

Shropshire Revisited by Ray Pearce

It was a sunny day in March this year (2022) and the gardener was due. However he had phoned late the previous evening to say his car was off the road and he would not be able to visit me for a day or two. Suddenly I had a day to myself, no making of cups of tea all morning, so what to do?

A consultation to train and bus timetables and that morning I was on the X12 bus at 08.30 to Birmingham on to New Street station to get the 09:34 train to Shrewsbury. Arriving there shortly after 10:30 I proceeded to the nearby bus station to board the 10:45 service to Bridgnorth via Much Wenlock. I had worked for Lloyds Bank as a cashier and junior clerk at Much Wenlock branch so knew the little town quite well. The journey there was splendid as the sun shone and thousands of daffodils were in full flower. The first of the spring lambs were in the fields and 'all was right with the world'.



Lloyds Bank no longer has a branch in the town but the building still stands. I stood on the steps and said to an elderly couple passing by that I worked here in 1958 when it was Lloyds Bank. They passed no comment and walked on. You

will have noticed that there is a blue plaque on the wall of the building. It does not say that Ray Pearce worked here in 1958 but that this was the home of Dr William Penny Brookes. He was the founder of the Wenlock Olympian Society in 1858 and one of the co founders of the modern Olympic movement. The first of the modern Olympic Games was held in Athens in 1896 and still continue to be held every 4 years apart from wars and viruses.



I continued my stroll round the town and saw Raynalds Mansion, built in 15th century and enlarged in 1682. This building featured in the 1950 film *Gone to Earth*, based on a novel by the Shropshire writer Mary Webb. The film had a distinguished cast including Jennifer Jones, Sybil Thorndike, Cyril Cusack and a young George Cole. By this time I was feeling a bit peckish so went to The Tea in the Square for refreshments. Who should walk in half way through my meal than the couple to whom I had spoken earlier. It appears that, like me they were visitors for the day.

Time now to move on as 1:00 pm was approaching. Bus to Bridgnorth. Again beautiful scenery and another walk. I knew Bridgnorth from trips on the Severn Valley railway and having played cricket there. The bus to Wolverhampton was not due for 20 minutes so a walk through the archway in high town. There is also a low town joined by a funicular railway to High town but no time to visit



this today. Also the previous time I had been there I had heard the Bridgnorth Ukulele band which was formed in 2010. I was not sorry to see the Wolverhampton bus arrive. This left at 12:53 arriving at 1:35 pm. The bus station in Wolverhampton is quite near the railway station so I went there for a train to Birmingham International station where I could get the X12 bus back to Castle Bromwich. By the time I arrived at international station the bus was due so home by 3:30 pm exhausted but happy.

Ray Pearce 20.5.2022