

## A Curious Footpath on the Milverton/Warwick Parish Boundary

Old photographs show an ancient cobbled footpath and bridge across the River Avon at Saxon Mill. Outwardly this is just a footpath crossing the Avon, which happens to mark the Milverton/Warwick parish boundary. It extends from the river crossing as far as the Coventry/Warwick Road and is properly defined with a row of kerb stones, - or at least, it used to be. This curious, well defined path is said to have caused trouble when the original mill was converted to a hostelry, as it was not part of the Mill site. Arrangements had to be made to define the path as a separate entity. Many years later when drawing the enclosure map of Milverton parish, I noticed something odd across from the rear of the Saxon Mill: the boundary, which followed the river along that side of the parish. The bridge and the footpath, although on the Warwick side of the Avon, were shown on the enclosure map as part of Milverton parish. Whether the Saxon Mill bridge had always been part of Milverton parish we do not know, but it was no doubt useful to both the landowner Bertie Greatheed, who lived on the Warwick side of the boundary, and the parishioners.

We now enter the realms of supposition. A scrap of paper (CR 1707/101) in Warwick County Record Office indicated that Lady Greatheed had arranged a footpath along the bank of the Avon from the rear of Rock Mill Cottage along the river as far as Saxon Mill bridge. A footpath now used mainly by fishermen requiring access to the river-bank, and incidentally passing through a children's playground, the site of the original village. We can only make a guess as to why Lady Greatheed organized the riverside path. My suggestion is that an original bridge at Rock Mill, upstream of the present bridge, had failed. There is evidence on old maps of an access road on the Warwick side of the Avon, presumably leading to an older bridge at Rock Mill, the failure of which would have left Leamington and Warwick separated. Eventually the Earl of Warwick and Bertie Greatheed got together and paid for the Portobello bridge to reunite the towns. In the meantime, Lady Greatheed provided a footpath to allow those on foot a route along the river bank from Rock Mill to Saxon Mill, and so, into or out of the county town, while the local coach and wagon traffic were denied access to the detriment of both trade and social life. With the completion of the Portobello bridge, the riverside footpath became just another footpath on a map.

Whether the original Saxon Mill bridge was always part of Milverton we cannot tell, but Lady Greatheed's footpath must have been a tremendous boon to foot travellers between the two towns, whilst wheeled traffic had to await the design and construction of the current Portobello Bridge.

*Mick Cullen*

## The Ironmen of Leamington

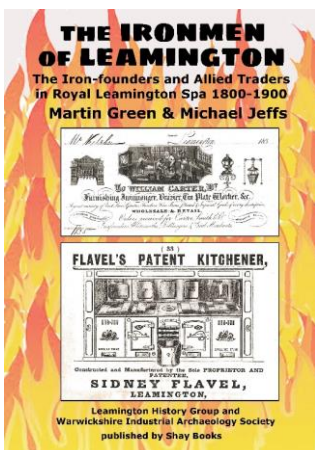
This book was born out of the shared interest of two groups, the Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society and the Leamington History Group, in the ironwork of the town of Leamington Spa and the iron-founders who manufactured it.

Many people, especially those from Leamington, will have heard of Flavel's cookers and gas fires. Few will be aware of the long history of this company or the involvement of many other businessmen in building cooking ranges and other iron products in the town in the nineteenth century. Local iron-founders and allied tradesmen were mostly strong characters but, for one reason or another, some survived in business only briefly. We attempt to unravel the technology involved as we explore the businesses and the various exploits of some of the industry's eccentric characters. Publication is expected to be mid-April 2019, and

the book, costing between £10-£12 to members, will be available from WIAS, LHG and local retail outlets.

To reserve a copy, please contact Margaret Rushton ([rushtonmm1860@gmail.com](mailto:rushtonmm1860@gmail.com)).

*Mick Jeffs, Editor*



## Leamington Spa and North Wales: an interesting connection

Curiously, there is an unexpected link between Leamington Spa and the slate quarries of North Wales that in the nineteenth century supplied the bulk of the world's roofing slate. The Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group has just published a book, *The Croesor Tramway: A History of the Tramway and Quarries of Cwm Croesor\**, detailing the slate quarries of the remote Croesor valley, where some of that slate came from. (The lower part of the Croesor tramway became part of the now re-opened Welsh Highland Railway.)

The tramway which ran down to the wharf at Porthmadog, was built to the order of Hugh Beaver Roberts, a successful Bangor solicitor and businessman. H B Roberts was born in Bangor in 1820, qualified as a solicitor in 1843, and was active in a wide range of legal, industrial, social and cultural activities in his home region. He was a landowner and Registrar of the Court of Probate at Bangor. Further research shows that besides his railway, quarrying and legal interests, H B Roberts was a Justice of the Peace, District Registrar at Bangor to the Court of Probate and variously Deputy Lieutenant for Merioneth, and Member of the Bangor Board of Health. He had a home in Denbighshire, where he farmed sheep and cattle, and also managed to fit in time to act as political agent to the Hon. George Sholto Douglas-Pennant, whose family owned quarries and the Penrhyn Estate (now owned by the National Trust.) He seems to have been something of a 'mover and shaker,' to use modern parlance.

By 1871 he was living in Leamington, at 9 Warwick Road "North Milverton", not an easy address to pin down. It appeared to be what is now Lucas Court, on Warwick New Road, but after a few false starts, with help from LHG, I learned that the Roberts family lived for a time at Thornbank, the biggest house and grounds on Warwick New Road, which eventually became Warwickshire College. The site is now covered with modern college buildings, but in 1871, the Roberts family lived at Thornbank in style, with a cook, an upper- and an under-housemaid, a kitchen maid and a footman. They also had a coachman who lived with his wife and family in the adjoining coach house and a butler and his family occupying a lodge. Old ordnance survey maps of the area show extensive grounds with ornamental shrubs and hothouses, bounded by the railway line and Milverton Station to the west, but stretching down to the river.

So why did Hugh Beaver Roberts come to live in Leamington Spa? It could well have been for health reasons, given the reputation of the curative waters of the Spa, but there may also be a 'slate' connection. John Whitehead Greaves, a Radford Semele-born businessman who was instrumental in developing the celebrated Llechwedd Slate Quarry in Caernarvonshire, retired to Leamington in 1870 and is buried in Lillington. He too was a Deputy Lieutenant of Merionethshire, and a JP. It may be that these connections brought H B Roberts to Leamington Spa in the 1870s. He eventually returned to North Wales, where he continued to practice law until his death in 1903. Having qualified sixty years earlier, he was said to be the oldest solicitor in Wales when he died. His wife Harriet Maria and a son predeceased him, and he was buried at Llandegfan Church, Menai Bridge on 27th April 1903.

Despite extensive research I have not been able to find a portrait of Roberts or an image of Thornbank. Perhaps readers of this Newsletter can help.

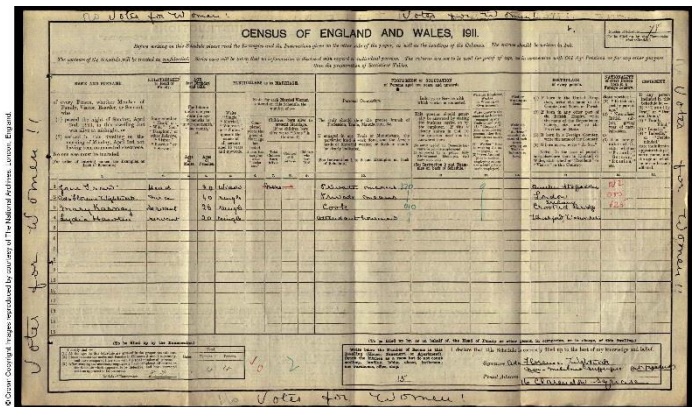
Nick Booker, Chairman, WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY HERITAGE GROUP,  
[www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk](http://www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk)

\* "The Croesor Tramway: A History of the Tramway and Quarries of Cwm Croesor" is stocked by Kenilworth Books in Talisman Square, ISBN 978-0-9930821-6-0

## 'Mapping Women's Suffrage, 1911: A Snapshot in Time'

Tara Morton was a postgraduate student at Warwick University, researching Women's Suffrage when she discovered from the LHG website that two well-known Leamington residents, Mary Dormer Harris and Mary Louise Vellacott were prominent members of the local Suffragist movement. Further research using 1911 Census returns and press reports revealed that such middle class luminaries were not the only local activists: there were young women from all walks of life who risked their livelihood, and in some cases,

estrangement from their families, to support the push for votes for women. Quite a few men also supported the cause. Tara presented her research to LHG last autumn, when the project to map women's suffrage was in its infancy. She surprised us all with her findings, which included one resident of Clarendon Square who defaced her Census return by writing 'Votes for Women' in all four margins of her form. Someone else, perhaps the person who checked the form, inserted the word 'No' in front of the slogan. Both



very risky things to have done, at the time!

Tara wrote recently: "The project map and website are still in the very early stages of development, with a small sample of campaigners, but it is now online at <https://www.mappingwomensuffrage.org.uk>. "Mapping Women's Suffrage" plots the locations, lives and materials of suffrage campaigners, in the towns and cities where they lived across England in 1911. The map recognises the contribution of multiple suffrage organisations – both law abiding suffragists and law-breaking suffragettes - in winning Votes for Women, as well as revealing the often-hidden lives of ordinary campaigners.

The project is committed to sharing, building and improving knowledge and access to the histories of the Votes for Women campaign. It is a collaborative project which brings together and works with local history groups, family researchers, academics and archivists to create an unprecedented map of the Votes for Women movement and its diverse campaigners. Mapping women's Suffrage is a long-term legacy-building project, and we are continually exploring avenues of funding for regional project developments, events and workshops.

I will be sending out more information about the project soon and how you and/or your local societies and organisations can become involved - putting your suffrage campaigners or ancestors on the 1911 map. You can also keep an eye on the project website's *Get Involved* page. For further enquiries please use the Contact Us form on the website or email me at: [mappingwomensuffrage@gmail.com](mailto:mappingwomensuffrage@gmail.com)"

*Image courtesy of National Archives, Kew*

## Leamington History Group Committee, 2019

Chairman: Barry Franklin  
Treasurer: Ian McCutcheon  
Web Manager: Mick Jeffs

Vice Chairman & Walks Organiser: Michael Pearson  
Secretary: Margaret Rushton  
Membership Secretary: Tessa Whitehouse

Committee members: Bobby Boalch, Stella Bolitho, Joyce Plumb, Maureen Thornton

Committee members can be contacted via the Secretary, or through the website, [www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk](http://www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk)

## Reviews, with Tessa Whitehouse

**Monday 28 January: Mick Jeffs, *Royal Leamington Spa: A History in 100 Buildings***

Following the A.G.M. we had a short talk by member Mick Jeffs about our recent publication 'Royal Leamington Spa: A History in 100 buildings'. A dedicated group of LHG members pooled their research to produce a broad picture of the Leamington that we know today. Reading through the book it soon becomes clear that it is not just the old and well - documented buildings that are featured but those that built in living memory which have become familiar landmarks in the town. They were selected not just for their architecture and cultural significance but for their current contributions for entertainment, retail and residential use. There have been many changes: The Lachine Hotel and Harrington House in Newbold Terrace were demolished to make way for the new Justice Centre and the Spa Centre.

The story of the town reflects the 20th century's continuing need for more housing. One of the first developments was the Rushmore Estate, embracing the Waverley Road area with its familiar and unique design. This area also has its own history being close to the former railway sheds and coal yard, and the memory of residents quick to follow any lorry with a bucket to collect fuel supplies as the vehicle negotiated the railway bridge!

Mick went on to talk about town plans which never came to fruition, such as an eastern by pass and a north south route from Lillington to Sydenham. Should these have been followed through the town would have become unrecognisable. One which did take place was the redevelopment of Eastnor Terrace which paved the way for the railway station and its car park, a project which is forever changing to meet today's needs.

Such has been the book's success that several reprints have been made to meet the unexpected demand. We are all grateful to Mick and his dedicated team who have enjoyed giving us a terrific insight into the town's past, and its continuing development. What next, we wonder?

**Monday 25 February: Allan Jennings & Peter Coulls, *Leamington & Warwick Tramway***

This absorbing subject began with Allan Jennings giving a brief history of the coming of the trams, starting in Birkenhead in the 1800s, and soon seen in many other towns. In Leamington, a route was established between Avenue Road in Leamington, going up the Parade and along Warwick Street, across a widened Portobello bridge, up Smith Street and through Eastgate arch to the terminus in High Street, Warwick. The first trams were horse-drawn and proved very popular. To keep the system moving, grazing land was needed, and extra horses to allow for breaks and the extra power to haul heavy loads.

The Tramways Acts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the demise of the horse-drawn trams and the introduction of electric trams. Tracks were electrified and vehicles purchased from various sources, one of the first being from Taunton. Tram sheds were set up at Emscote Road and what was Warwick's power station was built to provide the power to keep the system running. This finally closed in the 1970s.

Following the introduction of buses, the tram system closed in 1930 and the tracks were covered over or removed, but there are still remains of some track under the tarmac in Smith Street, discovered during roadworks. One of the early horse - drawn trams was discovered at Yarningale Common during the 1980s and the writer remembers seeing this when out with her children and wondering what it was and why it was there. It was later removed to a museum. Nationwide, trams have since been given a new lease of life in museums such as the one at Crich, Derbyshire and Beamish, County Durham, and they have made a comeback in cities such as Manchester. Allan and Peter's research revealed so many different aspects of what the tram system brought to the town, creating opportunities for work and easier movement. As in all transport systems there were accidents and there were notable ones at High Street in Warwick and Eastgate. We enjoyed a wonderful picture of the tram journey between Warwick and Leamington which originally took about 35 minutes - has *anything* changed?! Allan and Peter left us all eagerly looking forward to the publication of a 'Trams' book in the not too-distant future.