

## **Melvyn Thompson – Victorian Kidderminster**

Melvyn Thompson, a popular and regular Speaker at the History Group Meetings, received a warm welcome as he spoke on Victorian Kidderminster. To accompany his talk he showed a DVD, filmed by Ken Hobson and with a commentary by Richard Warner. The DVD was filmed in the 1990's, just before the demolition of the Brinton carpet factory complex, in the Town Centre, to make way for the development of the Weavers' Wharf Retail Park. The music played on the DVD was the Andante and Allegro by Francis Bache (1835 – 1858) and played on the world famous Kidderminster Town Hall Hill Organ.

Melvyn gave an amusing and nostalgic presentation with lots of interesting snippets about the Town. The film included many facts and statistics on the town, and highlighted the architectural details – domestic, commercial, industrial, ecclesiastical and financial – many of which have now been lost, due to redevelopment.

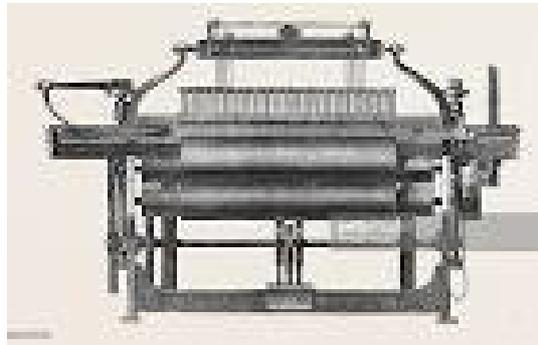
Victorian Kidderminster is thought to have started when the first power loom was shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851. As a result, the town expanded rapidly, with much housing, mills and commercial buildings and sites being erected over the following score of years. As a mark of the importance of the town, a School of Science and Art was founded, on the site of the present-day Library and College, and the Town Hall was built in the town, on the site of the old Vicarage, at the end of Vicar Street.



The film showed present and demolished buildings of great beauty, and also 'homed in' on exquisite details of banisters, windows, exteriors, gable ends, inscriptions, brickwork, terracotta decorations etc.. The origins of some of the street names were also revealed. Carpet barons, benefactors and worthy local men of the Victorian age had their memories permanently recorded in some of the names of the Kidderminster streets.

Nostalgia was very evident as the film showed footage of the carpet trade. The 'Brinton Bull' (a ship's whistle from a Clyde puffer) brought back a lot of memories to the group. The DVD showed where evidence of the former carpet trade and other Victorian sites can still be found, including the 'Dolls' Houses' in Park Lane, the Old Cemetery, the Comberton Hill area and the Town Centre.

**Victorian Power Loom**



Old postcards, paintings, photographs and documents provided supporting evidence of an era in the history of Kidderminster which is now almost lost and Melvyn was very warmly thanked for his contribution to our collective memories and his hard work in keeping the history of our town alive.

Heidy Hague