

LAND'S
END
1965

WOLF ROCK
LIGHTHOUSE 8

JOHN-O-GROATS
874

SCILLY ISLES 28
LONGSHIPS LIGHTHOUSE 1½

OLDBURY 275



By the 1830's everything in the 28 square miles that lay on the 30 feet deep seam of Thick coal was Black. The landscape was Black; the air was Black; the people were Black; the slag heaps and piles of refuse were Black. In stark contrast were the fires; the fires of the furnaces that burnt day and night; the fires in the thousands of hearths and smithies in the cottage industries; and the dreaded fires underground in the labyrinth of mine workings and shafts. Above ground and below ground there was fire, fire and smoke that covered the area in a pall that the sun seldom penetrated. The whole area was a stage set fit for a Wagnerian opera, yet from the fire, from the furnace, and from the blasted landscape, there emerged a people dedicated to the working of iron who earned international renown for themselves and their products.

- *The Black Country, the Legend and the Myth, Kenneth Mallin, 1991*

“All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.”

- *Susan Sontag, On Photography, 1977*

Memories are made of these.

In 1990, one Jubilee Arts project 'Sandwell in Black & White' invited over 60 local people from 9 to 87 years old to record one week of their life with a 35mm autofocus camera. Chosen at random, it turned out the majority of the people participating at that time did not even own a camera. Photographs were precious items, with the primary element for light capture in photography - silver halide crystals - dispersed in a gelatin emulsion on a plasticised film base, which then had to be taken to a shop or sent off in the post to Kodak or Agfa to be developed. These things took time.

It's all changed of course, with today's stream of uncontrolled consciousness released to the online world. There are six billion photos uploaded every month to Facebook and every single minute 27,800 photos are uploaded to Instagram.

Yet not so long ago, photographs were less disposable. They functioned as precious tokens and heirlooms, cherished objects to be passed down generations, each with a story. Today they exist as solid objects in need of care and conservation, relics in a constantly changing world. The Unseen Sandwell project is preserving over 20,000 images from the Jubilee Arts archive 1974-94, sharing these with local groups through workshops and a bespoke website.

- West Bromwich High Street, 18th May, 1968, the day that Albion won the F.A Cup



- The Albion ground, November 1990
(from 'Sandwell in Black & White').

“You wouldn’t be allowed to do it now. Happy days. No television, no cars, no toys...”





- Jubilee Theatre and Community Arts on the streets of Langley in 1974.

TELEPHONE NO. 1200 (7 LINES).



WYNDHAM PARKER, M.C.,
M.B., CH.B., (EDIN.), D.P.H. (LOND.),
COUNTY AND SCHOOL MEDICAL OFFICER.

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.



PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT,

COUNTY BUILDINGS,

WORCESTER.

LN.

22nd January, 1935.

Dear Madam,

I am in receipt of your Form of Request for the removal of your name from the Midwives Roll, and steps will be taken to give effect to this.

I wish to express on behalf of the County Council my appreciation of the excellent work you have carried out in Cradley for over 30 years.

Yours faithfully,

County Medical Officer.



ane,
arend,
Cradley,
Staffs.

“Her name was Eliza Hipkiss. She was a midwife well into her 80's. Would you like her to attend you? Her looks apparently belied her attitude. She was lovely.”

“A lot of things are stopping. I can remember the church used to do a march from Langley and The Salvation Army used to come on the corner. All that’s gone now, it’s such a shame. It costs that much to close the road, and health and safety and all this claiming compensation. You think, it’s all got out of hand now, because even at school... you know what I mean... a child falls over, mother puts in a claim for compensation, you think ‘Hang on a minute... Everybody fell over.’ We climbed trees and fell out of trees. I’ve got to be truthful, we had a better time to be honest.”



“Discipline was very strict in factories in those days. Where I worked in my first job they were building railway engines. They used to lift them up and move them down the shop and if you stayed on while they moved them, well you got seven days suspension, no arguing, no extenuating circumstances, nothing.”

“I’ve never had the sack, I’ve never been made redundant. There was none of this ‘How will I get a job?’ But those days are gone...”



“My husband came down from Scotland. After he did his conscription in the army, he didn’t want to stay in Aberdeen because the only work there was as a trawlerman. Albright and Wilson and other factories were recruiting workers. They recruited from Ireland as well as Scotland and they all lived in a hostel called the Sycamore and there was a weekly punch up at the Crosswells pub between them.”



- Accles & Pollock Fellowship Dinner, 1961.







“I used to work at Brookes, cleaning up, putting all the suds in the machine and cleaning them out. My first job in Oldbury was at Accles, sandblasting. The machine blew up in my face, and I had poisoning. I was in hospital, the old one at West Brom. They said ‘If you don’t come back, you’ve lost your job.’ They’d burnt all my working clothes in the hospital. All the lot. My coat was hanging on the wall, they burned that and my flask and my lunch box. So I went back to work in my wedding suit, still got the flower in. I got through the door and they said, ‘You’ve already got the sack but you can come back to work if you like.’ I’ve worked in six foundries, two brickyards, three building firms. I loved the building. I left this one job and went into making kettles and saucepans - it just before Xmas, in time for the Xmas party. Went back just after Xmas and the boss said, ‘Last in, first out’. He’d sold the business.”

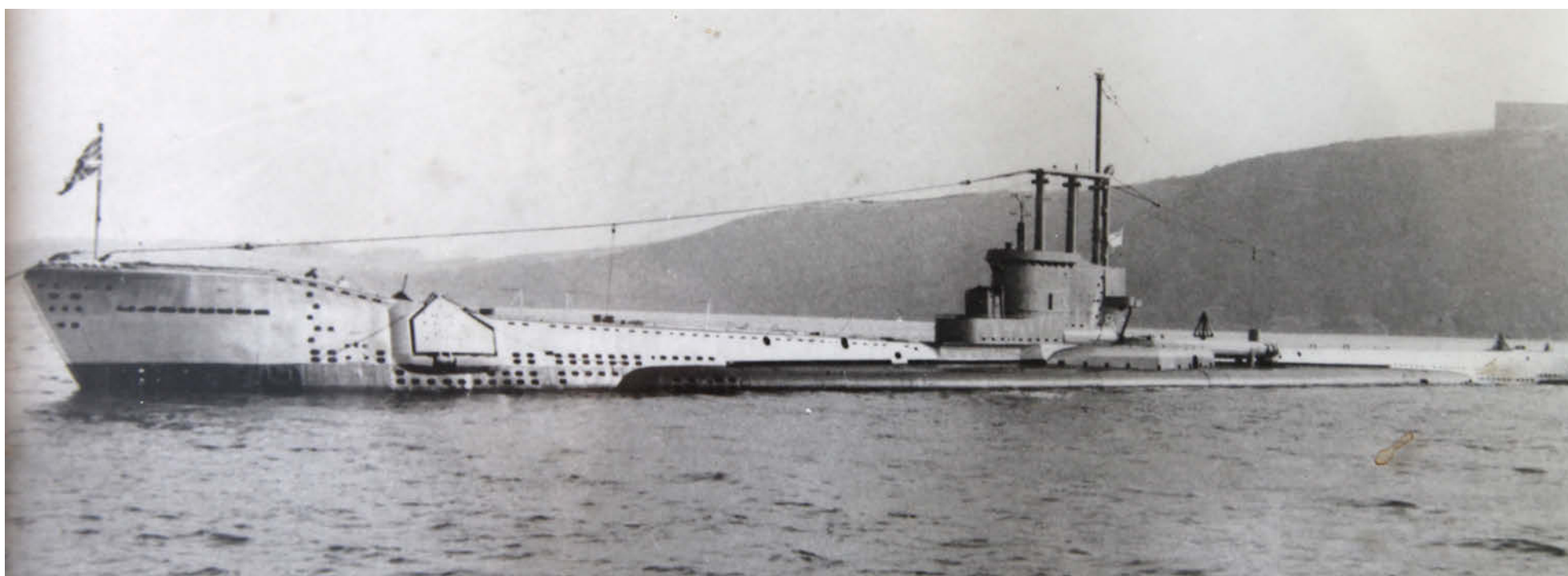
“There’s always been an influx of people coming into the Midlands for work. And different nationalities after the war, all moving around. There was a hostel here for Poles on the Wolverhampton Road, where the college is now. My Grandfather was a blacksmith and he walked down from Sheffield to get a job in Oldbury at Ratcliffes. My other Grandfather was a blacksmith in Crewe. My father came down from Crewe to build houses in Throne Road here with Mucklows. For my first job I went back to Crewe to work building steam trains.”



- Steeplejack and riveter William Hillman and his son worked in all weathers, only coming down in high winds when it was impossible to control the huge metal plates. Their expertise took them all over Britain, as well as abroad.

“I left the Sea Cadets in August 1948 for the Navy. We used to meet at John Street in Oldbury. We used to sail one of the boats from HMS Centaur (near the Black Country Museum as it is now) round Titford Pool. My father did 22 years in the army and I wanted to join the Navy to see the world and what did I see but the sea most of the time. I was in submarines for five years. We’d spend months under water, just surface to replenish supplies. I saw a lot of ports, Gibraltar, all along the African coast, different islands, but I didn’t see Malta. When I was onboard HMS Illustrious in 1949 Earl Mountbatten was the Captain.

When I was demobbed in 1956 my Dad got me a job at Accles and Pollocks – Broadwell works – in the maintenance department. Most of my relations were there at one time or another. At the weekend we’d have to strip the furnaces out and put new bricks in. When I left that, I worked in building construction.”



- HMS Artful, Amphion class submarine, 1952, 5 officers, 55 enlisted men



“Our back garden in Orchard Street. On the right, Grandad on Mother’s side. My Nan’s brother home on leave. He was on the Burma Railway, a prisoner of war with the Japs. He never came home.”



- Identity card, Francis Jones, 1945.
- Arthur Guest with the RAF Medical Corps, Bombay, 1946.



“I was seventeen when I got married. This is on my honeymoon in the caravan at Stourport – a spider infested caravan. It was horrible.”

- A vast swathe of the M5 motorway cuts through the area, elevated sections constructed in the 1960's, swallowing up whole streets, including the house and garden of 22 Blakeley Hall Road.



- Titford Pools, under the M5 motorway, 1990
(from 'Sandwell in Black & White').



- St. Michael's School, Langley, circa 1953.
- Martley Road, 1990's.



- Vicarage Garden Party, Lion Farm Estate, 1970.
- Marching Band, early 1990's.

- The annual Christmas trip into Birmingham to meet Santa Claus at Lewis's, 1960's.



Images from Jubilee Arts Archive and from personal photographic collections.

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www.jubileeartsarchive.com



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