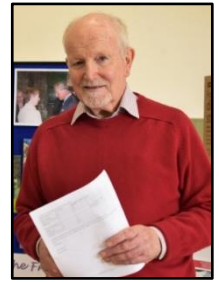


Friends of Ironbridge Gorge Newsletter

June 2026

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the reincarnation of the 'Friends', now to be called **Friends of Ironbridge Gorge**, whose aims are going to be similar to the old Friends in that we dedicate ourselves to provide support for the museum now called 'Ironbridge Gorge' held within the portfolio of the National Trust. The commitment to the heritage of Ironbridge Gorge will still be apparent in our objectives as will be the support we can offer to the National Trust whilst it comes to terms with the task it has set itself in guaranteeing a new lease of life for the museum. We wish them well in their undertaking.



Jim Clarke Chairman

It seems somewhat appropriate to begin this first edition of the 'new' Friends group with a tribute to the man responsible for setting up the museum we have supported for so long. Evidence of his importance here in Ironbridge and elsewhere in the Heritage world has been plentiful with recognition of his achievements coming from local, national and international contributors and whilst we can reflect on his successes it still is the years he spent at Ironbridge that remain uppermost in our thoughts.

Sir Neil Cossons 1939-2026

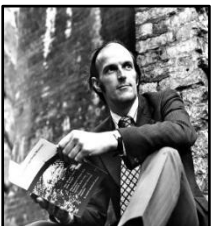
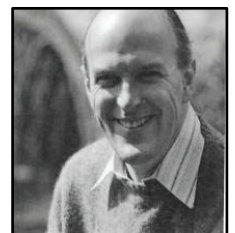


It will be sad news that many of you are still coming to terms with but the passing of Sir Neil Cossons on Sunday 29 March 2026 marks the loss of a key figure in the campaign to protect Britain's industrial heritage.

Neil arrived in Ironbridge in 1971 as the first Director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum; he came with a decade of Museum experience to set about establishing a new kind of living museum designed to capture and preserve both Britain's industrial heritage and the way of life in late Victorian Britain, a life fast disappearing under the pace of urban renewal.

The preservation of industrial heritage had not long been accepted as an area of study in itself; often dismissed as 'conservation not archaeology' Neil's achievements in Ironbridge were therefore all the greater given the established prejudice he had to overcome.

When the Ironbridge Gorge Museum opened in 1973 it became a triumph at all levels. Blists Hill, with its different approach to interpreting and presenting history, made that history accessible, becoming a huge success and a leading example of how history can be popularised. As a model, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum not only celebrated the heritage of the past it also contributed to the transformation of the economy of East Shropshire as part of the development of Telford New Town.



During his twelve years in post at Ironbridge Neil oversaw the development of the Museum, preserving sites throughout the gorge laying the foundations for the eventual recognition of the museum as a 'Museum of the Year' both in Britain and Europe. The acknowledgement of the status of the Ironbridge Gorge as a World Heritage Site, though after Neil's departure, was undoubtedly due in no small part to the foundations he laid during his tenure as Director.

Neil's success at Ironbridge meant others would be calling and his subsequent career at the National Maritime Museum, the Science Museum and English Heritage charted his rise as a major figure in the scientific, engineering and industrial heritage world. As an agent of change his impact was profound and the effect of his presence, vision and energy so evident at Ironbridge was also part of his legacy elsewhere.



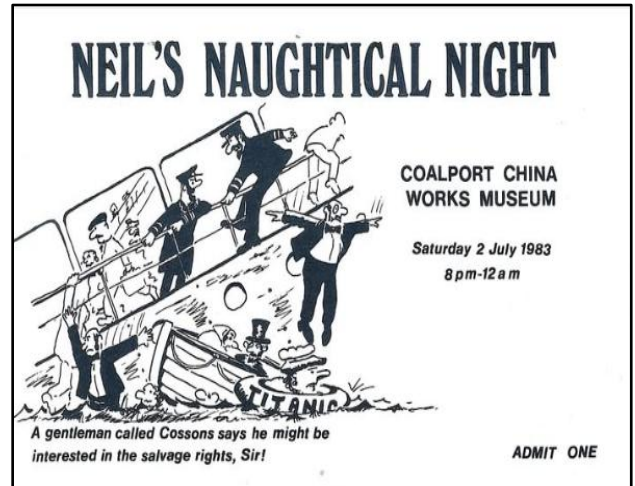
In retirement Neil's connection with Ironbridge was renewed when he accepted the role as President of the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum and was able to give a presentation at the 50th Anniversary of the Friends. It was therefore appropriate that in October 2025 Neil was present at the announcement of the handover of Ironbridge to the National Trust to witness the subject of his creation being passed on to begin the next phase of its journey telling the story of the industrial heritage of the Ironbridge Gorge.



The number of tributes paid to Neil from all sectors of the museum and heritage world, to say nothing of the many comments left on the Friends Facebook page, speak of him as a 'visionary leader' and an 'inspirational figure'; the honours bestowed on

him at home and abroad are recognition of how highly he was regarded at a national and international level but to us at Ironbridge he will always remain 'our Neil'.

Faces from a past era (above) enjoying a staff social event at Coalport when even the admission ticket (right) humorously highlighted the growing reputation of the Museum for 'acquiring' exhibits



Harold Grice 1933-2026 It is with much regret I have to report that Harold, a well-loved figure within the Museum and long-term member of the Friends, recently passed away after a short illness. He was well-known for his extensive knowledge of history and his passion for steam engines; a dedicated volunteer guide, he was famously known to visitors at Blists Hill Victorian Town as 'the man behind the steam' or 'the man with the bowler hat'. To Friends he was also known as the authority figure reigning over the good-natured chaos that accompanied the Beetle Drive at the Guides Christmas Party.

Geraldine King writes: "The entire Museum community lost Harold Grice recently, aged 93. He had been a stalwart volunteer across many areas of the Museum for nearly 40 years. He and his late wife Sheila began volunteering in the late 80s, when in Harold's inimitable words, 'That bloke from Broseley was Chairman of the Friends' (I calculated that the 'bloke' he referred to was Stuart Fraser which would have put the date in 1987-88).



Harold soon became a member of the Friends' Committee and the Museum's Advisory Committee where his knowledge of engineering and history was highly valued, as it was in his Guiding at Coalbrookdale and Coalport where he also helped train Guides. Regularly found demonstrating various steam exhibits he particularly loved showing off Billy the Steam Roller, especially when he could take it to other local steam events. As he got older and had had a serious illness, he was able to do less heavy manual work but enjoyed talking to visitors on Blists Hill, so for this he was often based in the Saw Mill, with fellow volunteer Mike Owen.

I last saw Harold when I visited him in March to deliver the IGMT book of '60 years in 60 pictures' along with a drawing of him found in the Museum of Iron, which I had framed for him. No one, including Harold, knew who drew it. He was in good form then, so it was a shock to hear he had died a few weeks later."

John Challen added: “I first met Harold around 1990 when I was working at the Jackfield Tile Museum. He was part of a team of volunteers who helped me clear the cobbled yard running between the then derelict clay arcs and mill building with some very energetic shovelling! However, it was when he finally retired from his garage business a few years later and I was at Coalbrookdale that I really got to know him. His wife Sheila took me to one side and asked me to keep him busy - and it never took much doing!

Over the following years Harold devoted many hours of hard work with a wire brush, scraper and paint brush, helping prepare large engineering exhibits for display in a precursor to Enginuity and at Blists Hill in the company of other long missed volunteers such as Bob Heath and Cyril Conew.

These were also the years that the Trevithick replica found a permanent home at Blists Hill, soon joined by Billy, the Wallis & Steven’s steam roller. Harold learned to drive both, along with the Winding Engine and became a valued member of the regular operating team. Without him, thousands of visitors would never have enjoyed the sights and sounds of these unusual sub-species of steam engineering at work, nor heard their stories told as only Harold could.”



Harold was a man of many talents – we shall miss him. The Museum and the Friends owe him a huge debt for his 40 years of Volunteering.

National Trust announces Ironbridge Museum takeover

Following much rumour and speculation the future of the Museum was secured with a takeover by the National Trust. At the announcement ceremony in October 2025 Karen Davies, interim CEO of IGMT, acknowledged that the struggle to reach the visitor numbers target needed to make the museum viable, a problem common to many visitor attractions and heritage sites, had led the Museum Board to seek a solution that protected the collection, heritage and hard work of the previous 60 years. The search for a solution was led by Mark Pemberton on behalf of the Museum Board, to whom much gratitude must be offered for his knowledge, skill and commitment in helping to bring about this outcome.

Lisa Nandy, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, in announcing a £9m grant to support the takeover by the National Trust spoke of a model of government engagement with the heritage sector that would be looked at as a blueprint for the future.

Rene Olivieri, Chair of the National Trust, was conscious of the international reputation of the Museum and promised ‘not to break it’ by building on the heritage that existed and bringing it to a wider audience.

National Trust ‘excited’ over museum takeover



Paul Forecast (left), Regional Director for the National Trust in the Midlands and East Anglia and more importantly the person with the responsibility for the new acquisition, acknowledged the care and dedication with which the IGMT had looked after its internationally significant collection over the past 60 years.

He said “Ironbridge Gorge is a globally important heritage site which has had a significant and profound impact. The National Trust is proud to be entrusted with safeguarding a place widely regarded as the birthplace of the industrial revolution ensuring that future generations continue to discover the innovation, ingenuity and skills that made it all possible.”

Looking ahead he went on to say “The intention is for the National Trust to build on the legacy it has inherited to start a new chapter in the site’s incredible history through introducing it to a new extensive membership base and so create a sustainable future for it.”



With the official takeover on 2nd March 2026 a National Trust project team led by **Mark Agnew** (left) was put in place to carry out assessments of each site and organise such things as signage, IT systems and tills.

In response to an approach from the Friends of Ironbridge he said “Thank you for both making me feel so welcome at Ironbridge and inviting me to contribute to your latest newsletter. I am currently the Project Director for the National Trust as we re-open the Ironbridge Gorge properties as National Trust sites. I first got involved with the project back in June 2024 when IGMT asked the Trust if we would be interesting in taking on Ironbridge. I was involved in the feasibility, due diligence, negotiations on the transfer and then the legal transfer.

Due to the importance of Blists Hill and Coalbrookdale for visitors, local businesses and the local communities the focus has been in getting them back open but looking ahead the plan is to have everywhere up and running as quickly as can be managed.”

In stressing how essential colleagues, volunteers and Friends are to the success of the project Mark said “I am delighted that 134 IGMT staff transferred over and around 150 volunteers have also signed up to the National Trust. It is the people who make a place and having the property team made up entirely of people who know and love the places will be key to future success. I am the only NT member of the property team. We are then supported by a fantastic NT project team to assist in our becoming a key portfolio for the National Trust.”

Whilst the immediate objective is to grow visitor numbers and income to ensure that the Museum can operate sustainably Mark said “Our other key objective is to ensure we are even more embedded into the life blood of Telford and Shropshire by ensuring all of our partners, neighbours and stakeholders locally are involved with us as we plan for the future. We want to be genuinely audience led.” To that end he went on to say “Our friends and volunteers will be essential to future success, and I very much look forward to getting open again and working with you all to get Ironbridge on a sustainable footing.”

Mark is a very experienced National Trust Manager having spent the last 20 years at Attingham and before that Castle Drogo in Devon following a successful period in the commercial world. He concluded by saying that “I have been part of many mergers before including 3 years leading the NT takeover and transformation at Shugborough. I am hoping that all my experience can help lead Ironbridge to future success and I look forward to working alongside you all as we re-open.”

Behind the scenes



During the two months the Museum was closed it did not mean nothing was happening. Apart from the intricacies of installing a new broad band fibre network to replace the network previously provided by Telford and Wrekin Council, the training of staff and restocking, the first obvious signs of change were in the new signs being erected as these at Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron.





Elsewhere the evidence of the National Trust was to be found in signs like these at the Darby Houses, offering hope and good intentions. In the foreseeable future the opening hours of Blists Hill are to be extended to seven days a week, Enginuity will be hosting school booked visits and the Toll House reopened. Cleaning operations at Jackfield Tile Museum offer hope of a reopening soon whilst the intention is to open the Broseley Pipeworks for a Heritage weekend in September.



Meanwhile at Blists Hill the 'Painting Team', having cleaned 'Kinlet', began preparation work on the old shed on the Green prior to it being repainted. Their colleagues in the 'Steam Team' continued their restoration work



on David and Sampson, seen here applying a coat of base primer before the top coat was applied. Whilst all this has been going on the Gardening Team have been busy at work, ably helped by volunteer squads tackling the aggressive weeds that have grown during the shutdown.

Elsewhere in the Museum the Conserving the Historic Estate team have been working on the final projects of their 3-year programme that has seen them carry out repairs to 49 buildings, securing their long-term preservation and use. Seen below are examples some of the ongoing work at Coalbrookdale and Coalport. The work on the Old Furnace is hoped will be completed by July whilst the clock tower on the Museum of Iron and the Chapel at Blists Hill are examples of what finished projects looks like.



On **Wednesday 16th September at 2.30pm** in the Glass Classroom at Coalbrookdale **Lucy Oldnall**, Director of the Conserving the Historic Estate Project and her team will be giving a talk to the Friends entitled '**Farewell and Thank you!**' providing an overview of their work over the past 3 years celebrating their triumphs and acknowledging their challenges in working their way across the Museum estate. Book the date in your diary along with the other Talks and Walks in our upcoming programme of activities full details of which can be found later on in this Newsletter.

Breaking News! The significance of Iron Bridge documents recognised by UNESCO



UNESCO Memory of the World National Register

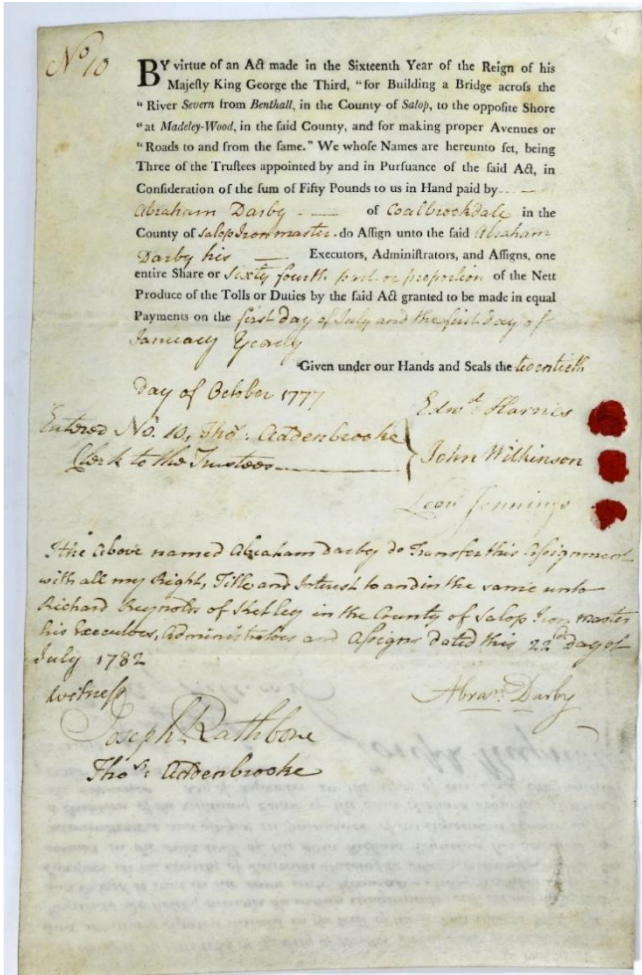
Five remarkable collections of documentary heritage from across the United Kingdom are the latest to be inscribed onto the UNESCO Memory of the World National Register, recognising their outstanding historical, cultural and social significance. Together they reveal the breadth of the UK's documentary heritage and its continuing importance for understanding the people, ideas, institutions and movements that have shaped society.

Amongst the newly inscribed collections are **documents related to the building of the Iron Bridge**. Erected under the direction of Abraham Darby III in 1779, the Iron Bridge over the River Severn in Shropshire was the first wholly cast-iron bridge in the world. The successful completion of this

pioneering structure marked a turning point in British design and engineering, and thereafter cast iron came to be widely used in the construction of bridges, aqueducts and buildings.

Documentary Heritage Relating to the Building of the Iron Bridge, Shropshire

Holding institution/partners: National Trust
Location: Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, England
Date range: 1771-1781

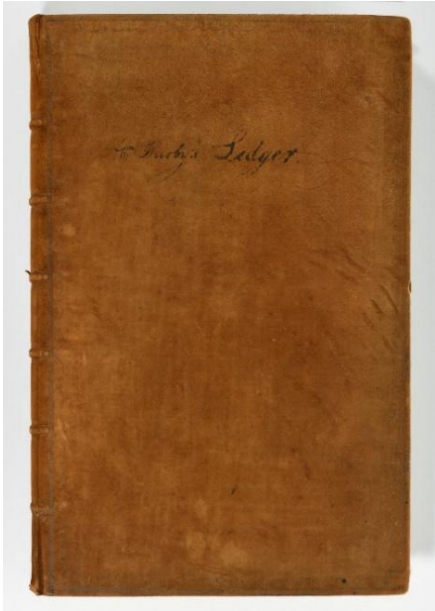


This collection documents the financial and practical foundations of the Ironbridge, erected over the River Sever in 1779 under the direction of Abraham Darby III. As the first wholly cast-iron bridge in the world, it marked a turning point in design and engineering. The inscribed documents include an estimate for the bridge, a share certificate issued to Darby, and his ledger, recording the investors, suppliers, costs and timeline behind one of the defining achievements of the Industrial Revolution.

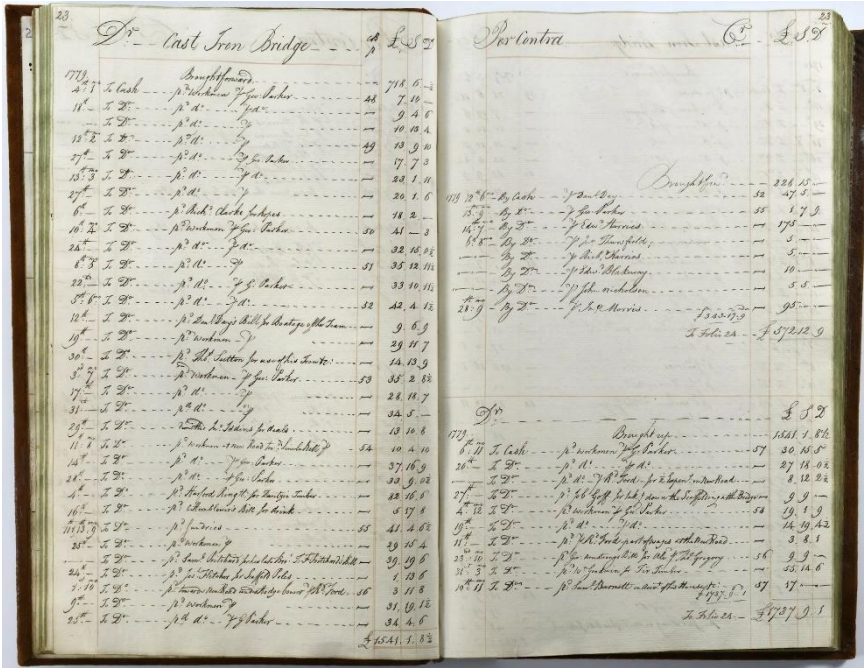
Iron Bridge Share Certificate No 10, issued to Abraham Darby 20 October 1777 (Left)

Abraham Darby III Ledger 1771 - 1781, recording detailed costs related to building the Iron Bridge (Right)

Detail from Abraham Darby's Ledger showing record of costs (Below)



No mention of the Iron Bridge would be complete without a reference to Thomas Farnolls Pritchard (1723-1777) the Shrewsbury architect and interior decorator who provided the original design for the Iron Bridge.



Rachel Hosker, Chair of the UK Memory of the World Committee, said: “Such documents offer a unique insight into the people, ideas and movements that have shaped society. Their inscription onto the UK Memory of the World Register recognises both their national significance and the importance of preserving them as well as making them accessible for present and future generations.”

Sarah Roberts, Archivist, National Trust, Ironbridge, said: “We are delighted that these documents have been recognised by UNESCO in this way. This collection shines a spotlight on the vision, innovation and ambition shared by Abraham Darby III and Thomas Farnolls Pritchard, whose revolutionary ideas were to prove truly world-changing. It is intended a temporary exhibition showing the documents will be opened in the Museum of Iron at Coalbrookdale, possibly in July.

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme recognises archives, manuscripts, records and other documentary collections of outstanding significance. Often described as the documentary heritage counterpart to World Heritage, the Programme raises awareness of the need to preserve these records and make them accessible to present and future generations.

The [UK Memory of the World Register](#) includes some of the country’s most treasured documentary heritage, including the Domesday Book, the Shakespeare Documents, the personal archive of Sir Winston Churchill and the Charles Darwin Archive. The Iron Bridge Documents now join that distinguished list, underlining their national significance and their wider value to the story of human civilisation.

Friends of Ironbridge news

The process of moving from The Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum to Friends of Ironbridge Gorge has been ongoing over the past two months; work on a new website has involved obtaining quotes for the work needed to get it up and running as well as agreeing its contents e.g. Constitution, Data Protection, Safeguarding and other such policies. With the increased cost of printing and postage it has also been decided to move to digital forms of communication, hence your receipt of this edition of the Newsletter in its digital format, however, if you no longer wish to keep in touch with the Friends please let us know so that we can remove you from our database.

During 2026 many of you will be able to continue using your Friends Card to not only access the Museum but other National Trust properties. As the date of validity of cards will vary depending upon their expiry date the Friends Committee have taken the decision to continue to offer all members access to our programme of talks and activities as well as access to our Newsletter until 31st December 2026. From 1st January 2027 we shall be operating a single membership date and a new subscription rate will apply from then, the exact amount is to be decided but it will be just a nominal sum to support our programme of activities and cover basic administration costs with any surplus being made available to support the museum.

Walks around the area

Whilst the facilities at Coalbrookdale have been closed the Friends have maintained a programme of activities by holding several guided walks in the Ironbridge Gorge area. In **March** Geraldine King organised a **Madeley Treasure Trail** taking members to hidden parts of Madeley that even locals were unaware of – who knew Madeley Churchyard was that big and contained so many interesting features?



Friends gathering together before the walk and relaxing outside the Anstice building in Madeley Square afterwards. Some interesting advertising on the side of a Madeley house!

April saw Steve Dewhirst leading a walk through the **Broseley Jitties** which explored the unplanned nature of the area, built in response to a need to house miners and other associated workers connected to the growth of industrial activities on the south side of the river before the expansion of Coalbrookdale and Coalport on the north side of the river.



The Broseley group assemble before exploring the Jitties with their curious names. The house in Queen Street where the subscribers to the Iron Bridge were believed to have first met, emphasising the importance of Broseley as the centre of financial and legal services, before later developments within the Ironbridge Gorge moved the focus north of the River Severn.

In **May** it was the turn of **Coalbrookdale** when Jim Clarke and Geraldine King explored the background to the rise of Coalbrookdale, visiting the Darby Houses, Quaker Burial Ground and Rope Walk with a 'stroll' along the Loam Hole Dingle to finish.



The Rope Walk, Loam Hole Dingle and the triumphant group after their 'wander' around the Dale.

In all cases we were fortunate to have good weather as evidenced by the photos above. A future walk entitled '**The other end of Broseley**' is planned for **11 August**, full details are contained in our **2026 Summer /Activities programme** featured in this Newsletter.

Friends Talks return!



We're back! After the break during the changeover to the National Trust the Friends of Ironbridge Gorge have now been able to schedule a series of 'Talks and Walks' for Summer and Autumn 2026 following their successful Spring Walks programme. Programme Director Geraldine King said: "It was great to see so many familiar faces who were delighted to be back, an appreciative audience enjoyed the talk which was well received."

Sheila Black, a former Chair of the Friends, one of the first to arrive for the talk, being greeted by Jim Clarke, the present Chair.

The first talk of the season was held on **Wednesday 10 June** in the Glass Classroom at Coalbrookdale delivered by **Lauren Collier**, the National Trust Property Curator at Ironbridge, entitled '**Hidden in Plain Site: Industrious Women of the Ironbridge Gorge**' in which she highlighted the contribution of women which, until modern times, went largely unrecognised. Highlighting the social attitudes of the past which classified women as the weaker sex bound by their domestic duties, she was able to illustrate the range of roles working class women played in the pre industrial Cottage Industrial system and the Factory System which challenged the Public (male) and Private (female domestic) employment spheres traditionally assumed in Victorian England by the Upper and Middle Classes.



Within the Gorge it was clear that although the division of labour meant women often did repetitive work combined with their domestic duties there were differences in employment practices. No women appear to have been employed in the Coalbrookdale Iron Works, apart from office jobs late on in the 19th Century, unlike their counterparts in the Black Country who featured highly in the Iron Industry; whilst at the Coalport China Works staggered shifts starting at 8.00 and 10.00am were offered to women to accommodate their domestic roles. It was also true that women at Coalport developed highly valued skills when, for example, employed as a Paintress over a number of years or could even progress from basic labouring roles to more skilled roles producing China.



Anny Payne (left), the last ironstone pit girl in Shropshire, from an interview by Ken Jones in the 1970s. Known as 'Shroppies' the girls worked on the pit banks picking through clay for iron nuggets. Anny worked at Kemberton Pit in 1900 from the age of 13 until her marriage at the age of 23.



Shropshire Pit Girls*

'Shroppies' gather at the start of their shift with their iron boxes made by the pit blacksmith.

Climbing over waste heaps of shale and clay to recover iron nuggets was a labour-intensive process with only about one ton of ironstone recovered from every ten tons of waste tipped. At their peak in the 1870s over 1000 Shropshire pit girls were producing about half a million tons of ironstone per year.

* An AI generated image?



Pleased to be back, an attentive audience for the talk by Lauren Collier on the Industrious Women of the Ironbridge Gorge (Above) whilst a familiar face (Jenny the Raffle) waited to greet them on arrival.

Friend receives Award



Katie Foster a long-term member of the Friends, is seen here receiving her **British Empire Medal (BEM)** from the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, Anna Turner on 4th June 2026. Given her long association with the Museum as an employee and Friend, Katie requested that the medal be presented to her at Coalbrookdale where her family and friends gathered to witness the event.

Katie was Head of Marketing and Public Relations under Stuart Smith and Mark Pemberton before moving onto roles as the Chair of Tourism first for Telford, then Shropshire and eventually the Heart of England. Emerging from this she spent

time on the Lottery Grant Committee where she says she had to be careful of crossed loyalties when it came to the museum! In addition to this Katie has been a long-term Fundraiser for Alzheimer's Research UK making her recognition well deserved.



Friends of Ironbridge Gorge

Summer/Autumn 2026 programme of Talks and Walks

Talks Programme: Glass Classroom, Coalbrookdale TF7

Free to Friends, Non-Members £1

- **Wednesday 15th July 2.30pm – Crushed by the Wheels of Industry: Health Hazards of the Victorian Workers in the Gorge and the North East Shropshire Coalfield by Curator Kate Cadman.** Modern Health and Safety rules are often criticised and even ridiculed, but what happened when few, if any, existed? The catalogue of work-related injuries and diseases in the 19th Century is horrific.
- **Wednesday 16th September 2.30pm – Farewell and Thank you! by Lucy Oldnall and her team from the Conserving the Historic Estate Project.** Recounting the journey over the past 3 years of the Project Lucy and her team will recount the challenges and triumphs encountered when working on the Museum's many listed properties.
- **Wednesday 14th October 2.30pm – 'Britannia' by Dr Patricia de Haan.** When William Camden began his county-by-county description of Britain in 1577, published in 1586, it was ground breaking and went through many editions until 1806. Only the very best maps were included. Original maps will be at the talk for everyone to see!
- **Wednesday 4th November 2.30pm – From the Archives: James Thompson (1781 – 1871) Calcutts, Lightmoor and Beyond by Steve Dewhirst. Annual Joint Meeting with Broseley Local History Society.** Born in Scotland James was a civil engineer, iron and coal master. He worked with Thomas Telford on the Gotha Canal and later for William Hazledine at the Calcutts Ironworks before moving onto Lightmoor; a failed business venture at Fenton Park led to employment in Scotland before returning to the Midlands as a consulting mining engineer. A story of entrepreneurship, failure and persistence!
- **Further dates for November and December to be announced in our Winter programme**

Walks Programme:

- **Tuesday 11th August 10.30am – The other end of Broseley. A walk led by Steve Dewhirst.** A follow up to the walk around the Broseley Jitties in April which will examine the area around Broseley church. Meet and park at Broseley Library TF12 5EQ. Let Geraldine know if you are coming.

Acquisitions for the Museum

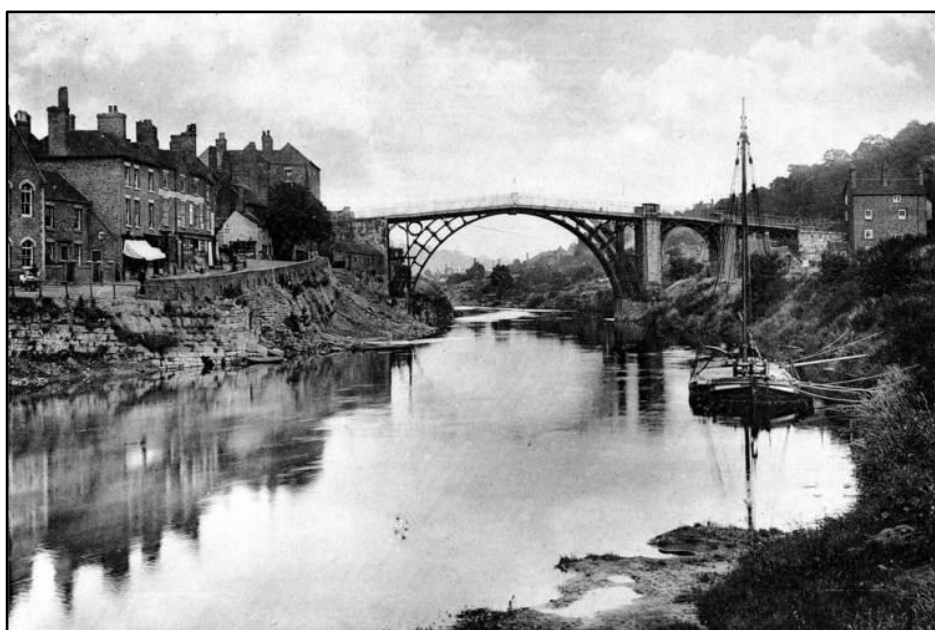
The interest of the Friends in supporting the IGMT and its reincarnation under the National Trust remained active throughout the recent transfer process so I am pleased to report that we have recently been able to purchase two items for the Museum collection:

A **Coalbrookdale Bronze Pointer Dog** was purchased for £733. A wedding present from the employees to Miss G.M. Temple on her marriage to the Managing Director on 11th February 1928. It not only is an example of a Coalbrookdale product but represents a social element of Coalbrookdale at the time for Miss Temple worked in the office at Coalbrookdale and as such illustrates the close-knit nature of the community and provides evidence of the growth of women in clerical rather than the industrial workplace. Seen here is Jim Clarke, Chair of the Friends of Ironbridge Gorge presenting the Bronze Pointer to Jo Smith, Registrar.



A **medal cast at Coalbrookdale** in honour of **John Howard** was bought by the Friends for £11 and although a small item it shows the links between Coalbrookdale under the Darby family and advocates for social issues.

John Howard 1726 – 1790, a Nonconformist, was a philanthropist and social reformer dedicated to prison reform and public health improvements in whose honour the Howard League for Penal Reform was founded in 1866.



A view of the Iron Bridge showing many of the original buildings in the High Street and the buildings on the approach to the Bridge itself, now demolished. On the middle right is one of the Severn Trows tied up alongside Bower's Yard, a boat building facility in Ironbridge.

Memories are also made of these!



King Charles III, as the Prince of Wales, visiting the Gorge to open the Museum of Iron on 5 July 1979 and celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the building of the Iron Bridge - the first of five visits he made, with many familiar faces in attendance. As Patron of the Museum Trust, he always showed great interest in the Museum and what it stood for.

The Long Warehouse to the left is seen before it was renovated to house the Library and Archives and the structure built up against it removed.



Coalbrookdale 30 November 2017

Aga Rayburn ceases production at its Coalbrookdale works marking the end of over 300 years of ironmaking in the Gorge. Middleby Corporation, the US-owned firm who bought it in 2015, said it was "no longer economically viable and castings made at the site will be sourced from elsewhere in the UK and Europe." At its closure there were 35 workers, a far cry from the hundreds who worked there before.



Coalbrookdale February 2018.

Life-sized suffragette silhouettes representing the 37 women who gained the right to vote in the Representation of the People Act 1918, out of the 160 who were working in the ceramic and iron industries across the Gorge. The name and profession of each woman was written on the back of the silhouettes.



2nd June 2016

"Was it really 10 Years ago?" asks Geraldine King when the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum received this prestigious Award in recognition of their efforts to support the Museum over the previous 50 years through their volunteering and fundraising which produced over £1million for the Museum. The focus is now on the newly formed 'Friends of Ironbridge Gorge' to provide the necessary support for the National Trust as it comes to terms with its Ironbridge Gorge portfolio.