



If you've been inspired to uncover your own history, explore historic newspapers, access Ancestry, and more free local and family resources in our Archive and Local History Centre, Libraries, and online.



In partnership with

f X @dudleylibraries

**BETTER**

**Dudley**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

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**FREE TO  
ATTEND**  
RESERVE YOUR  
SEAT TODAY



# FESTIVAL GUIDE

11TH-31ST OCTOBER 2025

In partnership with

**BETTER**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

**Dudley**  
Metropolitan Borough Council



# Local History Day

**Saturday 18th October / Dudley Archives / 10.00am - 3.30pm**

Explore the Borough's intriguing past at Dudley Archives and Local History Service on this special open day. Discover treasures held in the collection, learn about the services the Archives and Local History Service can offer, and explore the family and local history exhibitions. Don't miss three talks from local historians, and the range of local and family history publications for sale.

Star  
Event

## 10.30am The Black Country 500 Years in 50 Voices

with Brendan Clifford

Born and bred in the Black Country, Brendan Clifford is an enthusiast for local history. In his book, "The Black Country- 500 Years in 50 Voices", he pulled together one of the first anthologies of writings through history about the area now called the Black Country. He has shared his learning with many groups around the Black Country including at the Wolverhampton Literature Festival where he will also be performing again in February 2026.



## 11.35am & 3.15pm Tours of the Archives

with the Archives Team

Explore behind the scenes and discover the treasures of the archives on a guided tour of the stacks and stores with our archives team.

## 12:15pm Cholera in the Black Country 1832

with Kevin Goodman

In 1832, Rev. William Leigh wrote of the impact of Cholera in the Black country: "Nothing reigns here but want and disease, death and desolation." It was not an understatement. Within a few weeks there were 9,622 cases and 2,313 deaths. Discover what happened in the Black Country during those darkest of days with Kevin Goodman, the Black Country's medical historian.

## 1.30pm Museum Tour

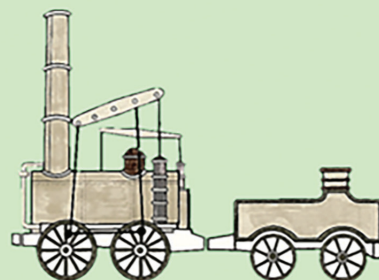
with Graham Worton

Museum Tour by Graham Worton, Keeper of Geology & Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark coordinator

## 2.15pm Place Names of Halesowen and Lenches Bridge

with Paul Ford

Many people find place names an interesting topic, even fun, however, using the local place names of Halesowen, Cornbow, Rumbow and Lenches Bridge, I would like to cement that while they are interesting, fun may be taking it too far!



## The First Days

Photos and other material from the Dudley Local History and Archive Service



## The Last Days

Photos from the Terry Hyde Collection held by the Black Country Society and curated by Keith Hodgkins



## Transport History

## Exhibition: From Agenoria to Beeching: The First and Last Days of Steam in Dudley

**Saturday 11th October - Saturday 20th December / Dudley Archives / Standard Opening Hours**

This exhibition will consist of two sets of photographs - one illustrating the first days of steam railways in the Dudley area between 1830 and 1860 including the local locomotive 'Agenoria'. The second illustrates the final days of steam in the area from late 1950s to early 1960s and includes unique images of engines and trains from the Terry Hyde collection.



BOUND BY ROOTS  
DIVIDED BY PATH

1ST OCT - 31ST OCT. 2025

# ABRAHAM BABAJIDE COLE

MODÁKÉKÉ AND IFÉ  
THE STORY OF MIGRATION

THIS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FREE ENTRY  
DUDLEY LIBRARY

BOUND BY ROOTS  
DIVIDED BY PATH



1ST OCT -  
31ST OCT. 2025  
DUDLEY LIBRARY  
FREE ENTRY

ABRAHAM  
BABAJIDE  
COLE

## Exhibition: Bound by Roots, Divided by Paths

Wednesday 1st - Friday 31st October  
Dudley Library / 10am

This project seeks to bridge historical and contemporary migration narratives, creating a space for cultural understanding and artistic expression. The exhibition will amplify the voices of displaced and migrant communities, exploring both personal and collective reflections on identity and belonging. It is timed to celebrate Black History Month in October.

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Musical Show / Local History

## 'Busketeers' Black Country Show

with Billy Spakemon and Tim Martin

Friday 17th October / Brierley Hill Library / 11am

This show contains a variety of stories, songs of the region, sing-alongs and audience participation songs. The objective is to bring a smile to people's faces and to keep local history stories alive.

Star  
Event

Local History

## The Real Peaky Blinders: An Illustrated Talk

with Professor Carl Chinn MBE

Friday 17th October / Dudley Library / 1.30pm

Stylish and dark, the BBC series 'Peaky Blinders' highlights the exploits of Thomas Shelby and his violent Birmingham criminal gang in the aftermath of the First World War. Well-dressed, captivating and powerful, these dramatized gangsters are nothing like the real peaky blinder gangs of the 1890s and early 20th Century. This is the story of the real Peaky Blinders.

Star  
Event





#### Social/Medical History

### Black Country's Forgotten Hero: Rev William Leigh of Bilston

with Kevin Goodman

**Saturday 11th October / Coseley Library / 1pm**

The Rev. William Leigh, curate of St. Leonard's Church, Bilston, 1813-1835 was a dynamic and controversial figure. An active champion of the poor and an ally to nonconformists, he was at the forefront of the battle against the terrible cholera outbreak in Bilston during 1832. Rediscover his achievements and why he is a true Black Country hero.



#### Industrial History

### Chain Makers

with Jill Guest

**Saturday 25th October / Cradley Library / 11.00am**

The talk on the chain shops of High Town was one of the last Jill Guest researched for the Cradley Then and Now Historical group. Sadly, the group did not reopen after Covid but the website [cradleylinks.co.uk](http://cradleylinks.co.uk) contains a wealth of knowledge on Cradley history.



#### Local History

### The Dunsley Murder of 1812

with David J Cox

**Saturday 11th October / Stourbridge Library / 2pm**

The Dunsley Murder of 1812 is a study in early nineteenth century crime detection, justice and punishment.



#### Local History

### Tales from the Coroner's Casebook - Life and Death in Georgian South Staffordshire and the Black Country

with Quintin Watt

**Saturday 25th October / Gornal Library / 1pm**

This presentation examines the cases of unexplained deaths, presided over by Henry Smith Esq., Coroner of the County of Stafford, between 1801 and 1842. These included accidents, manslaughter, murders, suicides and 'visitations of God'. Join Coroner Smith's Jury and re-consider some of the cases he dealt with during the first part of his career.



#### Local History

### An Ecclesiastical Affair - Pensnett

with Chris Baker

**Monday 13th October / Brierley Hill Library / 2pm**

A True story from 1870 about the Black Country parish of Pensnett where the errant clergyman, Vicar of St Mark's, had a flirtation with a pupil teacher at the local school, that led to scandal in the village, a clergy discipline trial and a nationally reported libel trial. Wayward clergy, scandal and libel - all the hallmarks of a good story!



Talks are free to attend but spaces are limited and booking is essential. To reserve a seat, scan the QR code to visit our website

**[better.org.uk/dudley-history-fest](http://better.org.uk/dudley-history-fest)**





#### Entertainment History

### From Kate's Hill to California - James Whale, the Father of Frankenstein

with Craig Denston

**Thursday 23rd October / Dudley Library / 7pm**

How did a working class lad born into 19th Century Dudley become, for his time, the highest paid director in Hollywood? This tells an extraordinary life story from a factory to war, through art to the theatre, to the making of some of the most influential horror movies of all time, and yet ultimately, to a heartbreakingly tragic end.



#### Local History

### "Avin a Loff!" (Black Country Humour)

with John Homer

**Friday 24th October / Halesowen Library / 10.30am**

John presents a unique insight into the humour of the Black Country. A pot pourri of song, stories, anecdotes and jokes which will make you laugh, cry and celebrate this wonderful 'bostin' region where "yove gorra loff or yode cry".



#### Local History

### Silence! - 3 Stories From the Staffs Coroner's

with Paul Ford

**Friday 24th October / Sedgley Library / 2pm**

History is about the written word, but sometimes is equally about what is not written. Here we look at three cases where silence plays a huge part... Mustn't Talk: Fit for Military Service (Cheslyn Hay 1916), Won't Talk: the curious case of Maud Minnie Mills (Walsall 1912), Can't Talk: the Silent Skeleton of Murder Mine (Dudley 1961).



#### Industrial History

### Mining in Cradley

with Margaret Bradley

**Tuesday 14th October / Cradley Library / 11am**

This illustrated talk features the mining of coal, and the lives of those involved in this industry, in the 10 small collieries of Cradley, including Netherend, The Hayes, Homer Hill, Two Gates and Oldnall, from before the 1500s, through the period of coal mining expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries, until the closure of Beech Tree Colliery in 1958.



#### Art History

### JMW Turner's Tours in the Black Country and Birmingham

with Brendon Clifford

**Tuesday 14th October / Dudley Library / 2pm**

Voted Britain's favourite artist in a 2004 BBC Poll, JMW Turner visited the Black Country and Birmingham area a couple of times during his life (1775-1851). The talk covers the background of Turner's interest in the area, the watercolours he produced and specifically the tangled tale of what happened to his watercolour of Dudley.



#### Military History

### Warriors All: Acts of Valour by Men and Animals Since The Great War.

with David Bardell and Mick Byrne

**Tuesday 14th October / Stourbridge Library / 2pm**

This talk tells the amazing stories of both men and animals, their devotion to duty, bravery and selflessness. Both men and animals showed they were fearless, relentless, diligent and resolute. We will tell stories of VC recipients spanning from WW1 to the present day and about animals awarded the Dickin Medal over the same period.





#### Local History

### Haunted Dudley

with Andrew Homer

**Tuesday 14th October / Halesowen Library / 7pm**

This virtual talk will focus on some of the many ghosts and hauntings associated with Dudley Borough. An intriguing mix of more traditional and modern stories, the author's own experiences covering many years of investigating alleged paranormal phenomena will feature throughout.



#### Local History

### Leasowes Walled Garden

with Carole Freer

**Wednesday 15th October / Long Lane Library / 10.30am**

In 2014, the Halesowen Abbey Trust raised the money to purchase the 18th century walled garden in Leasowes Park and, along with other volunteers, have been restoring it since then. They dedicated it to the public. It provides a wonderful oasis for both humans and wildlife with a wildlife pond and wildflower meadow with limited access for wildlife.



#### General History

### Dark History: Vile Victorians

with Damian Carter

**Wednesday 15th October / Gornal Library / 7pm**

Daily life in Victorian Britain was filled with hazards like dangerous workplaces, the risk of disease, crime, drowning and starvation. Clothing could injure, wallpaper might be toxic and make-up could be poisonous. Explore the dark and fascinating world of the Victorian era where you could be executed for minor theft or buried alive by mistake!



#### Transport History

### Rails to Hales

with David Waldren

**Wednesday 22nd October / Halesowen Library / 7pm**

This talk is a photographic journey from Old Hill to Longbridge using original, largely unpublished images from the late 1930s to the mid-1960s.



#### Industrial History

### Walking in Satan's Footsteps – The Blackbrook Valley and Merry Hill

with Rob Broadbent

**Thursday 23rd October / Brierley Hill Library / 10.30am**

The Blackbrook Valley and Merry Hill were once covered with iron works, brick works, clay pits and collieries and a network of canals. Today their remarkable industrial history is mostly hidden. The talk covers places of interest, dramatic changes to the landscape and some of the industries and companies the locality is famous for.



#### Local History

### Stourbridge Glassmakers, Their History and Their Legacy

with Dr Kate Round

**Thursday 23rd October / Kingswinford Library / 2pm**

This talk tells of the growth of our glass industry from Medieval Forest Glass and the integration of expert Huguenot glassmakers, from the development of discrete industries making utility bottles, glasses and windows to the fine crystal tableware for which Stourbridge is renowned. The Stourbridge artisans have left a legacy that is celebrated worldwide.





#### General History/Local History

### Cavalier Dogs and Roundhead Rogues with Mary Bodfish

**Wednesday 22nd October / Long Lane Library / 10.30am**

The English Civil War brought much upheaval and damage to the area between Wolverhampton, Lichfield and Birmingham as people took sides and their forces engaged each other repeatedly. The voices of several of those involved shed light on a pivotal period of our history.



#### Local History

### Is Halesowen in the Black Country? with John Billingham

**Thursday 16th October / Halesowen Library / 2pm**

Whether Halesowen is in the Black Country or not is a very emotive subject for many people. Let us put aside the emotions, prejudices and misinformation and examine the hard historical and geographical facts and then decide what the truth is.

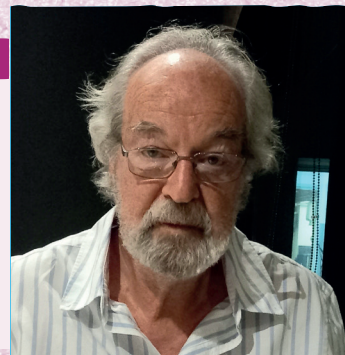


#### Industrial History

### History of Stourbridge Glass with Dr Kate Round

**Wednesday 22nd October / Stourbridge Library / 2pm**

This talk is a good introduction to the subject of Stourbridge Glass and traces the roots of Stourbridge glassmakers back to the 8th Century BC, from The Alabastron of Sargon 11 to their arrival in Stourbridge and shaped its history, its wealth and the health and working lives of its people.

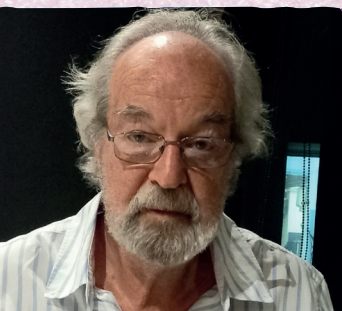


#### Art History

### Public Artwork in and Around Stourbridge with Brian Carr

**Thursday 16th October / Stourbridge Library / 2pm**

This talk is about the Dudley Public Art website which was set up to showcase the vast amount of art in all its forms that can be seen in Dudley Borough. Brian says he is not an art expert nor historian, just an enthusiast hoping to share what is out there.



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#### Natural History

### Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve with Paul Floyd

**Thursday 16th October / Sedgley Library / 2pm**

Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve is of exceptional importance. Join Paul on an imaginary walk around the site. A light hearted, interactive talk that highlights why Wrens Nest is recognised as one of the top Geological sites in the World, as well as a major contributor to the Industrial Revolution.





#### Local History

### Tinker, Taylor, Soldier, Spy

with Quintin Watt

**Thursday 16th October / Kingswinford Library / 2pm**

An interactive account of four Wolverhampton Warriors' Great War. This talk combines a visual presentation with some active engagement. It focuses on the stories of four servicemen and considers how and why their war-time experiences should be remembered. Let Mr Watt teach you a 'modern' history lesson!



#### Local History

### A Furriner's View of Netherton

with Ned Williams

**Monday 20th October / Netherton Library / 1.30pm**

This talk looks at what Ned Williams discovered in Netherton and is not so much a detailed history of Netherton, more a well-illustrated account of what "a furriner" might discover as an intrepid explorer.



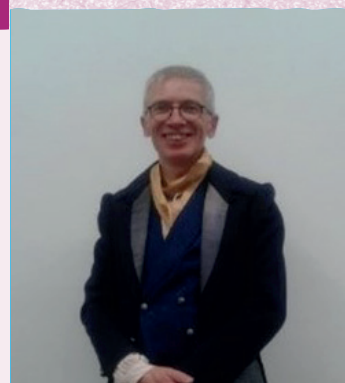
#### Local History

### Retail Revolutionaries? The Struggle For Power and Influence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Dudley

with Judith Davies

**Thursday 16th October / Dudley Library / 6.45pm**

Dudley was controlled by landowners, industrialists and Anglican clergymen in the 18th century. However, Britain was facing pressures for change. In Dudley, nonconformists led the demand for change and many of their leaders were shopkeepers like Samuel Cook and Thomas Hill. The town became a hot bed of protest and this talk looks at the events and personalities involved.



#### Art History

### David Cox, Artist of Birmingham and the Black Country

with Brendan Clifford

**Tuesday 21st October / Wordsley Library / 2pm**

Artist David Cox (1783-1859) was born in the Deritend area of Birmingham and lived his last years in Harborne, then a village in south Staffordshire. The talk introduces David Cox's life and locates his increased skill and accomplishment in his artistic practice, including several representations of Dudley.



#### Local History

### "Damn Her, If Her Won't Go, Chain Her To The Post"

with David J Cox

**Saturday 18th October / Wordsley Library / 11.30am**

This talk covers the strange case of Eliza Price and the two Petty Sessions in Kingswinford and Wordsley in 1845.



#### Local History

### A Furriner's View of the Lye

with Ned Williams

**Tuesday 21st October / Lye Library / 2.30pm**

This talk looks at what Ned Williams discovered in Lye and is not so much a detailed history of Lye, more a well-illustrated account of what "a furriner" might discover as an intrepid explorer.