

Stoke Local History Group

COVENTRY

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stokehistorygroup@gmail.com

editor John Marshall

Sherbourne Valley Project wins major funding award

THE next meeting of Stoke Local History Group takes place on Friday November 4th and will feature a slide show presentation by guest speaker Charlotte Ridpath, of the Sherbourne Valley Project, who will talk about the history of Coventry's principal river and some exciting plans for its future.

The meeting at Stoke Library coincides with news that Warwickshire Wildlife Trust has just been awarded funding of over £3million to implement the ambitions of the Sherbourne Valley Project.



*Bridge over the Sherbourne at Coundon Wedge.
Photo: John Marshall*



Following a two-year development phase, the Project has been awarded funding of £1.8million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, with matching funding from several partners including Coventry City Council, Severn Trent, the Environment Agency and Sherbourne Valley Churches. The total value of the project, says the Trust, is over £3million and the money

will be invested in a variety of outcomes over the next four years. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust will work with other partners, such as Historic Coventry Trust and Coventry University, to bring their plans to life.



*Guest speaker Charlotte Ridpath
Photo: WWT*

The Trust says: "This project will restore and revitalise the river Sherbourne, which runs through the heart of Coventry and will enable people to enjoy and celebrate all aspects of the river's heritage. In medieval times, the river provided food and water to the people of Coventry. During the Blitz, sluice gates were installed which allowed firefighters to access the water to use against the Luftwaffe. The project will reawaken the river, create new wetlands and change people's relationships with it."

The Sherbourne Valley Project has six key aims:

- To make the people of Coventry feel connected to the river Sherbourne and the surrounding green spaces
- To ensure the river and its associated habitats are improved for wildlife
- To ensure the river is more accessible to all along its length
- To preserve and celebrate the built heritage
- To help the local community to become empowered and to take ownership of their river
- To provide local communities with information and learning opportunities about their river.

The meeting takes place at Stoke Library on Friday November 4th, starting at 10.30am. NO BOOKING IS REQUIRED. Just turn up.



*A train on the Loop Line (above) travels alongside Gosford Goods Yard, leaving Walsgrave Road and Binley Road behind.
Photographs: Warwickshire Railways*

Coventry Loop Line opened way for freight trains through Stoke

COVENTRY'S industrial Loop Line was part of a network of railways in and around Coventry which carried freight to and from the city's factories whilst minimising contact with passenger lines and the city's busy main station.



A lorry enters Gosford Green Goods Yard from Binley Road, with the weighbridge office on the left and the manager's house behind (opposite Gosford Green). The large houses still exist.

The line officially came into being in 1914 and ran along much of the route of the current A444 road (appropriately named Jimmy Hill Way, with the sites of two of Coventry City FC's homes at either end).

At its northern end, the line joined the main railway to Nuneaton at Three Spires Junction (a short distance from today's 'Blue

Ribbon' road island) and it joined the main passenger line to Rugby at its southern end, at Humber Road junction, the latter not completed until 1916.

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The line linked to the Foleshill Railway which was originally commissioned by Webster & Wilkins Brick Works Company. The company acted as merchants to local collieries and quarries as well as excavating minerals from the quarry at their own site and producing bricks.

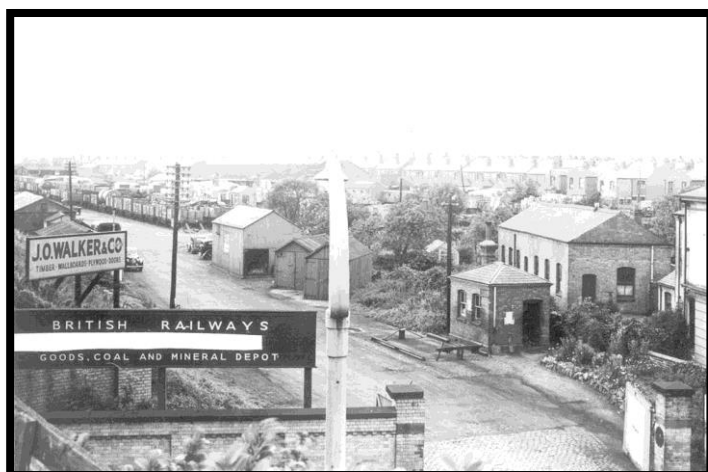
The Foleshill Line was expanded in 1908 to take in several Courtaulds sites and the Red Lane Ordnance Works. The Ordnance Works provided the Admiralty with heavy duty naval guns and was formed by a consortium of shipbuilders including Cammell Laird. The railway line ran through the factory (the largest factory space in



An aerial view of Gosford Green Goods Yard, 1924, with the rail line going diagonally across the picture from left to right. On the right are the streets Bolingbroke Road, Hollis Road and Hugh Road, facing Humber Road.

Europe when it was built) and part of the line can still be seen in Wharf Road. Eventually Foleshill Railway would loop round behind the Ordnance Works to reach the Bell Green Goods Yard, located around the current site of Gallagher Retail Park – and commemorated through the naming of the Signal Box pub. The actual signal box was closed in 1967.

Another goods yard – Gosford Green – served the line just above the Humber Road Junction. Businesses served by the line (and industrial links to it) included Humber (and its various incarnations such as Hillman, Rootes, Chrysler, and Talbot – the line closed before the Peugeot era), Barras Heath Wholesale Market, Smiths Stamping Works, Morris Engines, the Ordnance Works, Websters Bricks, Courtaulds and Foleshill Gas Works.



Entrance to Gosford Green Goods Yard, pictured from the Binley Road bridge. This official photograph was taken in 1954. It is not known why the name of the station was blanked out.

The line officially closed in 1982. The last freight carried on the line were cars, components and plant moving between Talbot's Stoke factory and Linwood in Scotland.

Phil Tutchings

Coventry University names new building after local legend Delia Derbyshire

COVENTRY University has announced that its new Arts and Humanities Building in Cox Street will be named after the electronic music pioneer Delia Derbyshire.

The new building is a four-storey teaching facility, forming a link between the existing Maurice Foss Building and the seven-storey School of Art and Design - the Graham Sutherland Building. The older buildings are being remodelled and refurbished to create a state-of-the-art complex for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

Delia Derbyshire was born in Coventry in 1937 and is best known for producing the original *Doctor Who* theme tune in 1963.



Coventry University's new Delia Derbyshire Building. Photos: John Marshall



Her early life was spent in Cedars Avenue, Coundon, where she lived with her parents, Edward and Emma Derbyshire. Her father, originally from Preston, worked at a car factory in Coventry as a sheet-metal worker. Delia was said to be a bright girl, who listened obsessively to the radio, and her parents bought her a piano when she was eight years old.

She was three years old when the Blitz hit Coventry in 1940 and she was taken away briefly to Preston for safety. Later, back in Coventry, she was educated at Barr's Hill Grammar School and won a scholarship to Girton College, Cambridge, graduating in

1959 with a degree in mathematics and music - a rare achievement for a working class girl.

In the 1960s she was an influential member of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, a sound-effects unit based in Maida Vale in London. Members of the Workshop created experimental and innovative music using the latest music technology.



The *Doctor Who* recording was one of the first television theme tunes to be created entirely with electronic music. It is said that Delia Derbyshire was presented in the summer of 1963 with a basic *Doctor Who* melody and bass line by composer Ron Grainger, along with sonic descriptions that suggested certain types of sound effects. Derbyshire and her

assistant Dick Mills set about building the track, note-by-note, using complex recording techniques.

The completed *Doctor Who* theme tune was first aired at tea-time on Saturday 23rd November 1963, and a single was released in the same year. It served as the *Doctor Who* theme tune until 1980, when a new version was made using synthesisers.

From 1962 to 1975, Delia Derbyshire produced a multitude of music and sound effects for TV programmes, theatre productions, films and festivals. She is said to have influenced a whole generation of musicians, including iconic rock stars.

Delia Derbyshire died in July 2001, at the age of 64.



The BBC's Maida Vale studios in London, home to the Radiophonic Workshop where Delia Derbyshire worked during the 1960s.

Photo: John Marshall



During her childhood, Delia lived in two houses in Cedars Avenue, Coventry. Her birthplace was number 124 but in 1939 the family moved up the road to number 104. Both houses now have blue plaques, one placed by the Coventry Society and the other by the BBC. The plaque at the second address was unveiled by former *Doctor Who* actors Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant in June 2017, as part of a BBC Music Day.

A new street in Stoke Heath, Coventry - Derbyshire Way - was named in her honour in 2017. The street was part of a new housing development off Blackberry Lane, in part of the former playing fields of Lyng Hall School, and the name was suggested by Pete Chambers of Coventry Music Museum. Special events, including a concert in the Cathedral ruins, were also held in her home city in May 2017 to mark what would have been her 80th birthday.

"Delia Derbyshire changed the way listeners and viewers think about sound and sonic possibilities," said David Butler, trustee of the charity Delia Derbyshire Day. "Delia was inspired by the soundscapes she experienced in her home city of Coventry, finding beauty in the everyday, transforming the familiar into something extraordinary, whether that was a knock on the door, a metal lampshade or her own voice. The new Delia Derbyshire Building will continue Delia's example, inspiring future generations to further their creative spirit."

The new building will open in phases, and will be fully open in 2023.

John Marshall

● For a more in-depth look at her work, see the article (with film footage) by Dr David Butler on the BBC website – search 'Delia Derbyshire BBC 100'.

Pictured (left), Delia Derbyshire's childhood homes at 124 and 104 Cedars Avenue. Both now have blue plaques. Photos: John Marshall



Photos Extra...

Before and after the railway

Gosford Green in 1911, before the railway. In the distance is Ball Hill with no bridge over Walsgrave Road and no railway embankment alongside the Green. The back of the houses in Kingsway are visible, as is St Margaret's Church.



Walsgrave Road railway bridge, built for the Coventry Loop Line. It was taken down in the 1990s and replaced with today's road bridge



Binley Road Bridge, demolished in the 1990s and replaced with today's traffic island