

TCHT Newsletter

Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust

SPRING 2010

www.thecleehilltrust.co.uk

Registered Charity No. 1120659

Welcome to the latest issue of
the TCHT Newsletter.

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STOP PRESS NEWS:

SHORTLY TO BE LAUNCHED:
TCHT Monthly LOTTERY DRAW,
Win prizes and help support events

Forthcoming Events:

Saturday 17th April: Skittles evening at the Royal Oak on Clee Hill

Saturday 22nd May: Bluebells and Bellows
A blacksmithing demonstration by Darren Broome at the 19th century Bitterley forge and walk past the bluebells along Benson's Brook to the hydro dam.

Saturday 19th June: The Industrial and Social History of the Clee Hills. Guided Walk and talk with Alf Jenkins.

Saturday 25th: the Autumn Fayre at Mahorall

Saturday 9th October: The Serpent Gathering—Story Walk and talk on the prehistoric enclosure. In association with Cranesfield Bardic Arts.

For further details and booking please visit the website www.thecleehilltrust.co.uk

There will be a small charge for each event, pre

A Present from Clee Hill Marjorie Hammond



Looking at the attractive range of Clee Hill memorabilia TCHT now has on sale (see back page) I was very interested to see some rather older examples belonging to Mr and Mrs Bill Warrington.

The cup "A Present from Clee Hill" is Staffordshire bone china and at least a hundred years old. It was probably bought from Mr Theophilus' shop at the top of the village but we cannot be sure because most of the shops on Clee Hill would have sold these gifts. What a treat for the people living and working in the industrial Midlands in those days to come to Clee Hill with its wonderful views and open space.



The jug is of a later date, possibly the late 1920s. Again, the inscription is "A present from Clee Hill" and below the picture "The waterfall, Clee Hill". The waterfall is at Fairy Glen and the photograph was taken by my grandfather, C.H. Hooper, Photographer. However, this is not Staffordshire china. The logo on the base says merely "foreign".

I wonder if any TCHT readers also have items such as these?

A WINTER WALK

On the 23rd a walk on Catherton Common was jointly run by Shropshire Wildlife Trust and TCHT the first event on the area of Catherton recently purchased by SWT. Despite being cancelled due to overnight snow a bunch of intrepid folk arrived at Cleeton St Mary Village Hall at 10 am on Sunday morning. The sun arose to light up the new hazel catkins and make the white dressed hill sufficiently attractive to climb up the old tramway to Magpie Hill, 16 people braving the white stuff .



The Industrial Archaeology of Catherton Common and in particular Magpie Hill was the focus of the day and in deep snow and sunshine we climbed up the incline, adopted on the way by a friendly local hound keen to go for a walk with anyone who would take him.



We didn't see much wildlife, apart from a few intriguing paw and claw prints in the snow, but we did hear the Ravens calling out, as they start their annual mating rituals, tumbling through the sky above the hill summit. The Dragonflies didn't make an appearance on the

frozen clay pit ponds near the old Catherton Pit, but it was a wonderful walk and interesting talk about the old mines and aerial ropeway that once carried the buckets of quarried stone to Detton junction on the Ditton Priors to



Cleobury railway, over what is now the SWT Catherton Common reserve.

This aerial ropeway, over three and a half miles long was built in 1908 as part of the Catherton Quarry. All that now remains are the concrete bases of the pylons and the ruined remains of the terminal buildings within the old quarry, but once it was one of the longest such structures in the country. Terminal buildings circa 1908 shown above.

We returned to the Village Hall for a bowl of very welcome hot soup supplied by Diane from SWT

Further walks with Shropshire Wildlife Trust (Ludlow Branch) are planned for the summer, Contact Jim Martin (01299 271532 or email jim.martin73@tiscali.co.uk) for details

NATURE NOTES:

This winter has been the hardest and longest since that of 1963, far more the type of winter that many of us remember from times past. I 'm sure many of us will have thought how can climate change exist if we have such a winter? But climate change has been ever present, the earth is used to it. It 's us that are at the mercy of both climate and weather.

The ice and snow has perhaps reminded us just how we are still at the mercy of climate. What is certainly beyond question is that this winter has been long and hard. More so for the birds, many of which will never in their short lives have experienced such conditions. I know many of you will have been providing food for them, saving many lives. Below is a recipe for a fat ball cake that we have used throughout the winter, appreciated by a wide range of birds visiting our bird tables, which this year for the first time included redwings and fieldfares.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 oz lard
- 4 oz dried fruit/cheese—mix
- 2 small apples chopped
- 1lb mixed bird seed
- 6oz dried stale bread, crumbed



Mix dry ingredients, melt lard and pour onto dry mix and stir until all stick together. Split into four and put one quarter into a polythene bag, form into a ball. Repeat with remaining quarters, or if preferred put into suitable containers. Allow to set and then remove. This will give you four large fat balls which will provide valuable food for a range of garden birds.

But perhaps winter is now behind us, last week on the hilltop the first skylarks were singing, marking their territories out for a new year. The snowdrops are fully in flower, the first harbingers of Spring. But small birds will be in poor condition and need still feeding stations



and in the last few days crocus have suddenly appeared opening their heads to the welcome sun. Though much later than in recent years Spring lies close, breathing new life into a winter world.



Thoughts of Spring take me to the Nuvvers for which TCHT currently has a grant bid with Natural England. Soon the woodland flowers will be blooming there. Below is a celebration of the riches of our wood by Alf Jenkins

Trees, wood and man

Alf Jenkins MBE

As a child I spent a great deal of time in my Father's workshop, he was a wheelwright, carpenter and undertaker as well as being the publican at the Dhustone Inn. A craftsman, who knew about trees, timber its nature and varying properties. Much of this rubbed off on to me and has been ever since an intricate part of my life. Trees have helped the development of man's civilisation through the ages; providing natural fuel for warmth and cooking, food, hunting weapons, shelter, buildings, agricultural equipment, the wheel, our ships and railways to name but a small fraction.

When conducting groups to look at the Nuvvers' lime industry I realised it could be a much wider and enormously beneficial resource for future generations of school children. Head teacher Marjorie Hammond encouraged me to take her pupils there.

Since the formation of TCHT in 2006 I have felt that the Trust should do its utmost to purchase the “Nuvvers ” for the benefit of Cleve Hill Community, future generations of school children and all those interested in Cleve Hill ’ s remarkable industrial heritage. The “Nuvvers ” is a gem, too precious to lose or allow to degenerate or disintegrate.

The tall, **elegant ash** is and has been so useful. In the early nineteenth hundreds my Father accompanied my Grandfather, also a wheelwright to choose naturally shaped ash branches which could be sliced lengthways to make a pair of shafts for a farm wagon. The timber is a hard, creamy white and has elasticity. Hence my Father used it for felloes (outer rims of wagon wheels) because it could withstand bumps and ruts without cracking. That is also why it is still used for hammer handles and axe shafts. As a young man my Father worked for Morgan Motor Works at Malvern constructing car body frames – made from ash and many of you will recall that the wooden framework of the Morris 1000 and Mini Estate were also ash.



Father used **oak** because of its strength for spokes of farm cart wheels, for coffin boards, gates and any construction which required strength. When ‘quartered ’ it exposes the food cells, medullary rays giving it an unequalled beauty admired in first class furniture. Children will hopefully know of the ‘armada ’ and our famous wooden galleons constructed from oak at the time of Queen Elizabeth 1st.

Unfortunately Nuvvers lost its **elm** due to the ravages of Dutch elm disease. That majestic tree has a beautiful, brown, wild grain which because of its twisty nature just will not split. This was the reason why my Father used it for the hub of a wagon wheel and again for coffin boards. Many will know that Ercol made all its fine furniture from this timber too. In the round it will twist and contort. Most of our country cottage roofs in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire were made from elm poles. Hence the frequent dips and bumps we used to see on the roof ridges

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree
A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy palms to pray
A tree that may in summer were
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain
Who intimately lives with rain
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree

.The distinctive **Scot’ s Pine** is a hard, ‘ softwood ’ , excellent for bridges, old wooden ploughs and joinery.

Larch, the only ‘ evergreen ’ to change colour and lose its needles is an easily planed timber and one of the best for general joinery and railway sleepers.

Yew can survive for a thousand years. Think of our world when those trees were seeds – the time of the Battle of Hastings, Norman Conquest and Domesday Book. Its timber has a wonderful array of colours and polishes beautifully. It was used extensively for bows because of its strength and elasticity and because of its close grain golf club shafts and chairs. But beware! Its berries are highly poisonous and can kill browsing cattle.

Alder is useful to grow near water or in damp ground because it absorbs great quantities of moisture. It will last forever under water therefore was excellent for bridge piles. Of course its most extensive use was for making clog shoes for thousands of workers in industrial Lancashire and Yorkshire and great quantities were sent from this area to those counties.

Apple/Crab. This beautiful, close grained timber has a variety of orange, brown and very dark colours. It is excellent for lathe work, golf clubs and handles.

Beech, my favourite tree. Its leaves survive throughout the winter, retain good cover for birds, act as a wind break and are 'pushed off' when new spring growth appears. It makes an excellent hedge. Its pinky, orange flecked, close grained timber makes excellent furniture. It will bend easily and so is extensively used in chair making. Lie under a beech tree and look up into the branches. You will see a wonderful creation. Branches are arranged in a whirl so that every one obtains some light. Beech absorbs a tremendous volume of water. A mature specimen can take up as much as two or three hundred gallons in one day.

Birch, the lady of the woods with delicate leaves, catkins and scintillating bark. Its swirling twigs were clamped together to make besoms, the witch's brooms. Its very close grained timber is best for sheets of plywood. Many country folk including me have made delicious, potent birch sap wine.

Chestnut, the poor man's oak is brittle but nothing cleaves better and so it is well known for making chestnut fencing and for roofing shingles. Referred to as 'the poor man's oak' because the colour is identical to through and through oak and was asked for by locals for a coffin because it was much cheaper.

Holly. A leathery, spikey leaved tree with beautiful red berries; loved by us all at Christmas time. It is a good source of food for birds. Its timber is very hard and white. It is not often available to convert into wide planks but because of its straight grain it is a favourite for fine inlay work or banding around the edges of high quality furniture.

Sycamore produces an attractive, white, flecked timber. During my childhood it was used in great quantities for making mangle rollers. This very close grained wood even when wet did not produce splinters which would have caught in clothing and sheets; neither did it leave any stain on whites. Sycamore does not exude any taint and is ideal for bread boards and other kitchen and cookery uses. Its beauty and sound conducting properties makes it a favourite in the construction of violins. It was extensively used in the printing industry for printing blocks and its very close, hard grain is excellent for billiard cues.

Hawthorn. Well known for its vicious thorns which makes it unfriendly and animals wary of it, but its bright, red berries make a welcome feast for birds during the autumn. The old saying is that a good crop of hawthorn berries implies a hard winter. Its timber is very hard. It burns brightly and its straight grain chops easily. Ever since the time of the Enclosure Act it has become the best known hedging plant. It can be sided up easily and pleaches very well. By this method old hedges are rejuvenated to make an excellent stock proof fence.

Elderberry. This pithy tree, so common in hedgerows has useless timber value, but its dark clusters of berries are loved by birds. Country folk make potent red wine from the berries and elderflower champagne from the white blossoms.

Hazel A valuable coppiced tree which is pliant. Excellent for woven panel fencing and coppiced osiers for making baskets. It is a very good, fast growing hedging plant and of course a source of food (nuts) for us and squirrels too.

The above trees are associated with the Nuvvers. How wonderful if we could eventually make it a treasured arboretum for all to share and learn from!

Thank you Dad for imparting your knowledge and craftsmanship.

Titterstone Tea anyone?

Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust now has a range of merchandise available, all proceeds to the Trust. Designed by Jane Summers, bags and coasters are available, and the mugs with a rare picture of Clee Hill with blue sky are limited edition, with a new design coming out in December.

Mugs £5 each
Coasters £2 each
Shoulder bag £4 each

Please contact the Trust if you would like to buy any of these items.



Titterstone Tales: Sue Thomas

The Stories and Folklore of the Hill

In her book "Shropshire Folklore – A sheaf of Gleanings" Charlotte S Burne writes-

"some such legends.(of Giants)..must once have been told of the Giant's Chair on the Titterstone Clee, but they are now, it is to be feared, entirely forgotten, though the tradition still survives that there was a *battle of the giants* on the Titterstone, and that the loose stones about its summit are their missiles still lying scattered there"

She also mentions the Giant,s Shaft at Abdon Burf as being a fallen megalith or menhir "over eight feet long, and tapering from two feet four inches square at the base, to one foot eight inches square at the upper end"

Somewhere in time, a story was woven together from these threads, and became the legend of the Clee Hill Giant who battled with the 2 Giants of Brown Clee, throwing rocks and trees and eight foot long shafts of Dhustone. After the battle, the Clee



Hill Giant lay down to sleep, and was covered with stones by the Hill folk. According to Legend, he lies there sleeping to this day.

Can you see the Giant's face on this photo? Perhaps this is why this particular quarry is no longer worked ?



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