

Lining up four Black Country literary events

FOUR Black Country literature events will be taking place in November as part of the Black Country Echoes Festival.

Next Thursday (November 6) a one-day symposium, Black Country Landscape in Literature, will bring together writers, academics and historians who share a special interest in novels and short stories that depict the Black Country's landscape and people. Keynote speaker Dr Philippa Semper, from University of Birmingham, will be joined by Dr Esther Asprey, Dr Michael Hall, Chair of the Frances Brett Young Society, Ruby's Spoon author Anna Lawrence Pietroni

and Dr Paul McDonald from the University of Wolverhampton. They will explore themes ranging from Brett Young's Black Country world to local dialect, magical realism, and fantasy fiction set in the region. The symposium has been organised to coincide with The Making of Mordor exhibition at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, which continues until January 17, 2015.

The Black Country Echoes in Literature Symposium runs from 10am to 4pm at the Arena Theatre. Tickets are priced £25 (£20 concessions) or £30 (£25) including lunch. Places can be booked by visiting <https://bookwhen.com/hx49t>

or purchased from the shop at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Fans of JRR Tolkien will have another opportunity to hear author and Tolkien enthusiast Robert S Blackham talk about 'The Road to Mordor' on November 12 at a free event at Wolverhampton Archives, 5pm - 6pm.

On Wednesday, November 26 the Arena Theatre celebrates with Black Country Echoes Poetry Night, an evening of spoken word from some of the region's most well-loved poets including Liz Berry, Emma Purshouse, Dave Reeves and Billy Spakemon, as well as selection

of specially invited guests. The entertainment begins at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £10 (£8 concessions) and can be booked online: www.blackcountryechoes.org.uk/black-country-poetry-night or direct from the Arena Theatre box office, phone (01902) 321321 or email: arena@wlv.ac.uk

Poetry fans can also see Billy Spakemon performing in a Black Country Touring caravan as part of a major Halloween event in and around St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, tomorrow (Friday, October 31) and Saturday (November 1) from 6pm-7.30pm.

New facts found about Annie who wrote 1869 journal saved from tip



Margaret Owen, the niece of Captain Phillips is pictured by the new sign with nephew Dr Derek Pinches, right, and at the back the Mayor and other VIPs

Sign of compromise as error in VC hero's name addressed 14 years later

FOLLOWING the story in *The Bugle* (October 23 edition) the new compromise West Bromwich street sign to honour the town's only First World War Victoria Cross medal winner was unveiled last Friday.

The Edwin Phillips Drive sign, which was put up in 2000, should have read Robert Phillips Drive as the war hero had never been known by his middle name of Edwin.

The mistake was not spotted for six years and then it took another eight years for the Sandwell Council to respond to a campaign led by local historian Terry Price, and backed by West Bromwich MPs Tom Watson and Adrian Bailey and West Bromwich town deputy Councillor Steve Melia.

But then the residents said they did not want it changed as the change of address would lead to all the problems of moving house without going anywhere.

So the council removed the old street sign and unveiled a larger sign still keeping the original error but also including information about Captain Phillips' VC and his proper name.

Bravery

West Bromwich-born Robert Edwin Phillips was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1917 for his bravery while serving as a lieutenant in Mesopotamia. He went out with a comrade under heavy enemy fire to bring their mortally-wounded commanding officer back behind British lines.

The council adopted the road in 2008 and does not know who put forward the name suggestion or why Edwin Phillips Drive was chosen.

Mr Price, the Royal British Legion, the RAF Association, the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and relatives of Robert Edwin Phillips all attended the unveiling

ceremony, as well as local residents, the Mayor Councillor Derek Rowley, councillors and West Bromwich West MP Adrian Bailey.

Mr Price said: "I am very pleased that Sandwell Council has responded to my appeal to satisfactorily honour the only West Bromwich man to have been awarded Britain's highest award for valour, the VC."

Captain Phillips' niece Margaret Owen said: "It was a very moving ceremony and a wonderful turnout. My uncle never talked about the war, but we are all very proud of him."

Councillor Maria Crompton, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for highways and environment, said: "We will also be reflecting Captain Phillips' full name, and his act of bravery and courage with a special paving stone being laid in his memory as part of our First World War centenary commemorations."

By John Butterworth

THE Great, Great Nephew of the Bilston girl whose 1869 journal was rescued from a rubbish dump has uncovered more details about her life.

We reported in *The Bugle* (October 2 edition) how Stephen Baker and his wife Jean, from Devon, had been given the diary Maurice Wright had saved while working as a Biffa machine driver in 1989. His story was featured in *The Bugle* in May 2004 and Stephen read the story online ten years later while researching his family tree and realised that writer Annie Baker from Bilston was his Great, Great Aunt. After meeting up with Maurice and his wife Sylvia it spurred him on to further research and he has now tracked down Annie's marriage and death certificates and more details about her life.

Apothecary

Stephen said that Annie Baker, born in 1859, was the only daughter of William Humpage Baker (born 1828, died 1918) and Jane Baker (née Blakeway) (born 1826, died 1915). She had three brothers, Willis (born 1858, died 1895), James (born 1863, died 1940) and Henry (born 1863, died 1864). They lived in Hartshorne Street, Bilston, and in the 1871 census, when Annie was 12, it shows that her father was co-owner of Messers J & WH Baker, Japanners, employing 46 people and her mother had a pawnbroking business.

In 1880 Annie married Charles Goldstraw who was an apothecary and chemist and, according to the 1881 census, they lived 24 Oxford Street, Bilston, together with a servant, Sarah Jones. In the 1891 census they had

moved to Victoria House, 94 Church Street, Bilston, and they had four daughters, Lilian, Edith, Marian and Eleanor. Two servants lived with them.

In 1900 Charles had three chemist shops, 24 Oxford Street and 94 Church Street, Bilston, and Castle Street, Coseley. In 1901 Charles Goldstraw was bankrupt, but the census showed that Annie had had three more children, Beatrice, Victoria and Charles, and they were living at 42 High Street Sedgley - without servants.

Research

In the 1911 census, Charles, who was now 58, Annie, who was now 51 and the children Lilian, aged 29, Eleanor, 21, Beatrice, 19, Victoria, 13, and Charles, 11, were living at 21 Hordern Road, Wolverhampton. Charles was still a chemist but now worked for someone, rather than on his own. Stephen, who is doing more research, added: "We know that Charles died in 1927 and Annie in 1938."

Tell us your Christmas memories and win a top prize

CHRISTMAS Day is just under two months' away and we are again inviting our readers to send in their festive memories.

Tell us your story in around 500 words and we will print as many of them in *The Bugle* in our editions around Christmas and New Year.

They can be happy, sad, amusing or moving - but please supply pictures if possible.

The winning letters will win a smart ball-point and pen set.

Email your letters and pictures to editor@blackcountrybugle.co.uk or write to us at Bugle House, 41 High Street, Cradley Heath, B64 5HL.

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