

The following articles are from the 1995 edition of Transactions of the Alveley Historical Society

## CONTENTS

- \* Alveley Stone - Alan Nicholls
- \* Memories of Alveley - Alan Nicholls
- \* Severn Ferries - Joyce Cooper
- \* Robert E. Lee - Alan Nicholls
- \* School Life - Hilary Fleming
- \* Archaeology of the Parish
- \* Beating the Bounds - Alan Nicholls
- \* Shreds and Patches
- \* Disaster at Hampton Loade
- \* Re - opening of the Church
- \* Field Names - Colin Taylor
- \* Alveley Coal Mine - Bill Pryce

## ALVELEY STONE

Some years ago Mr A.E.Holden wrote an article about the stone quarry at Alveley for a Shropshire magazine. This article uses that source and others to give a brief look at another industry that has now disappeared from the village.

Mr Holden was born in the village in a cottage not far from the old school which he attended until the age of ten when the family left the district. His father, William Holden, was quarry blacksmith. He shod teams of heavy horses which were used for hauling the large mill stones to Belbroughton. He was also engine driver, crane driver and general engineer.

The menfolk of the village were either employed on the local farms or in the coal mine at Highley, mining had not begun on the Alveley side of the Severn then, or they were employed at the stone quarry which was situated in the second field behind the church.

The quarry was owned by Mr William Webb at this time, it was a thriving works and played no small part in the country's industry and welfare in that it produced and supplied the mill stones or grinding stones to all the mills in Belbroughton, Stourbridge. These mills, all driven by water power, in turn manufactured many kinds of agricultural tools such as scythes, bill hooks, spades, forks, forestry tools etc. all ground by Alveley stone.

Mr Holden remembered that there were quite a large number of men employed there, mainly stone masons and labourers. One gang would be occupied drilling points around an eight or nine foot cube of stone in the quarry face. When the cube was broken free from the mass it would be pulled by steam crane and wire hawsers up onto a bogie on rails and would eventually arrive into position under a large stone saw. Here it would be cut up into slabs twelve to fourteen inches thick.

This huge stone saw had no teeth but was an immense iron girder construction in which was slung a cradle carrying five or six long flat blades which were about eight inches deep and probably half an inch

thick. The length of the machine was twenty feet or more. The saw was driven by a traction type bailer with a steam engine which moved the cradle carrying the blades in a reciprocating motion at slow speed. Mr Holden remembers many times having a ride on the saw as it chugged backwards and forwards. The blades of the saw were perfectly smooth, the cutting agent being silver sand and water. The sand was put into a long trough, not unlike the old farm seed drill, in which there were steel discs carrying little cups around the disc periphery. These little cups would pick up the silver sand and drop the sand grains into tubes over the cutting blades. A trickle of water was also directed on the blades.

When the machine had cut through the cube of stone there would be five or six slabs of stone. These would then be moved into an open space in the quarry and each placed flat on supporting stone bases similar to the bases of staddle stones. In this position they would be at a convenient height for the stone masons to cut and shape them into mill stones.

The masons would start by scribing the required diameter with a large pair of compasses. This would give them the centre of the mill stone through which they would cut a square hole for the mill shaft. It would also scribe the periphery line around which the masons would cut and chip with a various assortment of chisels and a pear shaped mallet.

The completed mill stone would be hoisted by steam crane onto a special stone haulage wagon. This wagon was pulled by a team of heavy shire horses. The team would haul this load out of the quarry and along a rough dirt track which came out onto the road immediately above the old vicarage. The team would then proceed to a parking place in the village which was an area in front of the blacksmiths shop. Mr Holden remembers that in the early hours of the morning he would hear the horses being hitched up again, the waggoner moving around in his heavy nailed boots with a candle lamp or lantern hooked on his belt, connecting or hooking on the chain traces before the horses took the strain and moved off into the night, their destination Belbroughton. The waggoner's name was long Tom.

Mr Holden's father left the quarry to take up another employment due to the impending closure of the quarry. The reasons for the closure were firstly that the use of this kind of stone was being discouraged due to the prevalence of Silicosis among the stone masons, and secondly the quarry was nearly worked out.

On the 1779 map of the Alveley Survey the quarry field near to the church is not shown although on deed 2025/1 of the year 1737 from Shrewsbury Record Office the quarry is mentioned by Richard Adams of Kingslow as belonging to the Lord of the Manor, Thomas Lee (dec). The 1849 tithe map shows Long Leasow next to Pit Close which has a marking which denotes the quarry. The 1928 OS map shows an extensive area of these two fields given over to the quarry. The area is now abandoned and covered in trees with little showing the amount of work that was done in the place over a period of several centuries.

The Commercial Directories which start in 1851 give the Lane family as quarry masters through until 1874. Thomas Williams and James Wood are shown from 1851 until 1863. In 1888 Benjamin Webb is the only quarry master given. He is followed by William Webb who was quarry master from 1891 to 1913 who was the owner when Mr Holden's father worked there. The 1913 directory also gives Benjamin William Wood, quarry master and grindstone manufacturer of Hall Close Quarries.

The 1841 census doesn't mention a quarry but gives the names of eleven masons. John Lane, Zacharias Lane, Thomas Lane the elder and Thomas Lane the younger are four of these.

The 1871 census gives Thomas Lane aged 64 farmer of 35 acres and a Quarry Master and mason employing ten men and two boys, he lived at 23 Alveley Village. Richard Rowley is also shown as a Quarry Master and Commercial Agent aged 43 who lived at 34 Alveley Village. This census also shows seventeen quarry workers so presumably there was more than one quarry in use and employing men.

One only has to walk around Alveley parish to see several other abandoned quarries so it was quite

probable that more than one quarry was working at this time.

The quarrymen listed in the census were John France, Thomas Wright, George Wood, George Link, James Scriven, Samuel Williams, William Jennings, William France, William Lane, William Butler, William Wood, John Wood, John Wood and William Broom. There were also two Stone Sawyers, George Wood and Thomas Jay.

The men and their families mostly lived in two areas of the village, the first group in 2, 3, 5, 7, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35, 46 Alveley Village and the second group at 1,2,5 Daddlebrook. Only two quarrymen lived away from this area. John France lived at Wrights cottages and George Wood lived at Potters Loade. This grouping of houses suggests the quarry owner having houses in the village available to his workers for rent. The quarrying community totalled sixty nine people according to the 1871 census.

## MEMORIES OF ALVELEY

During the last year I have interviewed many people with Alveley connections about their life and times. Below is a summary of the interviews done up to now which have been edited to highlight several topics. The interview with Albert was done in 1986 by Gwyn Williams for a school project on mining but has some interesting local insights. I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the project. I will be doing more interviews in the coming year and will report on them in the next transactions.

### Introductions

Lily Needham. We lived at 92 Cooks Cross then Sid Humphries lived there after us. My mum died when she was thirty nine so I went back to Alveley to look after my dad. Then I had the cottage at 61 Stone Row and was married from there. I married Fred Needham, he came from Kidderminster, and had two lads there at the cottage. We left Alveley when our Graham was about nine months.

Bill Scriven. I think our family came to Alveley in the fifteen hundreds. There were fifty three families of Scrivens in the forties I believe. I was born at 61 Stone Row. The one behind the Post Office that's there now. There were four cottages there you see. Numbering 60, 61, 62 and 63 from front to back. I lived there till I was 14 then we went to the Nautical in 1956. I left school in 1957, Dad was licensee We've always been working people apparently. I was licensee at the Shoes for nearly ten years, I was at the Oak for nearly two then at the Nautical for five..

Alice Starbuck. Granddad Massey was a blacksmith. My father was Jack Baldwin and was born the son of a blacksmith at Clee Hill. He came to Alveley to work for granddad Massey, that's how he met my mother.

John Weir. I was born in the village at 93 Cooks Cross, the house had been in the Wier family for years and years. They used to farm the land around here and then eventually it was sold for building.

Dolly Malpass. James Garbett was me dad and Sarah Garbett me mother. They used to live in Highley a bit, but they come over here and they lived in Stone Row, by the shop. We was all born there, fourteen of us.

Joyce Cooper. My maiden name was Gwilt. I was born at Hampton Loade at Yew Tree Cottage or number 16 Hampton Loade. Dad was born in that same house. My grandfather died very suddenly. Mum was only about 11 and she had a younger sister, so they sold up everything in 1912 and went to Quatford. Mum went into service when she was 14.

Bing Cooper. I was born in Quinton, Warley. The family farmed at Hill Top farm Warley, we rented the farm and it came up for building on. In those days they said a years notice and your out. My grandfather

and his three brothers were in partnership and they came and bought the Bow Hills. I was three then.

Jack France. I was born John France in Alveley in 1911. There was a row of cottages at Centre Place by the butchers shop called the Alley, it's all knocked down now. Eighty four years ago. Dad was George France, he was born in Alveley and mums maiden name was Mary Broome and was born at Monkthopton, near Bridgnorth. He was born about 1880. They had seven children but there's only three left now. There was Winifred, Edward, Sidney, Robert, Bertram and May. May died when she was about twenty. I'm the oldest, the youngest was May. Edward and Winifred are living now.

John Taft. My mum, Alice Garbett, was born at Allum Bridge mill along with all of me aunt's. Me granddad's name on me dad's side was Enoch, a good biblical name, Enoch Taft. On me mother's side, me granddad's name was Eli Garbett and me grandmother's name was Kezia Robins. Now my grandfather, Eli, was the miller at Allum Bridge Mill. I don't know the exact date when he came there but I know he was there until 1923 and I think it was 1886 when he came. My granddad was miller for John Robert Clarke, he was the baker and delivered the bread as well. Me granddad, Eli had two brothers, I can't tell you their names but they were both millers. There was one a miller at Monmouth and one in Norfolk. Their name ought to have been Miller not Garbett.

Joan Humphries. My father was Sidney George Humphries he came from Severn Stoke, down the other side of Worcester. My mother was Martha Anne Garbett she was born at the mill. Granddad was the miller Eli Garbett. All my aunties, I think there were seven of them, bar one, were born at the mill. Granddad would mill the corn and take the flour up to Clarkes shop. As you go up from Alum Bridge, on the left there's quite a big house, that was a shop, and it was run by Mr. Clarke. He used to grind the corn, take it up to Clarkes shop, which had a bakery at the back, and he also delivered the bread. I was born at the papermill. We moved up to 92 Cooks Cross when I was two, in the April.

John Taft. Miss Knight who worked up at the shop here, Clarke's. She came here when she was seventeen years old and she came on the train to Hampton Loade and brought her cases up and stayed for the rest of her life. She used to have one of these high desks, she lived there, never married.

Bill Scriven. I remember Bobby Clarke, they always called him the midnight baker because he used to come to deliver bread after dark. He had an old Fordson Van, green, had a washed hessian cloth in the back with the bread on it. Nobby Clarke, he had a stump of an ear, a pig bit it off I heard. They bombed him so they said.

Alice. The smithy was at first just past the Methodist Hall, adjoining to Townsend farm there. I don't know who built it, and then a Mr. Griffin had a carpenters shop, next door. It was a corrugated iron place that was built. I remember that being built. And then dad left and we had buildings up the road and dad had the stables made into a blacksmiths shop. During the war he did a lot of agricultural work, he did rollers and harrows and things like that. He did them in the shop. Huge things they were. We used to love to go up and see him doing the hoops. You know the hoops around the wheels, they had a huge fire and they used to put so many on the fire.

Joan. Me dad was a wheelwright, a carpenter, a builder, an undertaker, a signwriter, a decorator everything. At 92 Cooks Cross to the right there's a big yard, and at the back of that there's a shed, it's built in brick now but dad had it in corrugated iron. He used to have the drays come down from the farms. He'd also make five bar gates and later on he used to do the coffins. He'd make the coffin and he'd bring it in, put it on the kitchen table and we'd have to help to polish it. And then mother used to pad them inside, and she got whatever they wanted in the way of a shroud. He'd write the coffin nameplate and if we were good, he'd get a piece of thin string, tie a knot in the middle and put chalk on it, then he'd hold it and we were allowed to ping it in the middle so it made the line for him to write on. He had a Trojan car. To learn to drive he'd go down Cooks Cross road to the bottom, turn around and come back again. And he

did that, up and down, up and down until he knew how to do it. After that he had a three wheeler, somewhere about the beginning of the war I suppose. Three wheeler van. And he used to take the coffins in the back of that. He would take the coffin, he'd put the body in it and leave it at the house until the funeral. They had to leave the body in the house until the coffin was made. Then they'd take the coffin, maybe the day before the funeral, put them in.... some people used to say "screw them down", straight away, and some would have the lid left off until they came to take them to church.

## School

Alice. I started school at five in 1916 and I was there till I was 11. There were four classes, two down and two up. Mr. Shepherd was the headmaster and Miss Wood was the infant teacher, and then we would always have a young teacher - straight from college. Mr. Shepherd with the older children, a young teacher from college was in the other classroom upstairs, downstairs was Miss Wood and another college trained teacher. Now the first term that I was at Bridgnorth we went by train. We had to walk, to Hampton Loade, out on Monday morning, back on Friday night, stayed the week.

Dolly. We used to have bell pinnies and gloves to go to school, and we wore clogs. Miss Wood was a very old lady when she died. Some of the kids used to come to school with no shoes or socks on, the dads were poor. Mr. Shepherd the headmaster was nice, we called him Shebby Donkey.

Jack. Mr Shepherd took the top class, that's where we were most coshed. Mr Gatcliffe, the vicar grew gooseberries in his garden, big red ones, we went and raided them. An old lady saw us and she told him. He came up the school and asked us, Walter Jones, Charlie Scriven, Colin Rolfs and me, "Were they good?" he said, "Yes Sir", we said, "Well now I'm going to give you something lovely?" he said, "Mr Shepherd have you got a cane?" Didn't he wallop us. We had to salute Reverend Gatcliffe or he would call us back, he was a stickler, but it was respect. The old ladies at the Poores Row used to play their faces, we weren't allowed to sit on the wall there so one bonfire night we tied a draw line to the doors and put some firecrackers through the keyholes. The policeman, Mr Humphries from Cooks Cross, had us up for that. He gave us a damn good hiding with his belt, we never did it again. We used to have a maypole up by the church, it was a flagpole as well. On Empire day we used to carry the harmonium out of the old school and sing around the flagpole.

Lily. I can remember if you caught a rat and took the tail to Tommy Shepherd you had tuppence. He used to have a big desk and he used to put them under there, some of the lads used to pinch them and sell them again. I never caught any rats but that's what he used to do.

Albert. When I went to school kids were going to school with no shoes on their feet. We used to have to take our snap in a bag, we used to have our water out of the taps in the street. If you didn't go to school they was at your door. You only had two days off at August, we had two days at Christmas and one other, we went to school the rest. Now they only go to school thirty six weeks of the year. We only went to school til we was fourteen. They used that stick, bash! He gave one the stick and cut his hand. He refused, so he held it.

Joan. I went to school at the old school. There was some horrible stoves, those round stoves in the middle of the classroom, and I used to have a day off a week with a bad throat and tummy trouble, and I think it was the fumes from those, the coke. The teachers were Miss Hardesty, she was with the babies, and Miss Richards, and her daughter then upstairs was Mr. Benson, I think he had two classes. Mr. Benson was the head master. We did Reading, Riting and Rithmetic. And some embroidery and knitting. When we went to school at Bridgnorth we went across the river on the ferry and then on the train. We used to leave our wellingtons at Hampton Loade at the boatman's house and then put our shoes on and go across. They had stages, and as the river went down they pushed the stages down.

Bill Scriven. I started school in 1946-7, four classrooms. Then they made the assembly hall. Then the infants section, a prefabricated flat roofed place. Then the two staff rooms were used for classrooms. Then they built the first estate, about 1948, and the second one 1951. We used to play on the field down the Bell lane, the Lear field, they call it the Lee now. When I was at school Morgans was the headmaster, Mrs Morgans was the wife/ teacher. They used to have students. Miss Vaughan, Alice Edwards, only a little dit of a woman. Morgans was a big cricket man. I remember the Bedsers coming to teach us. We used to go swimming, walk from Alveley to Fenn Green, in string. We also had to go to Worfield school for woodwork, the bus went every Wednesday, the girls went to cookery. We used to fight them. They hated the sight of us. ....

John Taft. I went to Tuck Hill, Tuck Hill College we called it. We had two teachers Miss Greatbatch and Miss Garbett. Miss Garbett lived at Mose two doors from where my granny lived, she was the junior teacher. The senior teacher lived in the schoolhouse. They had forty eight pupils. They were happy days. I left just at the beginning of the war. Two classes, we used to have a coke stove. I had the job every Monday morning of taking the money for the National Saving Certificates to the Post Office at Six Ashes. £5000 for a Spitfire, that was the national savings. I took the money and the books, money the parents used to give the kids, all written down. Another job I had when I was at school, I used to have to take the milk can to the Bolt Hole, Winwoods used to farm it then, and fetch the school teachers milk. We used to have Horlicks. We had a big tin of Horlicks and we used to boil the water on top of the coke stove and it was a halfpenny a cup. I think that was the head teachers little enterprise. I demolished the old school at Alveley for Thompson's. See that lamp outside the school, I've still got that.

Dolly. We never done much at school, we used to have to knit for the soldiers. Helmets and socks and pullovers, all sorts of things. I was doing that when I was eight. It was damned cold in them days.

Joyce. I went to Quatt school. I walked to Quatt from Hampton Loade, all by myself for the first three years, I was five and a half when I started, no one else from Hampton Loade went until my brother Alan. The only thing I was frightened of was the steam lorries. I hate anything that sizzes now. I travelled on the train but it always worried me. There was a lower and upper class. There were two teachers, Mrs Jellyman was the headmistress who lived in the village, then there was a Miss Davis who lived at Cherry Orchard, Tuck Hill, she used to come down on her bike. We did the three R's and a bit of sewing. I left there when I was ten and a half and went to St. Leonards at Bridgnorth. I went across on the ferry and on the train.

Bing. I went to Arley school. Romsley children were allowed to go to Arley because the old school wasn't big enough. It was three miles from here. My brother was 16 months older than me but we both started school together when I was five. I don't know why he didn't go earlier. There was three rooms, juniors, middle and higher classes. The headmaster took the higher class. Miss Edwards when I was first there and then Miss Phillips. Dad used to take us down in the car and we walked back. I left Arley school when I was eleven and then went to Kidderminster to the grammar school. Then I went on til I was sixteen. We had to go to school on Saturday morning, but we had Wednesday afternoons off. Well Wednesday afternoon was games we played rugby.

## War

Dolly. I remember the 1914 war, me uncles was in the war and they used to come on leave with these big biscuits, you couldn't bite em, dog biscuits I used to call 'em, and a tin of corned beef that was their meal. Used to have a laugh about that. The next world war me brother was in that, but he come back. There was a lot got killed in that, terrible it was .

Alice. I remember, in the first war, mother taking me on the lawn one night and the Zeppelins were over the Black Country. She sat me on the wall, under the cherry trees, to see the lights. And I can remember that as plain as anything. And another thing I remember. When the men used to go back to the war, after

being on leave, the band always turned out the night before and played outside their house.

Lily. When the first world war was won nobody had done anything so Ronc, who lived in the black and white house by the church, he rung the church bell and knocked himself out, he didn't let go of the rope. The vicar came and they found Ronc, he could have been killed.

Dolly. We had three bombs in the second war down by the Squirrel, old Bobby Clarke, silly old fool was feeding his horse and one of these bombs dropped nearby him, it went into the ground, had it gone off he'd have been blowed to nothing. Silly old man, he had a big hurricane lamp, went to feed his horse. My husband was away three years. He was in Dunkerque, he went to Arnhem first. The Jerries blinded him with pepper, when he come back home he was blinded, he was back here fourteen days then they packed him off to the West Indies for the sun.

Albert. Ha. When the war was on you couldn't get them there, I done as much as eleven shifts in a week, cutting the faces ready for them to start. I cut two conveyor faces then they come and asked me if I could go and do the one that they were stuck in. The gaffer came back to me and asked me. I said I was there that morning. He said that if you don't come over there's no work for them tomorrow. So I went down. They got it in their mind as they weren't going to work to help Hitler. They thought they'd lost the war. But I told 'em, them lads am dying for yer. Never mind about Hitler coming, put yer tack on and go and fight 'em.

Bill Scriven. Mum done her stint in the potato fields the same as anyone else in the war years.

Bing. All those who worked on a farm couldn't even volunteer.

Joyce. There used to be lots of caravans along by the pub where people came during the wartime to get out of the bombing.

John Taft. I remember, during the war, me dad bought a gross of rabbit wires and we set all these wires one night, when there was no moon, and we went round them twice in the night and we caught 143 rabbits. During the war I used to try and make a bit of money and I used to have a day each week rabbit catching, and I used to sling them over the handlebars of me bike and take them to Alveley Post Office, and the miners wives used to queue up for them, Mable Scriven, Alice Bint, all the old girls they looked forward to it. I made enough money out of selling rabbits to buy me first pig, and I bought a Wessex Saddleback and I ended up with four Saddlebacks. I sold the pigs and came out with a bit of money, but not a lot. I used to sell the weaners. I can remember a time during the war, when Doolittle's lived at the Perry House above us, there was a German plane that was crippled and the chaps had jumped out and the pilot and navigator went tapping on the window and the Doolittle's had these chaps in, phoned the police and then made them a cup of tea til the police came, they were alright. The army camp at Astley was developed for the invasion forces that went to the continent and Americans came here. When they were up there they did quite a bit of building and after the war there was quite a few families up there before they built the council houses. There was over three thousand combat troops, mostly negro, coloureds, with white officers. At that time I was at the Air Training Corps and we used the old school, the one I took down, as our headquarters. F Flight. We used to go there twice a week, Tuesdays and Fridays, and we used to study radio, I got me morse up to twelve words a minute and I passed me test on me morse. We used to go every weekend to Snitterfield to camp, and we used to go flying. I was in a reserved occupation, I wanted to go to war but me father didn't want me to, he knew what it was about. It wasn't sticks and bladders he used to tell me. This one night I was going past the camp and there was a negro on sentry duty and he was within a couple of inches with his bayonet from my throat. It was only a short stay camp, they were only here for a matter of six weeks or so, transit camp. The huts were here up into the fifties. Bridgnorth council took them over to house families. Mrs Kendricks of Hammer Hill was the organiser to go round billeting the evacuees during the war. She was a cousin to Neville Chamberlain.

She deposited some on us and they turned out to be rather Liverpudlian.

Joan. During the war Mrs. Kendrick used to bring material for mum to make pyjamas for the soldiers.

## **Play**

Alice. Every bank holiday Monday there was always a big whist drive and dance. As a rule in the big school room. We had it at the squirrel sometimes, they had a big room there. All the farmers and their wives came to that. They came from miles around.

Lily. We had dances at the school, Quatt village hall, down at Arley. We used to dance to the brass band at Arley. And Rose Jones from Townsend Farm, when her mother had gone to bed, used to get out down the tree outside her house and go off dancing.

Dolly. We used to go carol singing when we was kids they used to give us an apple or orange, something like that. We used to collect a little bit and give it our mother to decorate the Christmas tree. We used to get a pinnie and the lads a new suit or something for Christmas. We used to go out in the street with the organ on May days, plaiting the pole on May days. Then on May days we used to have a king and queen and we used to dress up. Put a pretty dress on and we had these blooming things playing hooty tooty, whistles. We always had a lovely tea in the village, a party, at Christmas up at the old school, prizes games and all sorts of things. Club walks we used to have around here. We used to decorate the horses up and the carts, take all the kids around by the Nauti, come back down the main road then there was a field and the kids had sports, where the houses are now, Honeybourne Road. We used to call that the Lear Field.

Bill Scriven. My first memories of fetes were in Jidders field opposite the chapel. Jidder Evans, that was his name. He was the organist at the chapel, the whole family went to chapel. That was where all the early fetes was, where all the campers came to. They always had a boxing match. The local kids used to perform. Sausage, Roly Scriven, I can remember him fighting, he must have only been fourteen. Gloves were probably pre war. There were sideshows, it would be all home spun stuff, nothing that was commercial. I remember Scarratts fair coming to the Horseshoes field, that was there for 12 months. In 1956 dad left the club and went to the Nautical. Notorious place in Teddy Boy days. Evil place. We used to get twenty coaches a night.

John Weir. Mike France used to play football for Alveley but couldn't afford any football boots so he used to play in his shoes. Charlie Knowles ran the football team for years. During the war a lot of the people worked at the munitions factory in Bridgnorth and they had a works bus to collect them. The bus would take the footballers and it was packed.

Bing. I was in the youth club, we called it the youth service then, it was run by the head Pye, the new school at Alveley. We went round and collected paper and scrap iron and made money. We bought a hospital bed.

John Taft. The Nautical William was a wonderful place, but when the Birmingham and Black Country people got there it started to get a bit off beat. When it first opened the main road there, even in those days, it was absolutely stacked with cars parked down the road.

Albert. There was Alveley working mens union, no women were allowed. The beer was fourpence halfpenny and every so often you were allowed so many free pints.

## **Health**

Alice. The local doctor was at Bridgnorth, Doctor Dixon, of course there were no phones then, I



remember when the first phones came to the village, well they had the post office. And only about four or five and we had to listen, I think our number was three, the bell would ring three times, but you knew who it was, it would ring up to five. The operator was at Quatt. And you had to phone or send someone in for the doctor, because there was no surgery then. Of latter years there was a surgery and Doctor Lloyd Jones would come out from Bridgnorth.

Joan. If we needed the doctor we'd go to Mrs. Webb at Penycroft and ring. That was the same family who had the quarry. There was Dr.Dixon and Dr.Rhodes who were our doctors, private you had to pay. Then there was Dr. Lloyd Jones, he used to come to Stone Row and he'd have a surgery there once a week. In the part that is now the Post Office. You didn't have to pay if you went there. And then when he finished and Peacock Hill was built there was a lady at the far end Mrs. Knowles, and a doctor came from Bewdley, but that was in the 1950's. And when he'd finished there he'd have a surgery round where Mr.Bannister lives now. The ambulance and fire engine were kept near Northgate in Bridgnorth. My uncle's father a Mr.Williams was the ambulance driver, the fire engine driver, the sanitary inspector, I think he had five hats. So what happened when there was a fire and you wanted an ambulance I don't know.

Albert. We had to leave Potters Loade, there was all houses down there, because of the fumes from the mound. All the mound set afire. If the wind was blowing over our place it was terrible. I come up here. I've been here twenty nine year. Look at that pit mound, now look what it's burned down to. Mind you there's some lovely scenery all through there now. There used to be three cottages down there. It didn't affect me til I was sixty six, after I finished work..... I tell you what it's like living in jail living here compared to down there. You had a big garden and could go out and shoot a rabbit. Loads of wildlife and that.

## People

Bill Scriven. Tilly Boroughs, Miss Boroughs, was a tiny woman, she lived in the stone cottage going down the bank. Some nights she'd be the only one in church when we was choirboys. Mrs. Thompson used to have an old Bentley, when she left the gates at Coton she'd put her hand on the horn and leave it on till she got to Alveley. She was a terrible driver. She'd have about six white Pekinese dogs in the back. Howard used to come on his own in another car. She was an eccentric woman.

Alice. Grove House. Well France's lived there after Mrs. Cresswell, they lived there in latter years. They were there when mother was alive. When Mrs.Cresswell used to live there it was a guest house. She used to have visitors in the summer. And she always had a schoolteacher to live with her.

## Work

Dolly. My dad was a miner when he came here, down Kinlet pit. He was too old to go down Alveley pit, he used to work on the road then. He was eighty nine when he died. Mother was ninety two. When my husband came back from the war he went down the pit, he used to have the detonators and the powder for the fire men, he had that six years before the pit shut. They closed the pit in the January and my husband died in the February.

Bill Scriven. Dad went to work on sinking the pit, he was a bricklayer on the sinking. Then after he came back from the army he went to the pit as a bricklayer. All the crossings of the roadways had big brick pillars in, also walls were built. A bricklayer was full time. When they built the miners bridge there was an Austin Seven on the other end with the tyre off that they used to drive the winch. Potters Loade was in the meadow right by it. There was also a ferry on the other side of the wood, the wood was young then. I worked in the mine when I first left school. I was a timber lad. I was there when they put the aerial ropeway up. It broke within weeks of them opening it, they made a mess.

John Weir. Before the Alveley mine opened my father used to haul the coal from Highley through the river at Hampton Loade and deliver the coal. The one time he was fetching some over the river was in flood at Hampton Loade, he got halfway across, one of the horses fell down and he was thrown in the river. I worked on a farm when I first left school, down at the Lakehouse and I then worked on the surface at the mine for a time. My first job was pony driving, there were two on the surface and about three or four down the pit, but by the time I went down I think there was still a couple down there but they done away with the ponies. I done that for about 18 months then I went down the pit. I worked on the haulage for about two years. You had to have six months training for face work, eventually I went on the coal face and I worked at the coal face for about seventeen years doing one job or another. Mainly coal filling, we were known as fillers the ones that stripped the coal. It was the happiest years, really, of my working life, I know it was dirty and rough and dangerous work but it was really happy because the atmosphere down there was entirely different. When the pit closed several of us went to work in a factory and we thought it was going to be the same but it never was. When I first started at the pit the wages were about three or four pounds, it was an improvement to the farm wage. When the pit closed we were earning about twenty two pounds in 1969 which we thought was a good wage. It eventually closed and we all managed to sort ourselves out, gradually moved to the carpet factory or the Star etc.

Albert. When they finished the pit they threw their lamps down the mound, anybody could have them, down by the powder magazine. There used to be a big board with all the lights hung on and your numbers, mine was 41. They throwed it all.....

Joyce. Dad worked on the railway. He was a ganger. Before that he worked at the sawmills at Dudmaston. Mum and dad both worked at Dudmaston, mum was cook for Captain Whitmore. They had the house from the job at Dudmaston. Granddad was there as well, he was a forester at Dudmaston.

Bing. We had a mixed farm, sheep, pigs, cattle, corn, hay, horses for working. I worked with the horses more when I was at school. We used to do raking of the hay and all those sort of jobs in the holidays.

John Taft. Our first tractor was 1938 Standard Fordson, orange one, it was very useful. But half the time they didn't know how to drive it or how to start it up so consequently it was all horses. I learned to plough with horses when I was 13. When I was a lad I had to take the horses to Tom Fenn, Six Ashes to have them shod, I often took two horses at once, I'd only be in my early teens, two shires. Punch and Bonny. I used to go and he'd be nowhere around and I used to go round the side wicket and knocked the door, "brought the horses for you to have a look at Tom", and he said "Pop over to the Ashes and get me a pint of beer and I'll be out", I did that and when I got back he'd be in the open shed ready to shoe them.

Bill Scriven. The last team of horses that worked round the district was Tommy Davis's who now owns the Bow Hills. Their ostler used to come from Heathton Farm, Claverley, which they owned as well. Roy Winwood had a team as well when I was a lad, potato digging.

Lily. My dad worked down the mines and all his brothers. Dad was at the face. He had his leg broke he was kneeling down and the coal fell on him. Cut it by hand, they had a tallow candle and a big belt and moleskin trousers. They had the tin bath ready when he got home and he had the first go with the hurden to get the first black off, every day. Black all the time, every where they sat. When I finished school I come to Quatt Post Office on the telephone. I was the operator, it was a small exchange all together with the stamps and that. We had nine pence for each telegram we delivered on a bike.

Dolly. We used to go out in the fields when I left school at thirteen. Pea picking and potato picking. We used to plant them in April. I didn't like the fields much we used to get wet all the time. Tell you the truth when I was thirteen coming on fourteen I went to the factory in Kidderminster making Tassles, I got fed up of that so I left, I had to walk from here to Highley station to catch the six o'clock train, I got fed up of that. So I come back and I was in Clarke's shop down there for five years till I was nineteen. Then I went

to Bridgnorth as a nanny minding Paul Ridley of the seed merchants on the bridge. Then I went to Kidderminster for a bit and got fed up there again, I didn't like Kidderminster much. I used to go strawberry picking at Lakehouse, plant them and pick them. Raspberries, gooseberries and he had some potatoes as well. I had seven children and forty two grandchildren. You had to work for your money, we only had a pound a day potato picking and I had to pay the rent. I used to like to work, when my husband was in the war I was across here in the fields at five o'clock in the morning, my kids were asleep, I was pea picking. I'd pick ten nets of peas then come across and get em up for school, get em their breakfast, give em a good wash and when they'd all gone I'd lock the door go back across the fields and pick some more peas. I'd come back at twelve and cook em some dinner and they'd go back to school at half past one and I'd go back again picking peas til 3.30. We used to have a bit of fun?. When they got the tractors it was much better. Poor old horses used to get stuck in the mud.

## Food

Alice. We had a lot of fruit at home, every kind of fruit because we had a very big garden, the only thing mother didn't grow was peas, because she'd get a pot of peas from the farmer, and main crop potatoes. We used to just grow new potatoes. We had four long rows of raspberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries, redcurrants, and four very big Walnut trees in the field by the house, I should imagine they're down now because they were huge.

Jack. Mum wasn't a very big woman but she looked after us, we never went short, none of the fancy things but all the essentials. Great hunks of beef, roast on a Sunday, cold on a Monday with spuds and pickled onions cos it was washing day, and then what was left over stewed on Tuesday. We used to catch a rabbit or a bird occasionally. We had two pigs and some chickens. We had a big garden and an allotment as well, grew all our own veg.

Dolly. I had a pig every year down the orchard where I lived before I went to Peacock Hill. We used to take him to the slaughterhouse at the back of the butchers shop, by Centre Place. They used to have some lovely meat there. A great big joint of meat for five shillings. It was all cut up for us. I used to have a big pantry, it was all salted and I'd hang it up in a pillow case. The man who killed it used to salt it. There's nothing left of a pig, I used to make brawn and pigs puddings, the meat was lovely. We had a big garden at the orchard by Ivy Place.

Lily. There used to be a pool with ducks on. The police house used to be down there as well, Humphries his name was. He summoned me dad for poaching, we'd always been such friends and neighbours, our dad never forgive him. Because of course in those days uncle Jeff and them, if you wanted a pheasant they used to sit on a gate and watch em go up. Our dad said when that pheasant said 'cock up' he was there for the night. He'd go down about twelve when the moon was shining, up went the gun, down come the pheasant. Then they used to take the nets to catch the rabbits. They had a pig in it once you know, they brought it home, yeah. I was only small.

Albert. I used to do farming. Threshing and all sorts. It was only eighteen bob on the dole and I'd see them going to Highley to get it, they wouldn't have it on the farms. Hedge laying and all that I've done. Old Joe Knowles as used to keep the boat, he had some sheep, came and said to me, "Albert will you come and help me I don't know how to do it, I've got two ewes in lamb". I said well I think I've got some grease and some gloves. It was a lovely day, I turned the lamb over, cos they've got to be born 'yed first, and drewed it, oh weren't her pleased. I don't like drawing calfs. Pigging is easy, we used to keep three sows, til the pigs come to twelve bob apiece. We used to keep ducks, geese, fowl and pigs. Almost every house had a pig. And I'd put a snare out and there'd be a rabbit in there. Get the gun out after the pheasant. The river used to be full of fish. The Otters used to catch salmon and only ate the bit off the back of the neck, I've had loads of salmon off Otters. There's nothing of that now. No trout or dace or eel. Eel tastes beautiful.

Bill Scriven. In the boat meadow my uncle Walter had a milking parlour and they used to milk by hand and deliver the milk round Alveley. Walter Jones, lived in Dye Lane. He'd go with the horse and cart from Dye Lane to the boat, milk these five or six cows, put it in a churn then take it round the village. Morning and night. The other milkman was old codger who lived at 100 Alveley, at the bottom by Turley Green. Jean Links dad. Walter used to come to the school and ladle it into a jar.

John Weir. Mr Clarke at Birdsgreen, the shop, used to make their own bread and cakes, he had fields of peas. They used to go off at about four in the morning with the peas to Wolverhampton market.

Joan. In 1926 there was the general strike, and where the shops are now at Cooks Cross was a ploughed field and the kiddies from down Daddlebrook, of course there was no Peacock Hill or anything then, used to get in the hedge at the far end and came down and get the swedes from a bury in the field.

John Weir. At the Bell they used to keep a lot of pigs but also they used to make a lot of cider for the farmers, they would take their fruit, out in the yard, a big press. All the pulp was thrown in the orchard and the pigs used to eat it and they used to get drunk.

Bill Scriven. I remember them making ice cream there, big day the ice cream was. They had an electric ice cream maker, why it only happened one day a week I don't know, perhaps it was the milk being rationed, but when the day came there was a queue up the steps. Superb stuff. Old Mrs. Webb was there, little tiny woman, ever so nice they were, give more away than her sold.

### **The Ferry**

Alice. When I was quite young the boat from Hampton Loade got away from it's moorings and went down the river with Mrs. Mottershead and the ferryman. Took them right down the river.

Lily. When I went to school at Bridgnorth, we went across the river, three ha'pence return to catch the half past eight train at Hampton Loade. Out on a Monday then back on a Friday night and we had to shout 'BOAT' to the little cottage this side, and you'd see him open his door and you'd know he'd heard yer because you'd see the light.

Joyce. To call the ferry you rang the bell. Gil Wood's brother got drowned, they'd been over to the pub and he volunteered to swim over, the ferry closed at ten, he went in and that was the last they saw of him.

### **The Village Band**

Alice. My father and my brother were in the band. Dad played a big base, a great big thing. And Griff played the Coronet.

Bill Scriven. I can remember Jack Baldwin playing , he used to practice in the back kitchen. I had one of these cornets. All the instruments were left in the chapel. When Ray Pinchers done the conversion of the chapel the old outhouse was tumbling down and the rain was coming in, all the old instruments were in there, he gave me a cornet and the front of the drum. I don't know where the drum is now though. Our band used to go to Hopton Wafers to play, they used to get that drunk, they used to have some fun.

### **Village Life**

Lily. There were five taps at Alveley. There was one by aunty Tets at Stone Row. There was one by the old butchers shop and one by about 89 Alveley, one down the bank and one at the top of the village by Gompass's. You had to go out with the bucket, and when they went dry we had to walk a mile to fetch it from Banky Whittle or down to a well by Asgalore, dip the bucket in and get it out, and all the frogs were in the bottom. The well was past the old vicarage towards the pit, that's where we walked when the water

was short. Ivor Garbett now and Les go down to Whittle to fetch their water. Pure as can be.

John Weir. When I was a child we never had any electricity we had oil lamps, we thought electricity was marvellous. Also the water, we had all our water from the pump.

John Taft. All the Alveley people used to be after the mushrooms there on Banky Whittle, that's where Alveley water supply used to come from before the mains came.

John Weir. My father worked the ground where the working mans club and the village hall were built, Mr. Massey of the Church House Farm had the playing field. I believe they gave the land for the club and the field.

Bill Scriven. My uncle Tom Bailey kept the Three Horseshoes in the thirties I took the Three Horseshoes in 1971 and when we took the lino up in one of the rooms it had a label on addressed to my aunty Mary Bailey 1932. My gran kept the post office in the old days, she was the post mistress of Alveley, in three different locations the post office was. The old Post Office was the bungalow which Gwen Williams lives in now, which is the end of the drive of Hall Close, where the post box is in the wall. Our old chap was a bookies runner for old Ernie Evans, which was illegal in them days. He used to sit in the canteen and take the bets and then he clocked them in. Old Ernie Evans used to have a clock, a bag with a clock on like a pigeon clock, they put the bets in and clocked them in, locked and clocked so there could be no fiddling. You couldn't put a bet in after the race had started in other words. Old Ernie would come with the clock and then he'd bring the returns later. He lived in the cottages opposite the Lowe farm in those days. Then he came to live in Alveley down the lane by the chapel. The old girl, old Nance, took the bets, it was illegal, I believe, but they all did it. They also had a fixed odds football coupon under his own name. Dad used to do odd jobs building around, then he was the steward at the working mens club at night. He built the club that's there now. It was finished about 1952. It's been added to a lot now.

Bill Scriven. Jack Baldwin had two cherry trees in his garden, and of course you could walk that big wall and the object of the game was to get the cherries. An he had four basnut trees, walnut trees, two at the top of the bank and two down the meadow. Them down the meadow was always better than them at the top of the bank, no difference at all! But because you couldn't have them they were the best, and the object of the game was to get them.

### **FERRIES AND FERRYMEN AT HAMPTON LOADE** Personal recollections of Joyce Cooper

My first memory of the ferry at Hampton Loade was when I was about three years old being taken across the river on the ferry with my mother to catch the train to Bridgnorth to do the weekly shopping.

Mr Jimmy Christie was the ferryman at that time. Mr Thomas Bennett was the previous ferryman, the first to my knowledge to go down the river when the ferry broke away in midstream with a lady aboard, namely Mrs Mary Mottershead of Sutton Farm, Hampton Loade. This was an iron boat and it was recovered further down the river.

Mr Bennett lived in the end cottage of the row, when he gave up the ferry in the late 1920's he moved onto the other side of the river, he died on 16th September 1946 aged 68.

Mr Christie took over the ferry next and stayed about ten years leaving the ferry house in the late 1930's to live at the Bone Mill on Dudmaston Estate. In 1940 he was called up again to serve in the merchant navy, as during the 1914-18 war he was a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy. He passed away on 8th April 1976 aged 80 after spending some time in Arden Way, Alveley with his wife.

The next ferryman was Mr Fred James and his wife Millie. They had three children and lived in Highley before coming to the ferry house for a short while before returning back to the Ship Inn in Highley.

We then had a ferry lady, Mrs Jacoba Davies. She and her two children had come out of London to escape

the blitz. She took over the running of the ferry and made a good job of it, if anything went wrong the neighbours all helped. Her husband was in the Metropolitan Police and came when he had time off.

In 1942 yet another new ferryman Mr Bill Parkes came from Smethwick, he had an eventful life being the ferryman for some fifteen years, going down the river and living to tell the tale. In the winter of 1947 the ferry was out of use for two days because of the ice flow, ice blocks like tabletops, the noise was quite frightening. The flow had started in the afternoon and all the folk that had to cross the river had to stay on the train to Highley halt and walk over the colliery bridge then up the fields to Hampton Loade and back again the next morning.

Mr Parkes had several amusing things happen to him. One day a while ferrying a Shetland pony it jumped into the river and took him too. Another time a dead horse got stuck under the bow of the boat and it just would not budge. It took ages for helpers to move it.

Many trees have been stuck under the ferry without too much trouble until a fateful late afternoon in August 1957. The river was rising very fast with much rubbish floating down when a partly submerged tree trunk struck the boat and broke the overhead cable. As the ferry, carrying Mr Parkes, went down the river it got lower in the water and the ferries and punts down the river were alerted.

The first at Potters Loade, a punt, could not do much to help. Nor could the punt at the Ship Inn but they did try to get him off. Mr Parkes, now clinging to the mast, sailed on to Arley a few miles downstream. As the ferry got nearer the Arley ferry, which was much larger, was launched into mid-stream, manned by four men. The two custodians, Mr Fred Whatmore and Mr Bert Evans, helped by Constable Frank Dingle and Reg Withers, staying in Arley. As the Hampton Loade ferry bumped into the Arley ferry they all shouted to Mr Parkes to jump, which was not an easy task as he was up to his waist in water, but the four men managed to grab him and he was safe.

The ferry went sailing down to Bewdley where it was finally recovered. Mr Parkes arrived home some four hours after his ordeal started.

The ferry was brought back to Hampton Loade and stayed on the bank for some time while Dudmaston Estate decided what to do about getting a new one.

The residents had to walk to the main road and use a bus.

In May 1958 Hampton Loade had a new ferry and a new owner, Mr Parkes called it a day. The ferry was sold to Mr and Mrs James, brother of the former ferryman Fred James. The ferry had few mishaps under it's new owners until one Sunday afternoon, 13th December 1964 when Gerald's son and his cousin were manning the ferry. Again it broke loose when a half submerged tree trunk struck underneath breaking the cable. The river was rising and flowing fast as the ferry passed the cottages.

Gerald's son Robert jumped into the river to get help but was never seen again, he was just 22 years old.

I'm glad to say no more tragedies have happened to the ferry. Robert's mother Mrs Annie James and her sister Mrs Kathy Evans still run the ferry to this day 30th October 1995.

In 1941 I started to use the ferry and train everyday, first to go to school in Bridgnorth at a halfpenny each crossing. Then when I started work at a private chemist in Bridgnorth the ferry fare went up to a penny each way. Later, in 1949, it rose to three pennies each way. When Mr James took over the fare was reduced to two pence again. I understand in 1995 it's about twenty pence each way.

Prior to the war and during 1939-45 the ferry was well patronised with up to twenty five children walking from Alveley to catch the train to school in Bridgnorth. The ferry opened at 6am to take over the miners and railway workers to go to Highley and also workers who left their transport on the east side of the river to work in the Black Country. During the war German prisoners also used the ferry to go to work on the farms on the west side. I gather that the ferry is now the sole one left in Shropshire which is in regular

use.

## CELEBRATING HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE 1887

This quiet little village of Alveley was disturbed early on Monday morning, June 20th. by the footsteps of those who had kindly undertaken to decorate the village. Several wreaths and garlands were put up as early as 5.00 am. Soon after 8.00 am the bells of the parish church rang out a merry peal which was repeated at intervals during the day.

At 12.15pm a special form of service was held in the church, which was fairly attended, from whence the men wended their way to the Squirrel Inn where an excellent dinner had been provided by Mr and Mrs Clark of which 205 partook.

The chair was taken by the Rev. B. G. Durrad who proposed the health of her most gracious majesty Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales and the rest of the Royal family.

The children, numbering about 170 were next supplied with plum cake and tea underneath the trees adjoining the school after which an excellent tea was laid out in the schoolroom for the women, of which about 150 partook, consisting of ham and beef sandwiches, plum and seed cake.

Thanks to the ladies, about 16, who kindly presided at the tea tables and took care that all wants were supplied. During the women's tea the committee of management, J. McCloud Petley of Greenhouse, Mr H. Lawley of Bow Hills, Mr W. Cross of Astley, Mr G. Clark, Mr J. Clark and Mr B. Webb, treated the children to an afternoon performance in Francis' circus which had been erected that morning in a field adjoining the Bell Inn and which proved a great source of amusement to the children.

The rest of the evening was spent in races of various kinds and during the intervals a string band, which was in attendance, played for dancing. At 10.00pm a gun was fired which told the spectators that something fresh was about to take place, and soon after rockets and other fireworks were sent up from the wall adjoining the school house. The school was next cleared of tables etc. and dancing commenced which was kept up with vigour until the small hours of the morning.

Great praise is due to the committee who spared no trouble to make the rejoicings pass off successfully.

The farmers near Bowhills made up their minds to celebrate the jubilee on the evening of 21st June by means of a beacon fire. Large preparations were made by Mr Lawley of Bow Hills, Mr J. Gretton of Hartsgreen, J. McCloud Petley of Greenhouse, Mr Stephens Cresswell and others on a field kindly lent for the purpose by the Rev. Blissett, owner of Pool Hall. The field is at one of the highest points of the hill. A great quantity of faggots and other materials had been fetched by the teams of the above gentlemen a distance of two miles and more and piled into an immense stack. At 9.00 in the evening great numbers of people of every class commenced wending their way to the spot and by 10.00pm the number had reached between four and five hundred.

Soon after, the signal was given from the Malvern Hills and Mr Lawley gave the order to fire the pile which was promptly obeyed and the bonfire was soon seen from the neighbourhood around while on the field itself everybody could be plainly seen. The fire continued to burn vigorously until 12.00 and in the largest of the wood kept burning and giving great heat until four o'clock the next morning. In the meantime rockets and other fireworks were sent up lasting at intervals until 12.15am.

Refreshments in the way of drinkables were abundantly provided to allcomers. A band was also in attendance and played at intervals all night with dancing until four o'clock next morning.

## ALVELEY COUNTY SCHOOL

The Thirties

The following article is a summary of the booklet which was written to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary

of Alveley County School. It consists of extracts from the school log book and memories of some of the pupils about their times at the school.

The last day at the old school by the church was on 21st November 1934. The timetable had not been kept to at all that day as packing of stock and moving of cupboards and desks was in full swing. Most of the children were dismissed just before three thirty as it was impossible to carry on longer.

Names were entered in the registers ready for Monday and the children had been regrouped into three classes rather than four. A tearful farewell must have been said to Miss Wood who had served the old school for many years although the new school log put it differently - "Miss Wood was not present as she received notice that her services terminated as from the closing of the old school."

On 23rd November Mr Benson, the head teacher, and his assistant teachers, Miss Hardesty and Miss Richards, along with several of the senior children spent the whole day transferring stock to the new building. A lorry was engaged for the purpose and, when the old school had been swept out, the keys were handed to the vicar.

Gerald Scriven must have been one of those senior children as he remembers putting school books into prams and pushing them down from the old school.

The first day at the new school was on the 26th November 1934 with 105 children present. "The children were greatly excited and there were many matters to arrange..... so that little schoolwork was possible." Freda Scriven thought it was great. "We could see to do our lessons with the low windows, in the old school they were high like church windows and we couldn't see much."

Gerald Scriven tells us, "it was like being in a greenhouse. We sat at single desks and had inkwells which were filled with a teapot every morning. We wrote with nibs on a wooden stick."

Jean Link says "Desks were different with two people at each desk, not like the old ones, where several sat in a row in the Church School. Blackboards were large and on the wall instead of on easels."

Freda Scriven tells of making Horlicks which was sold at a halfpenny a cup. She also tells about making food for the Christmas tea, putting up decorations and having fun. Some things, hopefully, will never change.

Gardening became part of the school activities also. Gerald Scriven remembers "the bottom part of the playground was divided into allotments where we worked half a day a week growing flowers and veg for the summer fete."

This fete was at Coton Hall and Alwyn Evans remembers "there would be races and a fancy dress parade. Some of the children would do country dancing. I remember having a maypole where children would hold long strings and dance around the pole."

Swimming classes were started in 1936, Alwyn Evans tells "in the summer we would walk to Fenn Green to swim in the outdoor pool, the water was always very cold but we enjoyed it."

There was also a school trip each year to one of the seaside resorts, Rhyl, Southsea or Southport.

Nature walks were also taken to collect leaves, flowers and berries for the nature table and also for pressing in books.

The log entry for September 4th 1939 tells that "the whole weekend has been given up to the reception and billeting of evacuees from the Liverpool area. Eighty one children with six teachers and a head mistress have been received from Walton Lane Council School, Liverpool, and they will treat this school



as their centre."

The entry for September 11th continues, "the school, for the time being is to be worked in two shifts, one school taking lessons in the classrooms while the other school takes informal activities at the village hall and out of doors, this being changed over at mid-day.

Alwyn Evans tells, "We had air raid lessons and the children had to carry gas masks in little boxes. We would line up and go very quickly to a bridge across the field to Daddlebrook. We used to hide down by the bridge until a whistle was blown to tell us we could go back to school."

Alwyn also remembers collecting rose hips from off the hedges which were sent away to be made into rose hip syrup. Children also picked blackberries and had a week off school in October 1942 to help with the potato harvest.

## **THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF ALVELEY PARISH**

When I look out at the landscape of Alveley parish I see a mainly agricultural scene. Obviously the village has grown substantially in recent years but the parish still consists mainly of a few farms and settlements dotted about the countryside which surrounds the village.

All the more surprising then to find that there are many archaeological sites scattered about the parish and a substantial amount of finds of artefacts from recent and distant historical times which have been recorded. Most of these finds and sites are listed in the Shropshire Monument Record.

In the following article I give a simple outline of these and try to draw together other interesting details about them.

### **Artefacts**

During the drought of 1976 work to the surround of the natural spring at Allumbridge farm led to the discovery of a probably medieval iron arrowhead in the base gravel. The site is situated in a meadow of old pasture containing ridge and furrow. The find spot also yielded a medieval glazed sherd and course ware and a cut penny of Richard II (1377-99). Part of a medieval hand quern was found earlier in the year.

At Coton Dingle a Roman silver coin of Vespasian was found, dated AD 69 to 71. Another coin of Gallienus was found in the same field. Both coins were found by a metal detector in 1984.

At Tuck Hill a Bronze Age Acton Park type G Anglo Welsh palstave (axe) was found on land under pasture by metal detectors in 1992.

In 1919 at the Butts Farm a Neolithic polished stone axe of the Langdale Group VI was found in the quarry. It was 95mm long, 65mm wide and 26mm thick. Stour and Smestow Archaeological group walked several areas of the parish and found two worked flint tools and other field scatter including pottery and a medieval pendant at Moor House farm in 1971.

In the same area they found a core, scraper and flake all of which were probably Mesolithic, and one sherd of possibly Roman pottery. A Mesolithic scraper was found in Roundabout field at New Barns farm. At another walk at Little London they found a core fragment of a single flint. At the Greenhouse in 1972 five flints were found.

A worked Mesolithic flint was found at Tuck Hill farm in 1979.

### **Ancient Sites**

#### **Fenn Green**

At Fenn Green in a field opposite the end of Lowe Lane is a large feature rising immediately from the

main road to an approximate height of thirty feet which slopes steeply on two sides and gently on the other two. The mound top is a plateau, the bulk of which takes the form of a squarish depression roughly dropping about a metre at one end but levelling towards the west, facing the road.

A possible entrance faces north and in the corner adjoining this supposed entrance is a gentle tump. The swelling sides of the plateau top could be regarded as defensive but there is no ditch although there is a curving hedgerow in the rear.

The adjacent farm is called Lowe farm for which in Anglo- Saxon was the name for a mound or burial place.

### The Buttercross

The Buttercross near Moorhouse farm stands on the verge of a crossroads and is a plain stone shaft about five foot high on a circular base head retaining on each face traces of a Maltese cross. Although supposed to mark the site of an ancient open air market place it is almost a mile from the village suggesting a use as a boundary cross in time of plague to be more likely.

### Deserted Settlements

A possible deserted medieval settlement is recorded at Kingsnordley although no earthworks appear to survive. There is another deserted settlement recorded at Astley. At both of these sites there is very little to be seen now.

### Pool Hall Moat

Pool Hall medieval moat is a D shaped moat with a ditch of irregular width between 20m and 18m. It is waterfilled except for the south arm which is now only waterlogged (1980) and 2.5m deep. Only the east half of the south arm survives, the rest having been filled in to provide a more suitable entrance for the circa 18th century hall. The west arm widens into a lake feature about 25 metres wide.

Due to the marked drops in ground level at the north edge of the moat there is a very substantial irregular outer retaining bank along this side up to three metres high averaging 3 metres wide. This bank has a wide, probably modern breach in it's middle with a sluice. This may be a replacement of an earlier similar water control system at this point.

At the south east corner of the moat is a probable linear fishpond, no longer waterfilled. Also at the south west corner of the moat is another possible fish pond in the form of a large rectangular depression. There is also an area to the north of the moat covering 2.5 acres which seems a complex series of banks, mounds and pond bays. They all appear to be connected.

### Moated Sites

At Lanegreen there is a medieval moated site which came to notice in August 1978. The area is about 27 metres square and is enclosed by a simple dry moat, immediately adjoining on the east side is a large shallow pond.

Of further interest is a slightly raised bank twelve metres from the north edge of the moat running the two hundred metre length of the field and some six metres wide following the vague outline of a ditch. The bank seems to be a road bank. In June 1979 a small excavation showed the bank of the moat to be of clay with no stone or brickwork found.

Finds were limited to Stafford Ware pottery and one clay pipe stem, all lying at eighteen inches depth. The island measures 30m by 25m and has black soil marks in it's centre. There was a general surface scatter of stone and 18/19th century pottery.

At Chidleys farm there is a medieval moated site called Brierley Moat. It is a small well preserved square moated site, intact and complete. The island is about 23 metres square and the waterlogged moat is up to two metres deep and about 4.5 metres wide. The island is raised about a metre above the surrounding

ground level. There is an outer retaining bank on the west side. The moat appears to have been fed by a spring which rises at the north east corner of the site.

## **BEATING THE BOUNDS OF ALVELEY PARISH**

Sunday 21st May 1995

The day went as planned with about a dozen members of the Historical Society and friends meeting at St Mary's church and walking together along the river to Hampton Loade. A very convivial walk in pleasant conditions with the sound of the birds, river and steam trains to help us along the way.

On reaching Hampton Loade the run started with me following a footpath rising through fields of rough grass and then onto a track which met the Hampton Loade road leading up to the main Bridgnorth road. Straight across here on a footpath rising sharply along a field edge to Nordley cottages then following the road to Kingsnordley farm, the original home of the Astley family many centuries ago. Right here and then left along a footpath beside an old abandoned house, (which I don't know any history or name of, perhaps somebody knows and could tell me), then left by a peaceful little cottage, but no signpost, and down a muddy lane full of stinging nettles and brambles, lucky I left my tracksuit bottoms on.

This track led on to the road from the Cider House to Broad Oak, a very sharp pull up to the main Stourbridge road past a house with a wonderfully scented clematis, then along the main road to Six Ashes post office and left to Tuck Hill.

At Tuck Hill church I was greeted by Rev. Bill Pryce and several of our group. Bill gave a short reading and a prayer blessing the parish and then I was off again after Jim Cutts pointed the way. Down the road and left on a track which followed the ridge towards Romsley. The track soon gave way to a rutted cornfield with no stile at it's end or post to show the way, lucky I've got a good map.

Over the hedge and on a good track past High Barns farm to Batfield lane. Down the lane to Highbarns cottages and left onto a track running parallel to the parish boundary past Chidleys, the old moated site and abandoned Barrets and on down a muddy section which again joined the parish boundary at an ancient hollow way rising through holly trees towards No Mans Green.

The view was wonderful along this section and rivals any view in Shropshire. The route then followed the road down past Herons Gate Farm which was anciently called Herrings Gate, one of the old gates into the manor of Romsley, and then left across a field above Lenmores farm.

The parish bounds follows a deep gorge just above this track, and then along the escarpment behind Lenmores using the features in the landscape as a natural boundary just as it used the ridge I had just come along. The path then went through the farmyard at Lenmores and along the side of grassy fields, over several stiles, meeting a lane at Tucksash.

I detoured from the boundary here to follow the road to the site of the deserted chapel at Romsley. Here I was greeted with applause from the support group who had come to hear the blessing given by Bill. A bull in the field of the chapel site took a disliking to us so Bill said his reading and prayers at the gate by it's side. We wondered how long ago it was that a service of any kind was held at this site and the history of the chapel here and the neighboring moated site. A very moving occasion.

Having refreshed myself I set off along the road to Romsley, across the ridge and down to the Red Lion. I could have dallied and downed a pint or two here but valiantly resisted and crossed the main road then took a footpath running below the Lowe farm and then left along the road to the Butts farm. Left onto a footpath going through Nether Hollies, anciently Nether Holways, and joined the river Severn once again. The last stretch along the river reminded me of the time many years ago walking on the other bank with my wife and young children not knowing then about my association with Alveley in years to come. A pleasant run along the bank through the new country park which has replaced the pithead and workings, finishing, not too tired, at the miners bridge.

Another pleasant walk up to the church, homemade cakes supplied by my wife Anne, wine supplied by

Joyce Cooper completed a historic day.

It was nice to make history for a change instead of studying it.

## SHREDS AND PATCHES

The following extracts are from "The Rocks of Worcestershire, Their Mineral Character and Fossil Contents" by George E Roberts 1860. This book, while mainly dealing with geology, has several early references to Alveley and Romsley.

pp. 148/149/150 "of the coal measures".

"Half a mile east of these three works (in Shatterford, and presumably referring to the coal mining buildings) is Church Field, where in sinking for coal a pavement of encaustic tiles was exposed four or five feet below the surface, the poor remains of a long forgotten religious edifice, for local history has no record of any church there or ecclesiastical building whatsoever."

"A mile north of this place is Romsley chapel, a ruined church of which only the foundations can be traced. It seems to have been attached to the order of the Knights Templars as two carved stones, preserved by insertion into the wall of a neighbouring stable, have rude sculptures of the zodiacal signs Leo and Sagittarius which held a high place in their symbolism. A massive stone coffin from this place is now a pig trough in a near farmyard."

pp. 153/154/155/156

"Fossil plants are most abundant in Lane's Quarry, near Alveley. Perhaps the most pleasing relic of this tropical picture..... is a large portion of the stem of a Tree Fern allied to Caulopteris recently discovered there. The fragment of this vegetable is nine inches in diameter and has a surface seamed in alternate single and double series with attachment marks (areolae) on the ball and socket principle from which leaves have fallen. There are some good limestone plants about these quarries. The Bee Orchis and *Chlora Perfoliata* are both plentiful while the beautiful Wood Vetch (*Vicia Sylvatica*) is nearly as luxuriant in the neighbouring woods as in the Ludlow area.

"At the foot of the ridge west of Alveley is the spring that supplies that village with it's water. Well remembered should this name be, who in the middle ages bequeathed it, and land adjoining, to the parish, for it is often their only supply, the hill being arid and dry and the line of springs far beneath the village. In old documents it is called the Whistell Spring, a suggestive name now corrupted into Whittall. Many years ago through neglect, the field was lost to the village and the time honoured well itself became a matter of strife.

However nothing could disturb the villagers right to it's clear water and the farmer who sought to turn it and them out of his field succumbed to the bill of pains and penalties an indignant people held before his eyes."

pp. 158. Alveley Church

"The nave arches are good late Norman with an upper story of Perpendicular work. The elegant Piscinae of an intermediate period are in the church and the tower angle of one of the battlements is oddly finished off with a medieval carving of a fox carrying off a goose which may be, I quote, I borrow the words of the worthy Rector, "a sly fling at the rapacity of the monks suggested perchance by some secular clergyman of the period who had suffered from their encroaching practices".

The line of the chancel is a good example of Festival Orientation as it deflects towards that point in the east at which the sun rises on the day of it's patron saint St Mary. Though other interpreters of ancient symbolism consider the crook in the church line to signify the bowing of the Sacred Head on the cross"

pp. 159

"On 29th November 1620 there was, to use the quaint language of a contemporaneous diarist, the greatest floode in ye River Severn that hath been since ye floode of Noah for there were drowned at Hamtones

Loade sixty eight persons as they were going to Bewdley Faire.”

### **DISASTER AT HAMPTON LOADE**

The above article refers to a disaster at Hampton Loade where sixty eight people were drowned. I have looked through the parish register and found the entries concerning the disaster but find that it was in 1607 and not 1620 as stated.

The register extracts make interesting reading as the burials were made over a period of several weeks, the river must have been reluctant to give up it's dead.

30 Nov 1607 Francis James and Robert Walles' wife of Fayntrey being two of them that were drowned were buried.

5 Dec 1607 The wife of John Hayward of Much Wenlock, being another of them which were drowned, was buried.

6 Dec 1607 Parnell, the wife of Humphrey Stringer of Fayntrey and Margaret the wife of John Harris of Deuxell and Elinor the wife of Thomas Fewtrell of Olbury were buried and were more of them which were drowned.

9 Dec 1607 Richard Acton of Bridgnorth, Ralphe Williams and his wife, strangers, John Parkes of Bridgnorth, John Jaxon of Bewdley, a young maid with a reed heade, whose name was not known, being drowned were buried.

12 Dec 1607 George Symons of Acton Rownde, Richard Clayton of Much Wenlock, and the wife of John Pearkes of Bridgnorth were buried, being more of them which were drowned.

16 Dec 1607 A stranger lade being drowned was buried.

1 Jan 1608 The wife of Thomas Smalman of Bridgnorth was buried and was one of the misse adventure.

8 Jan 1608 Francis Collins was buried and was one of them which were miss ventured.

### **THE RE-OPENING OF THE CHURCH**

November 1879

The following is a summary of a newspaper article which was found by Bing and Joyce Cooper in their collections concerning the above occasion.

On Wednesday last this beautiful old church was re-opened by the Bishop of Hereford in the presence of a large congregation.

During the last century the church suffered from alterations in accordance with the taste of the day and the restoration works which have just been brought to a conclusion have been directed to little else than the undoing of these efforts of misapplied ingenuity.

At that time the south porch was pulled down, the moulded bases of the grand Norman pillars were cut away, the lancet windows of the chancel, the traceried windows of the aisles, the string courses and hood mouldings both inside and outside were ruthlessly destroyed, the floor was raised nearly two feet above its original level and on it were erected high pews reaching halfway up the pillars.

On the chancel was placed a low roof with lathe and plaster ceiling and last but not least in the centre of the chancel arch stood a large "three decker" pulpit, equally unsightly and uncomfortable, blocking up the church and spoiling the proportions of the building.

Under the superintendence of Mr A. W Blonfield, the well known architect, these evidences of bad taste have been obliterated and the building restored as far as possible to the state in which it was left by the medieval architects.

Fortunately, enough of the old work was left to show what the design had been, and under Mr Blonfield's care, preserved.

Among those things which made the restoration of Alveley church especially noteworthy was the discovery of an extremely beautiful altar cloth dating from the latter part of the fifteenth century, richly embroidered in the best style of medieval art and in many respects a worthy rival in the west to the

celebrated Ely copy in the east of England.

A magnificent and faithful copy of this altar cloth has been made by the Wantage Sisterhood with which the altar was vested on the occasion of the re-opening of the church.

On Wednesday the services began with a celebration of Holy Communion at 8.15am. At 11.00am the church was filled with a large congregation in spite of the bad weather comprising most of the parishioners and a goodly number of the gentry and farmers of the neighbourhood.

The church looked extremely bright and well and in the north aisle stood the new organ, the money for which had been collected by the indefatigable exertions of the vicar, the Rev. C.W.Mackey, built by Mr Eustace Ingram of London, and placed under the charge of Master Wedley the organist of the Church of Holy Innocents, Tuck Hill.

The Alveley choir, reinforced by voices from choirs of the Churches of the Holy Innocents, Kinver and Worfield were placed in the chancel and discharged their duties throughout the day with great ability and heartiness. Seldom indeed have we heard a brighter and more hearty service. Shortly after 11 am had struck the procession of clergy emerged from the chancel.

The Bishop, preceded by his staff borne by Rev. T. Horsfall, vicar of Bobbington, took his seat on his chair within the altar rails. Rev. John Purton, Rural Dean of Stottesdon, Rev. Canon Howell Evans, Rev. H. Pugh of Wombourne, Rev. W. Cheshire, vicar of Wribbenhall all helped in conducting the service.

At the afternoon service the church was again well filled. The service was conducted by Rev. H. Parsons, vicar of St Mary Magdelene, Bridgnorth, Rev. F. Mather, Rev. J. Wilding, Rev. Howell Evans, vicar of Oswestry and Canon of St. Asaph.

On Thursday last a childrens service was held in the afternoon at which an address was delivered by the Rev. C.W.H.Kenrick vicar of Poulton, Gloucestershire. On Sunday there will be a celebration of the Holy Communion at 8.30 followed by morning prayer at 11 with a sermon by the Rev. T.M.Bulkeley Owen. Evening prayer will be at 6.30 when the Rev. E.P.Nicholas, vicar of Worfield, will preach.

Collections will be made at each service in aid of the restoration fund which is still considerably in debt.

Amongst the special gifts to the church may be noticed the work done to the Chantry Chapel, south, by Sir Offley Wakeman, altar and altar furniture by Mr. H.O.Wakeman, candlesticks by Mr.W.J.Richmond, vases by the Rev. C.W.Mackey, cross by a number of subscribers of small sums, bible markers and choir books by Mrs.Whitaker, bible and prayer book by the Rev.G.Amphlett, kneelings for the font by Mrs.Amphlett, pulpit hanging by Mrs Thompson and chalice veil by Mrs E.M.Wakeman

### **FIELD NAMES AROUND THE PARISH OF ALVELEY**

Devotees of the Old Testament may be familiar with the story of Naboth's Vineyard.(Kings I Ch.21) What has this ancient story to do with Alveley? Nothing apart from the fact that a small field that existed close to Perry House was, many years ago, called Naboth's Vineyard. I doubt very much that vines were ever planted there (although we know that in Roman times vines were grown as close as Arley).

It possibly had much more to do with the probability that someone other than the rightful owner coveted it. Whether they coveted it to such an extent as the original was we shall never know. However it is an interesting story and is one of the many enigmas that come to light when studying the old field names.

In common with villages and hamlets across the country Alveley has it's Little London. This was an area set aside for use by cattle drovers en route to London with their cattle and sheep.

Other names have connections with Old English, i.e. "The Starches, (named in 1770) possibly derives from "Steort" which was a projecting piece of land. The Bowells is another example, deriving from "Boga", which was a "curving boundary".

Other names are more simple in derivation. There was Pot Hook, so called because the shape of the field looked like a pot hook. The Bannuts simply refers to the large variety of walnut trees grown either in field margins or close by. They also named fields after flowers, and so they had "Smock Shirt Meadow". How often do we see Lady Smocks now?

The list can go on and on and there is much more research to do. Does anyone know how "Scrill Scroll" got it's name? The reason is at present lost but we hope to find out.

### THE ALVELEY COAL MINE

One of the research group projects which started during 1995 has been to begin the collation of information on the Alveley Coal Mine.

The project is in the very early stages.

One of the first priorities has been to identify the number of ex-miners still living in the village and to make a start on recording and transcribing their memories. Several recordings have already been made and it is hoped eventually to have approximately twenty.

A further two recordings made by a student in 1983 have also been transcribed<sup>7</sup>. The recordings cover not only specific memories of mining but also more generally of village life.

The second priority has been to commence a literature search. Very few artefacts remain. Some buildings are still in existence on what is now the Alveley Industrial Estate. One wheel of the ropeway mechanism which carried coal from the Alveley shaft to the coal preparation plant on the other side of the river lies half buried near to the right hand end of the miners bridge on the west bank. It is hoped that this can be excavated and exhibited.

Perhaps other artefacts may be discovered in the future.

The Alveley Coal Mine should perhaps be more accurately called the Alveley Shaft. The Highley Mining Company was formed in the 1870's and Brooch coal was struck in 1879. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the 1930's the mine employed between 400 and 500 men. The workings spread across to the other side of the river in 1930 and a large shaft was sunk in 1935-37 on the Alveley side quite close to the river bank.

As the new shaft and workings came into operation coal extraction from the Highley shaft declined and ceased in 1939. A new bridge was constructed across the river for miners from Highley to reach the Alveley shaft and in later years (1961) an aerial ropeway was constructed to carry coal from the shaft to new sidings and washeries on the Highley side.

During the mid 1950's the mine employed over 1250 men. Shortly before the pit closed numbers had declined to about 700. For many years production was over 2000 tons per week and reached a peak in the late 1950's. Output peaked in 1959 at 300,000 tons raised by just over 1000 men. In the late 1950's a major new development took place to allow an eastward expansion of the coal face and both underground and on the surface a virtually new mine was constructed. This was completed in 1962 and the colliery was forecast to have another fifty years life.

It was planned to work the coal as far as the Badderidge and Shatterford workings near Dudley and Kidderminster. However geological and economic problems, and difficulties with power loaders forced the closure of the mine in 1969.

The Alveley shaft was last used for winding coal on 31st January 1969 and the shaft was subsequently filled during April 1969. The Brooch seam varying between three feet six inches and four feet in thickness extracted was the only seam worked. In general terms the workings dip to the southwest of the shaft and lie at an average depth of 1400 ft.

A photocopy of a National Coal Board undated map of the workings of the Highley Colliery is in the Severn Valley Country Park visitors centre office with a small collection of photographs and other documents about the development of the Country Park.

The following brief extracts from some of the transcribed tape recordings give a glimpse of other aspects of mining activity.

Basil Morgan remembers his first experience in the mine, "I left school at 15 years of age in 1954. The Bevan Boys were still in operation and there was two years National Service so if you didn't work down the pit you were liable to be called up at 18. There was very little work in the village and the carpet factory took a few of the school leavers but the fathers got their own sons jobs there. The farmers took a few.

I left school on the Friday and started down the pit on the Tuesday. The first days training started at 7.30am. I did six months training, two days each week at mining school and three days at the pit. The first day down the mine was frightening, it's dark, it's black, it smells.

After six months training it was only one day a week at school. I was paid £3.9s the first week, out of which came ten shillings towards the cost of boots, the first helmet was free. After six months I started an apprenticeship as an electrician but the wage was only £1.6d a week and I couldn't afford it. The apprenticeship was seven years and I gave it up. I went into the back end getting supplies, we called ourselves timber lads, getting supplies to the face. The top money was £9.5s a week. You weren't allowed to work on the face until you were 18".

Bill Morgan , Basil's father, started at Highley Colliery in 1931 at the age of 14. Bill recalls the time before the bridge was built" we went across the river. "We went across the river, got to be there for ten to seven. Over the railway and the pit was just up the lane.

You could see the stack from Alveley". Asked how he'd got across the river Bill replied "Boat from Potters Loade - only a small one that would take nine or ten - we had some rough rides on there when it was in flood. We used to wait until we had a load then go up the river and strike over to get to the other side. We had a paddle apiece. When the river was low it was hand over hand on a rope."

Asked if local miners sunk the Alveley Shaft Bill replied, "No - Banford and Gee from Nottingham, and they built the bridge. I worked on the bridge. A little Austin Seven was used to run the ropeway. They buried it in the ground and worked it off the back wheels. It took buckets of cement to where it was used. I worked on the bridge until it was two yards from the middle. I got a penny an hour more than the others for working up in the air".

Tom Cadwallader made some comments about markets for the coal in the 1930's. "We used to send fifteen to twenty truckloads of slack to Kidderminster carpet factories. We sent it all down country to Torquay and South Devon Coal Co., to Shrewsbury, to Bridgnorth and all Shropshire, Tenbury Wells, Ludlow and all around the area."

In reply to a question on what sort of industries were taking coal Tom replied, "All the metal works of the Black Country, the hop yards bought and it was used to dry the hops. They sent it to Wales, they had pits of their own but they used to buy off us." In response to another question about transporting the coal Tom replied, "Yes, the railway was the easiest way to send it. Kiddie' was our best buyer for slack. Austin Brothers, the coal merchants, sold it to the various factories, they took twenty trucks a day."

John Wier started working in the mine in 1948 and recalls some details of the movement and marketing of coal, "early on there were some screens on this side, (Alveley), of the river and it was taken away by road. They took a lot to Marsh and Baxters the sausage people at Brierley Hill. Also quite a lot went to Stourport Power Station. The majority went by road, queues of lorries through the village."

John made the following comments about his life as a miner (of over twenty years), "it was the happiest years, really, of my working life. I know it was dirty and rough, dangerous work, but it was really happy because the atmosphere down there was entirely different. Everybody relied on everybody else. When the pit closed several of us went to work in a factory and we thought it was going to be the same but it never was.

Although the pit's been closed for over twenty five years I still meet up with one or two old mates that I



worked with and it's just the same now as if we were still working together."