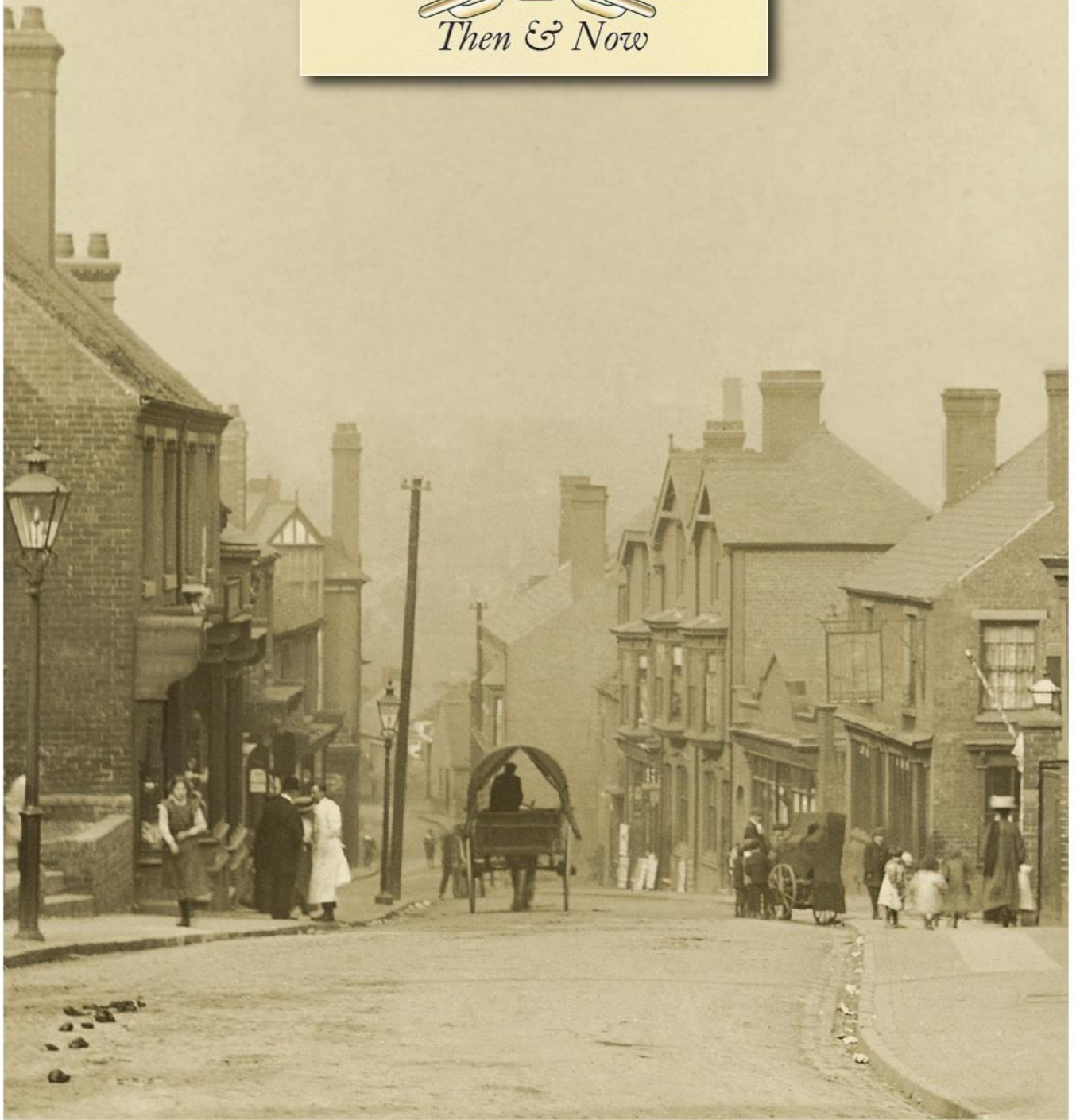


Cradley

Then & Now



School Education Pack

This education pack has been produced as a resource for the teaching of Cradley's history.

There are 3 accompanying DVD films which provide more detailed stories and are broadly divided into the following categories:-

History & People

Work & Play

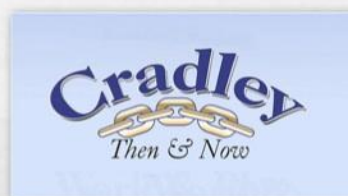
War & Peace

The Cradley Trail has also been produced to give information about sites of special interest around the village.



Stories

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The Broadstone

Cradley - a brief history

There is evidence that people inhabited Cradley in ancient times. At Oldnall nearly 6,000 struck pieces of flint have been found. These date from the Middle Stone Age, between 8,000 to 6,000 years ago. It is thought that on this high ridge was a summer camp, set up by about 30 nomadic hunter-gatherers. They followed the seasonal migration of elk, deer and cattle to upland summer pastures. These people used temporary hide shelters and would chip away at flint cores to make tools.



Arrowheads from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages have been found and pottery shard from the Iron Age. Also hundreds of other small objects, including a dolphin broach and glass phial. This suggests there was a farmstead at Oldnall during the Roman occupation of this country.

The name Cradley has Saxon origins. 'Crad' might have been a Saxon pioneer who lived in a clearing in woodland called a 'leah'. The boundary of Cradley dates back to this time and follows the River Stour, streams and an ancient footpath called the Kings Highway. The local dialect was also influenced by the Saxons.



From the Domesday Book of 1086 we know that Wigar, a Saxon, held Cradley before the Norman invasion. It was given by William the Conqueror to a Norman baron who sublet it to a man called Payn or Paganus. At that time there were just 15 households in Cradley. 11 lived on quite large farms, the rest on poorer ones. They shared 7 ploughs, each with a team of 8 oxen.

The manor of Cradley was bought and sold over the centuries. It also changed hands as a result of favours and politics. A Deer Park was enclosed by Baron Roger de Somery. He was the Lord of the manor and lived between 1208 and 1273. The Deer Park was between The Hayes, Two Gates, Tanhouse Lane and Park Lane. In 1473 the manor of Cradley went to the Crown and King Edward IV gave it to his Queen. In 1564 Sir John Lyttleton of Frankley bought it, along with Oldswinford, Hagley and Clent. The family still own Hagley Hall and surrounding land.

In June 1644 during the English Civil War, 40 Parliamentary troops are said to have had their quarters in the area of Barrack Lane. Their cost to Cradley residents was £11 per week. Officers would have been based nearby at the partly moated Manor House in The Park.

Dudley Castle was a Royalist stronghold that kept local villages under control. This made sure that Cradley's forges and iron works supplied King Charles with equipment and weapons. The Parliamentary troops aimed to take the Castle. Although support for them was widespread in Cradley and surrounding area, they did not succeed.



Drawing by: Rose Priest aged 7



St Margaret's Church, Ratlinghope

Mahlah Homer - *the nail maker's daughter who became lady of the manor*

John Charles Addyes Scott was a wealthy merchant in Victorian times dealing in nails and chain. It is thought he was a 'fogger' who supplied iron sheets or rods to workers. He then paid them for the finished chain or nails.

One day he was in Cradley on business walking down Furlong Lane. He heard a woman singing so beautifully that he had to find the singer. It was Mahlah Homer, making nails in the family nail shop. John Charles fell in love with her voice and later with her. They married and Mahlah became Mrs Addyes Scott, Lady of the Manor of Ratlinghope, in 1863.

Mahlah was the 7th of 11 children of a humble nail maker. She never forgot her family back in Cradley. She often visited her old home arriving in her own horse-drawn carriage. She usually left money to buy sweets for the local children.

John Charles paid for Mahlah to train as an opera singer in London. She was invited to sing all over Europe.

Mahlah was a strong minded and generous woman. She was also eccentric, excitable and temperamental. Once she fired a gun in the house, leaving bullet holes in a door.

John Charles died suddenly at their villa in Naples, Italy. In Cradley people read the news of his death in a local newspaper dated 28th January 1888.

Mahlah donated generously to good causes. She paid for a new school house to be built near Ratlinghope. She also gave money for new windows at St Margaret's Church, Ratlinghope. These were in memory of her family and her parents, Jesse and Hannah Homer of 'Birfield', Cradley.

Mahlah died in 1907 following an accident when the horses pulling her carriage bolted.

The Cradley nail maker who became lady of the manor is buried in a simple grave in the churchyard at Ratlinghope.



William Caslon - printer & engraver

According to reference books and word of mouth passed down over the generations, William Caslon was born in Cradley. The son of George and Mary Casselon, he was baptised on St George's Day, 23 April 1693. This was at Halesowen parish church, as there were no churches in Cradley at that time.



William was the child of Dutch immigrants. His parents came to England in 1688, following the Glorious Revolution when William of Orange became King of England. The family was probably attracted to Cradley by the iron trade. The village was involved in the engraving of gun locks, barrels, swords, cabinet locks and hinges. When old enough William was sent to serve an apprenticeship in the engraving of gun locks and barrels in London.

In 1716 William opened his own engraving shop in London. He began to engrave brass tools and stamps for imprinting titles on leather bound books. This led to him setting up a type foundry in 1720.

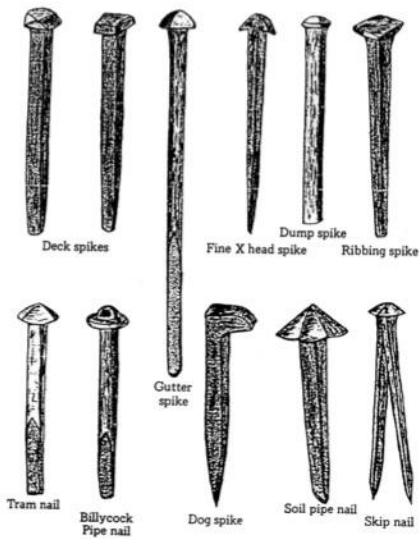
One of his first commissions was to design and cut the type for a Psalm book and New Testament. Use of the Caslon, or as it was also known 'English' letter typeface, spread throughout Europe and the American Colonies. By 1737 William Caslon's company was based in Chiswell Street, London. It was the first major type foundry in Britain.

Among his friends were the musician Handel, preacher John Wesley and politician Benjamin Franklin. Caslon died on 23 January 1766 aged 74. He was buried at St Luke's Church, Old Street, London.

William's work remained extremely popular in the American Colonies. It was used for the first official printings of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. His typefaces were used for most important printed works from about 1740 to the end of that century.



Taken from 'When I was a boy' by Clifford Willetts



Nail & Chain Making - work of men, women and children

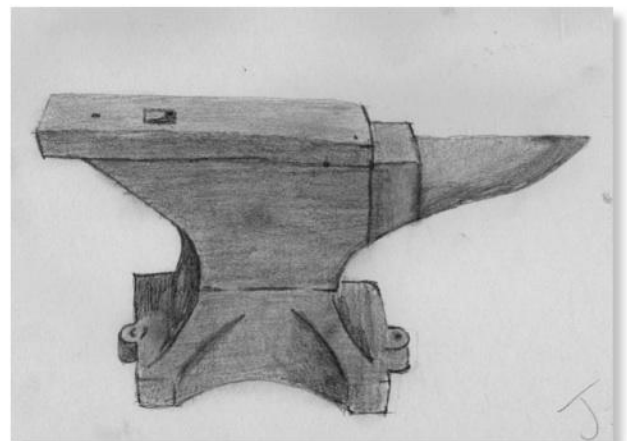
Nail making was going on in Cradley from at least the 1500's. Up to the 1600's the nail trade was mainly part-time, along with agriculture. In bad weather and during winter farm workers turned to nail making indoors. Sheets of iron were slit by hand with a hammer and wedge to make metal rods, of different thicknesses suitable for the size of nail to be forged.

Later nail rods were cut in the slitting mills such as Shelton Mill (the converted medieval corn mill) which was powered by water.

By the 18th Century the trade was full time work. Families were totally dependent on it for a living. Nailers worked from a raised stone hearth at their homes. They used fire, bellows, a small anvil and various tools. They hammered the red hot iron rods into shape. For large nails a spring tilt-hammer (oliver) was used. They did the same simple job for 15 hours each day. The work was hard but earnings were low. Children worked at the family fire as soon as they could handle a hammer. Some at the age of six stood on bricks to reach the anvil.

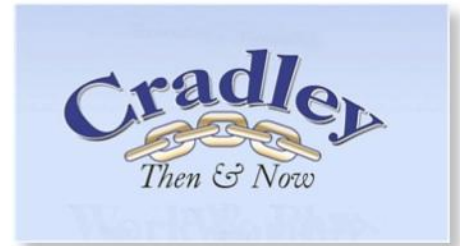
Middlemen and women known as 'foggers' provided the rods to nailers. They often supplied poor quality, wrongly sized rods, on credit. They bought back the finished nails at low prices, or by 'truck' (payment in goods not money). Foggers often used weighing scales that they had tampered with to pay the nailers less money.

Nails made by women were treated as inferior products. Usually women's earnings were half the man's rate. Therefore husbands and wives often worked together because the finished product could sometimes be priced up as made by the man. Many kinds of nails were produced and were taken through Bewdley and Worcester to Bristol. From there nails were exported by ship to North America and the West Indies.



Anvil by: Jake Chester aged 16

By the end of the 19th Century new nail making machinery had lowered nail prices. Nailers had to turn to chain making for a living. Many continued to work at home, using the same sort of tools, usually in a small 'chain shop' or 'brew house' just a few yards away from their back door. They became skilled in producing chain from iron rods, but were still poorly paid and often struggled to pay the rent.



Coal for their fires was mined in several pits in Cradley. Fireclay also came from the coal pits and was used locally to make fire bricks. These were needed to line large industrial blast furnaces and to produce high quality iron.

In 1848 Noah Hingley began making anchors and large cable chain in Cradley. When he moved his factory to nearby Netherton he took his highly skilled men with him. These gangs of experienced, hard working chain strikers could make a good living. The men in charge of them, such as Ben Hodgetts, were able to buy houses and shops. Ben worked on the cables for the well known ships Titanic and Lusitania.

Chain making died out in Cradley during the 1960's when production in England became unprofitable and the few remaining chain works closed.



Titanic by: Ryan Priest aged 13

Steve Bloomer

World's first football superstar

A memorial to Steve Bloomer, the world's first football superstar, stands in Bridge Street, Cradley. It is opposite to where he was born on 20th January 1874. Steve became the most famous football player of his time. He scored 28 goals in 23 games for England, a record that stood for almost 50 years.

His father was Caleb Bloomer who was a puddler at the iron works. The surname Bloomer is centuries old and comes from work in the refining of iron ingots or blooms.

In 1879 the family moved to the large industrial town of Derby. The arrival of the railways had made travel possible for ordinary working people. So Steve Bloomer left his birthplace at the age of 5 but he often returned to Cradley by train to visit relatives and friends.

Steve played football at school in Derby. When he was 11 he watched an exciting league match. He decided he wanted to play football for England. At 12 Steve left school, having learnt to read and write, something his parents never did. He worked with Caleb at the factory but being a professional footballer continued to be his ambition. He played for several local teams. At 17 Steve was described in the press as, 'The best young prospect we have ever seen'.



He eventually became a professional footballer with Derby County Football Club. His wages were so low then that he continued to work at the forge. In his first Football League game he scored two goals. He celebrated by doing cartwheels. Steve was his team's top goal scorer for 14 consecutive seasons.

Steve was of medium height and slim build. Because of his very pale complexion he was called 'The Destroying Angel'. He made his England debut in 1895 and scored 2 goals. For the first time his father was there. Caleb had always worried that Steve might be seriously injured playing football. In Victorian times that might have prevented him from earning a living and led to a life of poverty.

His international record was superb. He scored in his first 10 matches for England. Even now he is still in the top 10 all-time goal scorers for his country.

He was one of the first working class heroes. With superb balance, he had devastating shooting power from any angle with both feet. Steve had a great career, never letting success change him. He is still remembered at Derby, whose fans sing 'Steve Bloomer's Watching'.

In May 1904 he played cricket in Cradley for Colley Gate. The following Thursday he presided over a supper at the Fish Inn on the High Street, now Colley Lane. The licensee was his old friend, Hezekiah Walker.



After retiring Steve went to Germany to coach a Berlin team. Three weeks after his arrival World War I began. He was imprisoned as an enemy alien. Afterwards Steve said that he survived because of sport and food parcels from home.

During his football career Steve never made the kind of money players do nowadays. It was his love of the game that fuelled his success. He enjoyed a second career as coach, manager and journalist traveling all over the world.

When Steve died in 1938 his funeral took place in Derby Cathedral – the biggest funeral ever in the town.



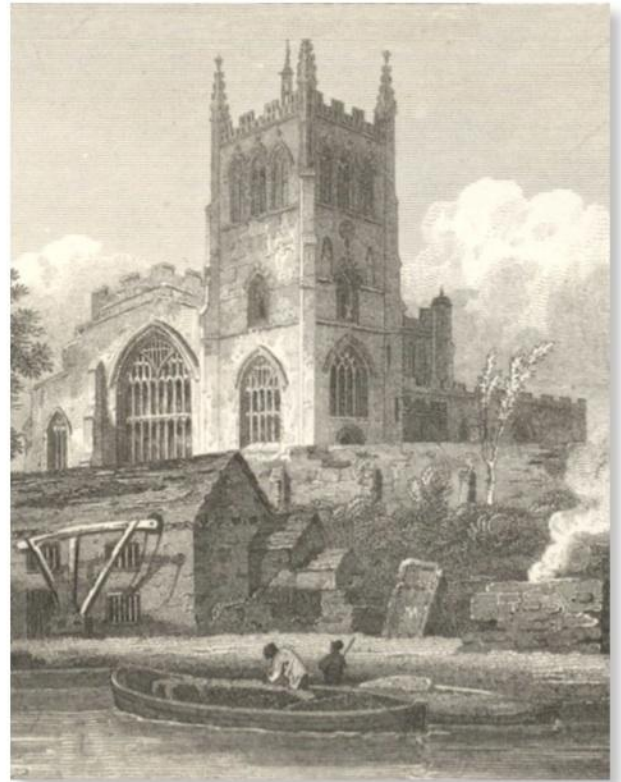
Elizabeth Beardsley

Poverty in the 18th Century

This is the story of Elizabeth Beardsley, whose father Richard settled in Cradley in the 1730s during the reign of King George II of England.

Elizabeth was a child when her own mother died. Her father Richard spent time in Stafford County jail. Elizabeth was left alone without any family to take care of her.

Her decision many years later to move on to Kidderminster with her own children ended in tragedy.



Kidderminster: Engraved by Sands, drawn by I Neale

In the winter of 1749 Elizabeth walked from Halesowen to Kidderminster, taking with her Mary aged 3 years and baby Elizabeth aged 3 months. She had no food, no money and no husband. Her only way to survive was by begging in the street, which was against the law. One punishment for begging on those days was to be whipped.

Elizabeth was arrested on Tuesday, 7th November in Kidderminster for vagrancy, living rough and begging. The children were also taken into custody. Under the Poor Laws local ratepayers were forced to pay for the food and housing of local paupers. Therefore, Elizabeth and her children were not welcome in Kidderminster.



Woman with children by: Lucy Clews aged 9

It was decided to send them back to Halesowen. By then Elizabeth had died because of lack of food and extreme cold.

Just the two small children were returned to Halesowen, possibly by open cart. Baby Elizabeth could not survive without a mother to feed and care for her. She died on the cold journey back to Halesowen.

However, Mary did arrive safely and was raised as an orphan.

War & Remembrance - Cradley memorials

In 1922, four years after the end of the First World War, an important ceremony took place in Cradley. In St Peter's churchyard an 'Avenue of Remembrance' was dedicated. This was in memory of the 60 former pupils of the Church Schools who had died in the Great War.

60 lime trees were planted by a relative or friend, one for each man commemorated. Each tree was supported by a wooden stake bearing the man's name. Together the trees formed an avenue leading up to an oak cross and memorial stone. Along the boundary of the churchyard and Homer Hill Road, 60 poplar trees were also planted.



Avenue of Remembrance

The Avenue of Remembrance was organised by teachers, former pupils, and the men's old friends from the Church Schools. A plaque in the school hall bears the names of some of the men who died.



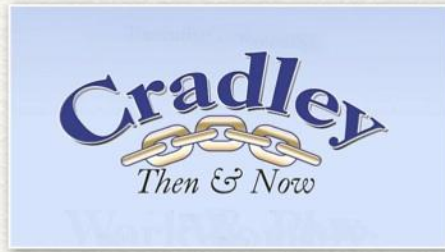
Cradley War Memorial

One of these is Joseph Tyler. Joe volunteered to join the army soon after the war began in 1914. He wasn't injured in the fighting but became very ill in the trenches. Eventually he returned to Cradley and sadly died in August 1916. Sgt Tyler was given a big military funeral. Hundreds of people watched the solemn procession through the streets of Cradley.

Colley Lane School also has a plaque, with names of its pupils who died in both World Wars.

In 1928 Cradley's war memorial was unveiled. It stands in a garden to the east of the main door of St Peter's Church. The names of Cradley men who died during the First World War were inscribed on it. After the end of World War 2 many more new names were added.

Each year, close to Remembrance Day, the pupils of Cradley schools hold a ceremony. During this they remember those who died in all wars.



For more information and to explore
further the history of Cradley visit:

www.cradleylinks.co.uk

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