

THE GT BEDWYN POST

News and Views

From and For

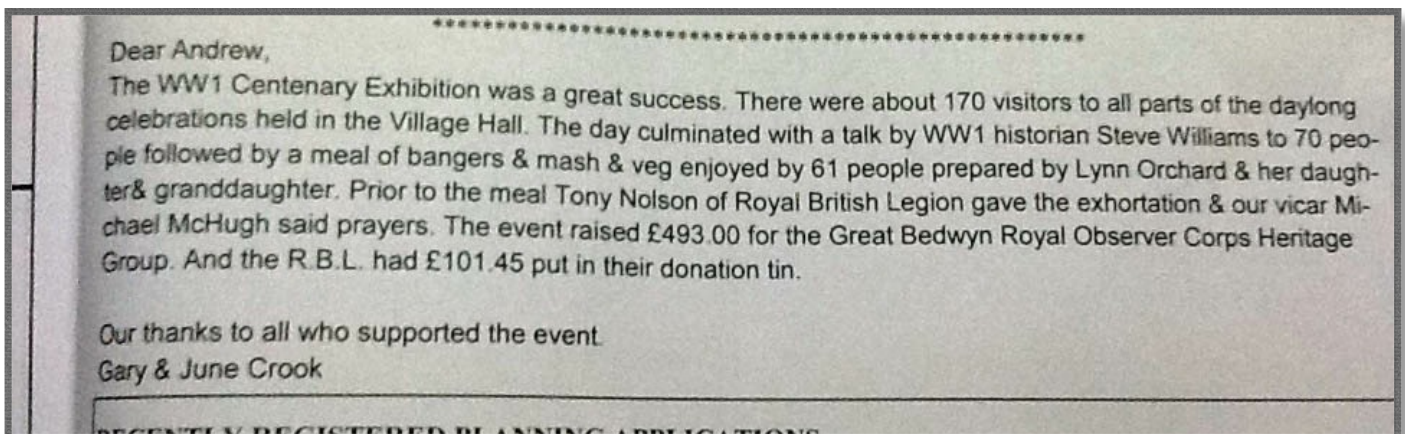
Members



Issue Number 17

July 2014

Saturday 26th April June sent me the following copy of letter inserted in parish magazine - self explanatory ,



Tuesday 1st May saw the start of ground repairs etc at post site following removal of seconds fence and hedge :- June's email

Hi Chris,

The extra ground at the post site was levelled by mechanical digger on the half that none of us could do by hand. I did a deal with a local builder he done it on Wednesday the 30th April. I have no pictures of him actually doing it as it was next time he hired a mini digger he was going to fit it in. Will take a picture of the newly flattened ground with the I pad, it's lashing down at the moment but will get some to you ASAP. This completes the levelling of the extra piece of ground we acquired by mutual consent with all concerned of the no mans land between the two fences. Just leaves Paul to finish the planting etc.

Regards Gary&June

Photos next page



Paul making sure no-one slopes off for early sandwiches.

An Item from Brian : -

Hi Chris,

Monday Gang Day latest day out.

Our gang went to Blaenavon Big Pit on Wednesday.

As a pre booked party we started our trip to the machinery museum for a guided tour. Our guide, Paul, was an ex miner having worked as an engineer below ground until the many pit closures. One of the machines had the nick name of The Widow Maker because of the dust it created, killing the miners from lung disease. I had not realised that anyone working below ground was a miner. They could be electricians or bricklayers etc. The miners who dug out the coal were the colliers.

We then assembled at the pit head to enter the pit. We had to surrender anything that could cause a spark, even quartz watches. We were then issued with hard hats, helmet lights with batteries and carbon monoxide respirators. The latter being very appropriate following the sad loss of life in Turkey due to carbon monoxide poisoning. We then entered the lift cage and dropped to 90 meters at 2 meters per second. In a working situation the cage drops at 15 meters per second. Leaving the lift cage we then made our way through various workings. Some were high enough to walk through normally while others demanded a stooped position. It was quite easy to hit something with your hard hat being sent flying! It was always a relief to move into more headroom and being able to straighten up. We visited the pit pony stables where they were stabled for 50 weeks a year often in total darkness. They had 2 weeks holiday, the same as the miners.

In the heydays of mining there were some 600 deep mines in Wales and now only 2 are working with most of the coal imported. Even with description from the guide of working conditions it was difficult to imagine just what it was like when the pit was working. It was said that the Drax Power Station uses 36,000 tons of coal a day at full capacity. That's a lot of lumps of coal! It is difficult to imagine a few wind generators providing that level of energy.

You have no idea of direction as you move through the various workings and it was total surprise to see the lift shaft directly in front of us having left in a totally different direction.

Above ground we visited the various buildings, including the winding engine house and an extensive black smiths shop.

Following a good lunch we set off for home and then one of our members noticed a microbrewery and we were forced to enter and have a pint. It was not prearranged and fortunately did not spoil a good day out.

Brian



Thanks Brian.

And Brian's been out again.

Hi Chris,

On a recent pleasant sunny evening a group of us from the West Wilts Industrial Archaeological Society made a visit to Freddy Giles Farm on the banks of the Kennett and Avon canal at Seend. Freddy Giles is a local man from Devizes. Starting from a humble position delivering milk for his father's dairy farm. He then did his National Service and on completion of that became a chimney sweep. In the late 50's he opened a milk bar in Melksham which sold "something for the weekend sir?". Quite unheard of in those tranquil times! His business's flourished and he started steak houses and bought hotels and several semi derelict buildings in Trowbridge which have subsequently been developed. His personal wealth also blossomed and he bought Clink Farm out in the countryside not far from Frome. Here he could indulge his passion of single seat racing cars and enjoy the music of their open exhaust systems. He was apparently a very quick driver and held several records at West Country hill climbs. However with the relentless march of time it was not long before he found himself surrounded by a housing estate with a Frome address! Complaints from his new neighbours soon started to arrive and he decided to move. This is when he came to be by the canal at Seend and as far as I know does not have complaining neighbours. (Not even Maurice who lives close by) On his new site he virtually has his own museum. He has a 4.5 litre Bentley (see picture) in good condition which he still uses regularly and a "chain gang" Frazer Nash which he uses on the road. This has a chain gearbox and solid back axle with no diff. He says that makes it quite interesting on a wet roundabout with the car deciding where it will head not the driver! He also has a 1968 Hillman Hunter he used in the around the World in 80 days rally in 2000. He was overall winner of the event, starting and finishing at Tower Bridge London. On the Rally he said he held rigidly to a policy of making sure the car was attended to before he and his wife ate and slept. Other teams just got stuck into the food and wine on arrival and were then too tired to sort out their cars. Freddy's principles paid off as they beat all comers even Mercedes and Porsche.

Also in 2000 he built a Millennium Barn an oak framed barn of traditional design using wattle and daub. The fact that daub, basically clay, has cow dung in it is just by accident. They used cows to "mill" the cows by walking on it. Inevitably cows did what cows do and this was mixed into the clay with no detriment or enhancement!

Freddy was recently on TV with Timothy West and Prunella Scales as they visited him from their barge. He said what pleasant company they were and enjoyed afternoon tea on the bank of the canal with them.

On his land on the other side of the canal he has created his own wood of British trees and this is where he will be buried. It is fortunate that a footpath passes through the wood so we can all enjoy it if we wish.

It was a very enjoyable and interesting evening and goes to show what can be achieved by an individual.

Brian



Thanks again Brian.

On 25th May Gary and June visited the Duxford Museum for their D-Day Show and display. I think it rained !!!



Thank you Gary and June



The Duxford ROC Post

This Item from June's Mum - very good : -

Hi Chris,

June's Mother in response to your more content request (as she reads the newsletters), wondered whether you would want the following snippet of info. Ann's Father Obs Percy HOARE served on Great Bedwyn B-3 post during WW2. Now if Percy's shift clashed with a Sunday, he wasn't going to miss out on his Sunday dinner! Hitler and his mighty German Army may have been poised across the channel, but in true Observer Corps tradition, Percy would have to have his roast dinner at 1.00pm on the dot! This job fell to two of his daughter's Ann (Junes mum) & Joy. "We would have to each hold one side of a basket with his dinner between two plates with gravy already on it, & wrapped in a tea towel. And our mum instructed us not to spill the gravy! And there was hell to play if we did! There was a half a mile to walk from our cottage to the post so it took some doing. Our dad would often say "Hitler is not going to stop me having my Sunday dinner"!!"

Regards,
Ann Hawkins & Joy Webb (nee HOARE)



Percy Hoare is back row - far right.

Many thanks for this.

Sunday 8th June - Gary forwarded picture of D-Day display created with his model figures



Also Sunday 8th Brian passed on the following :-

Hi Chris,

On Sunday 8th June we took our grandchildren Oliver and Georgina to a farm in Rowde near Devizes under the "Open Farm Sunday" scheme. It was a nice sunny day and perhaps the start of a wonderful summer! There were plenty of things to see and do including a sheep shearing demonstration and a farm trailer ride. We did the trailer ride early in the day to avoid the crowds. Back from the ride we watched the sheep shearing as we enjoyed a Dexter beef burger. We visited the various pens holding ducklings, chickens, sheep and goats much to Oliver's enjoyment. Further on a collection of farm machinery was available to climb into the driver cabs. A large John Deere tractor on a 2008 plate was said to cost £80,000 when new! There was also a display of birds of prey, including an Eagle Owl, Harris Hawk and a Peregrine Falcon. Alongside was an exhibition by Melksham Beekeepers.

As we were about leave we came across a Stanley steam car which had been restored to a very high standard and said to be worth some £200,000! Despite the high standard of restoration the owner was happy to let people get in behind the steering wheel and Oliver was soon taking his place there as you can see in the picture. Not sure where he gets that aloof look but I think it might be from Nanny! It was nice to enjoy a day out that was completely free.

Brian



Tuesday 10th was of course our third expedition along the treacherous and uncharted eastern reaches of the Kennet and Avon Canal..

At 19:30 sharp 27 intrepid souls set off eastwards from Devizes Wharf to explore the waters fortified only by the excellent fish and chips and a couple of cans of 6X.



Our transport for the trip of a lifetime



As we prepared to leave the natives were already about in their canoes

Joking aside , 27 of us enjoyed a very pleasant trundle along the canal , in excellent weather, and it proved again to be a good fund raiser for the Heritage group, showing a profit of £105 even after a donation to the Canal Trust.







Another nice evening on the canal so many thanks to Ron Heaton for arranging and to the Canal Trust who crewed the boat and looked after us very well. THANK YOU.

Tuesday the 17th June saw Brian actively engaged, this time, in a cruise on the Kennet and Avon.

Hi Chris,

I was recently asked if I could help in the moving of two narrowboats from Wootton Rivers to Great Bedwyn along the Kennet and Avon Canal. With my recent experience on the K&A canal I was an obvious choice to help! Arriving at Wootton Rivers the engines of both boats started without trouble and we were soon underway. Our first lock, No. 51, was entered and after 3 more locks we were approaching the Bruce Tunnel. The tunnel is named after a local landowner who would not allow the canal to pass over his land. It is 502 yards long and straight, with one being able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. As we passed through the tunnel I was at the bow with a torch and shouting "left a bit" or "right a bit" to our cox, Vicky, who held a good course and we did not touch the wall. Well done Vicky! There is no towpath through the tunnel so in the good old days the barges were pulled through using chains attached to the walls.

Clear of the tunnel we then entered the 9 locks that would take us up to the Crofton Pumping Station the highest point on this section of the canal. As we passed through the locks I noticed that many of the bridges had the WW2 concrete tank stoppers still in place. Perhaps they do not know the war is over!

Our final lock, No 64, was at Bedwyn Church just before we reached our mooring at Great Bedwyn. We had been through 14 locks and it had taken us about 5 hours. An enjoyable day but I did feel a bit weary after all those locks. It would have been a different day if it had been lashing with rain!

It was interesting that as we kept going up and down through the locks the trains, which are never far from the canal, were hurtling past us without any apparent gradients.

If you look carefully at the photo you can see me at the bow just before we entered the tunnel.

Brian



On Wednesday 18th June I visited the International Centre for Birds of Prey at Newent near Gloucester with Maurice and Pam and a very good day it was ,as it usually is. The only complaint was that they had stopped producing their smashing bacon rolls. (Hopefully we get to Cosford in time for one this year).. The birds looked fit and well and they had obviously had a very successful breeding season with numerous chicks and fledglings about. (Puppies as well as one of the proprietors Labradors had had eleven pups) The flying displays were varied and well presented and the weather almost perfect, but warm.

On the return journey down the A417 from Birdlip a B52 was spotted climbing away south and west.



Diary Dates

July 11,12 and 13 IAT Fairford

July 20th LMA Cosford

Aug 22,23rd Blitz Buddies at Lacock

Aug 30th Post BBQ

Nov 8th John Drewitts Show at Bratton.

Hi,
Below are pick up times for the Cosford trip:

BRATTON 07.30

IVOR 07.50

POTTERNE 08.00

DEVIZES 08.05

ERROL 08.25

TONY 08.46

COSFORD 10.36

We will attempt to keep the bus to these times and we may even be early so be at your pick up points 5 minutes earlier than published times.

Brian