Sedgley, Woodsetton and Coseley. It is this link that led to the belief in a religious settlement and a bizarre story of an underground passage from Sedgley to Dudley. Of course it's all nonsense!

SEDGLEY MANOR TRIVIA

The oldest part of the Park Hall Hotel in Park Drive was once a Catholic boarding school for boys. The actor John Philip Kemble [1757 - 1823] was educated there from 1767 to 1771. His stage debut was in Wolverhampton in 1776. In 1783 he appeared as Hamlet at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. He often played opposite his elder sister, the well known actress, Sarah Siddons.

TURNPIKE ROADS AND TOLLHOUSES

By 1700 the nation's roads were in a dire state. Poor construction and maintenance led to a radical rethink of how to finance their upkeep. In the past parishioners had borne the costs, now road users would pay tolls as the turnpike trusts flourished throughout the C18th and peaked in the 1830s when thousands of miles were controlled by this fund raiser. Vehicles and the passage of animals incurred charges. Walking was free! The golden age of pay as you go ended in 1895. Overtaken, in every respect, by the new railroad network.

The key Wolverhampton to Dudley road became a turnpike c.1760 as the ups and downs were smoothed out and surfaces properly graded. Tollhouses were built at the Fighting Cocks, Moden Hill, Shavers End and Dibdale Road. Tolls were collected until 1876.

The Sedgley to Tividale turnpike was gated at Bunker's Hill, Gate Street and Littleworth, Woodsetton. The former was demolished in 1933; the latter was built in 1843 and rebuilt at the Black Country Living Museum late in the C20th.

The Himley to Dudley turnpike had a tollhouse at Askew Bridge, Lower Gornal. It is now a private house. Another toll was paid at Cooper's Bank.

The Wombourne to Bilston turnpike, opened in the 1790s, was tolled at the bottom of Bush Bank [Gospel End Street] and opposite the Congregational Church [St. Andrew's] in Bilston Street. Other gates operated at the bottom of Can Lane [Hurst Hill], Deepfields and Ladymoor.

Census returns also show gate-keepers at Bradley Lane, Gospel Oak [Tipton], Catchem Corner in Ettingshall, and Prince's End.

[All the tollhouses mentioned were in Sedgley Manor or on its boundary. Turnpikes were also gated at other strategic places along their routes.]

Tim Jenkins, a Staffordshire 'ex-pat', is researching tollhouses in the south of the county. He has exchanged material with the Society.

WEBSITE WATCH

Black Country History ~ www.blackcountryhistory.org

Launched this November it brings together information covering over 120,000 documents, photographs, maps etc. Ideal for a browse and a starting point for enthusiasts.

Full Circle Project ~ www.macearchive.org.uk

Do you have locked away old cine-film or home videos? Footage of local events, places of work, buildings and mundane or memorable happenings can become valuable records of historical importance. Visit the Media Archive for Central England [MACE] website to find out more, view film clips and sign up to their newsletter.

Dudley Archives & Local History Service ~ www.dudley.gov.uk/archives

This site is a treasure trove of material. Find your house on old maps; check the availability of Nonconformist & Parish registers and Census returns. Make an appointment to view actual registers, data CDs and microfiche. And for a real treat arrange to see material from the Earls of Dudley archive. Invoices, deeds, mortgages, mining surveys and manorial records.