

# SEDGLEY JOURNAL

The occasional news-sheet of Sedgley Local History Society  
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## TARMAC ON THE ROAD FROM ETTINGSHALL TO SOLIHULL

The accidental mix of tar and slag on a road near a Derbyshire steelworks in 1901 was seen by the county surveyor for Nottingham, Edgar Hooley. The rest is history, but unfortunately not for Edgar. His 1903 Tar Macadam Syndicate Ltd ran into financial difficulties and in 1905 was taken over by Ettingshall steelworks magnate, Sir Alfred Hickman.

Tarmac Ltd, based on Millfields Road, was soon supplying the product all over the country including bench mark projects such as the Kingston bypass (1920s), and the Preston bypass (1956). By the 1960s the company had diversified into construction work and become a top international brand.

Anglo American PLC bought the Tarmac Group in 2000. Further restructuring finally led in 2012 to Tarmac's merger with Lafarge and the transfer of administration to the latter's Solihull address in 2013. After 107 years Tarmac will employ few people in Ettingshall – another Black Country name on the move.

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## BORN IN THE MANOR

In October 2012 Trevor Genge Sedgley's leading local historian died. He was born in Lanesfield in 1931 and educated locally.

He joined his father and sister Sylvia at John Thompson Ltd working there as a draughtsman. In the 1960s his career changed course as he trained as a teacher. Trevor taught at Alder Coppice, Bramford and finally became head teacher at Lanesfield Junior School.

Along with Andrew Barnett he was joint founder of the Society in 1984. Trevor was chairman for over two decades and in later years, president.

He produced five illustrated books on Sedgley Manor, gave countless talks throughout the Black Country and organised numerous walks.

His legacy is assured; moreover Trevor will be fondly remembered and greatly missed.

## SEDGLEY MANOR TRIVIA

Bradshaw's Handbook [1863] was the tourist guide for Victorian railway travellers. The four part book is the bible for the long running TV series *Great British Railway Journeys* presented by Michael Portillo.

Every station and town on the network was mentioned. The Manor was on the Stour Valley line of the London & North Western Railway.

George Bradshaw wasted few words in moving from Tipton to Wolverhampton dismissing Deepfields and Ettingshall Road as "having no particular interest".

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## NEW ARCHIVES CENTRE

Dudley's new archives and local history centre, next-door to the Black Country Living Museum, is on schedule to open in the summer of 2013. Progress can be seen from a specially built public viewing platform.

## THE BEAN MOTOR CAR

On the eastern Manor boundary the Sedgley-Tipton road passes the site once occupied by one of the Harper Bean Ltd factories. Here, in 1919 on two moving assembly lines the Bean's ground breaking 11.9hp cars were assembled and tested on the adjacent half-mile circuit. The chassis were then driven from Hurst Lane to Waddam's Pool, Dudley to have bodies fitted and final finishing.

Although the company diversified into other car models, vans, lorries and even a bus, all production stopped in 1929 and by 1931 the Bean was in receivership. In its short history very nearly 24,000 vehicles rolled off the lines of which 17,500 were cars. The car radiator badge depicted a blue lion based on the one found on the Earl of Dudley's coat of arms.

The Tipton plant was back in business in late 1933 under the banner of Bean Industries specialising in foundry and machine work. Subsequent ownership changes in the 1950s and 60s lead to Bean Engineering and finally the Bean name disappeared in 1994.

The Hurst Lane site is now a housing estate. One street is called Thunderbolt Way in recognition of a highpoint in Beans history.

In 1937 the firm constructed, in less than two months, driver Captain E. T. George Eyston's record breaking car – *Thunderbolt*. The following year at the Bonneville Salt Flats, powered by Rolls-Royce engines, it claimed the land speed record at 357.49mph. The September run was a triumph for British engineering and a last hoorah for the Bean.

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## SEDGLEY POST OFFICES

The earliest postmaster was probably John Dullam Tamlyn described in 1851 as a 'druggist and postmaster' in Bilston Street.

### **Bull Ring**

In the 1880s grocer Jonathan Cadman was the postmaster in his shop at No. 7 receiving and dispatching letters as a Dudley sub-office.

### **Bilston Street**

John William Bourne, another grocer, was in charge at No. 1 by 1900.

### **High Street**

In the early years of the C20th John Bourne opened a dedicated PO opposite the junction with Bilston Street. Mrs Alice Bourne, still recorded as a grocer, followed her husband – Sedgley's first postmistress by 1911 and still in charge in 1921. Today it's an empty shop to the left of Tasty Plaice.

### **Dean Street**

Sometime before 1932 the move to No. 2 was made with Frank Webb in post until the 1950s. The fondly remembered replacement positioned at the Bull Ring end of Dean Street was a mecca for stationery and stamps. Alas the site is now a car park.

### **Dudley Street (2)**

A café, next door to a fish & chip shop, was converted into a modern PO around 1961. This served the ever increasing population until a move next door into the old Midland Electricity Board sub-station in 2010. The original unit is now a Chinese takeaway.

(By 1900 a post office could be found in Upper Gornal, Lower Gornal, Gornal Wood, Woodsetton, Hurst Hill, Deepfields, Coseley/Castle Street, Ettingshall & Prince's End.)